

Childhood Hunger in Vermont

Prepared by the Vermont Campaign
to End Childhood Hunger

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www.vtnohunger.org

What *Is* Hunger?

- *In Bennington, Vermont, lunch workers know it is Friday because children coming through the lunch line are hiding food in their pockets to have something to eat over the weekend.*



What *is* Hunger?

“Hunger is the mental and physical condition that comes from not eating enough food due to insufficient economic, family, or community resources.”
(from the Community Childhood Identification Project)



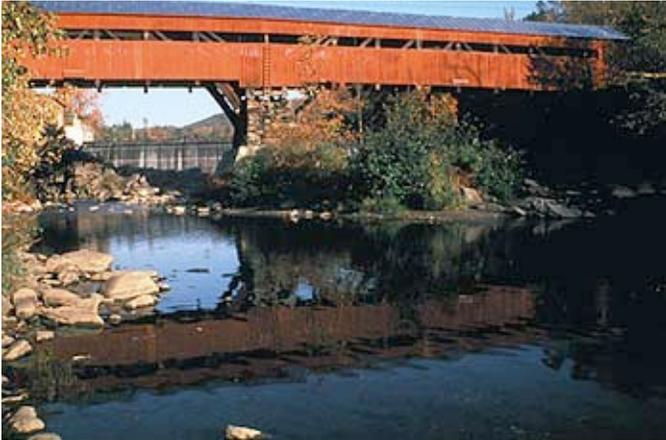
What does it mean to be hungry?

Hunger is a continuum



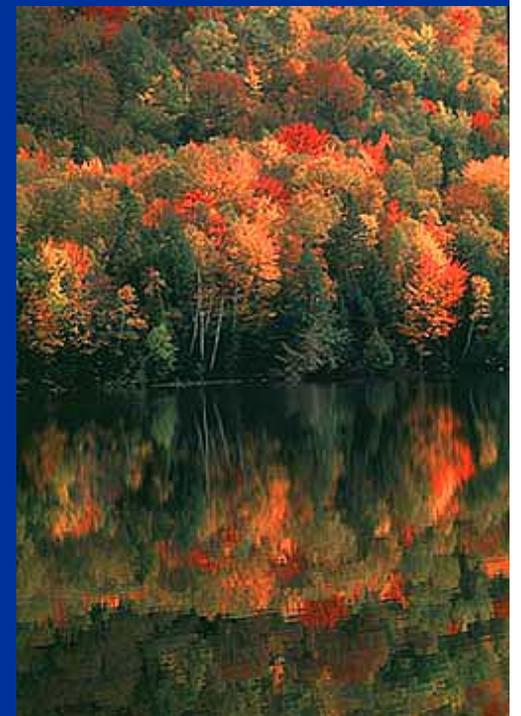
Transient
hunger

Chronic
malnutrition



Are children hungry in Vermont?

YES



Hunger in Vermont: The numbers

Data from the US Census Bureau:

- Between 1998-2000, an average of **26,000** children were hungry or at risk of hunger each year in Vermont.
 - That's about 1 in 5 Vermont children.

Hunger in Vermont: The numbers

Data from the US Census Bureau:

- In 1999, 16,595 Vermont children ages 0-17 lived below the poverty level.

–That's 11.4% of Vermont children.

Hunger in Vermont: The stories

- “We never make assumptions, but we know that this school meal may be the only healthy meal students get each day.”
 - Ferrisburgh food service director
- “It’s never enough . . . I’ve been hoarding [food] this month so we can have something for Thanksgiving.”
 - young mother at Essex Junction food pantry



Why are children hungry in Vermont?



- Unemployment
- Underemployment
- Lack of a living wage
- Health care costs
- Heating bills
- Housing costs

What does hunger mean for children?

- Health consequences

- stunted growth
- unwanted weight loss
- headaches
- fatigue
- anemia
- increased infections

- Social and behavioral consequences

- increased aggression, hyperactivity, anxiety, and depression
- difficulty with social interactions

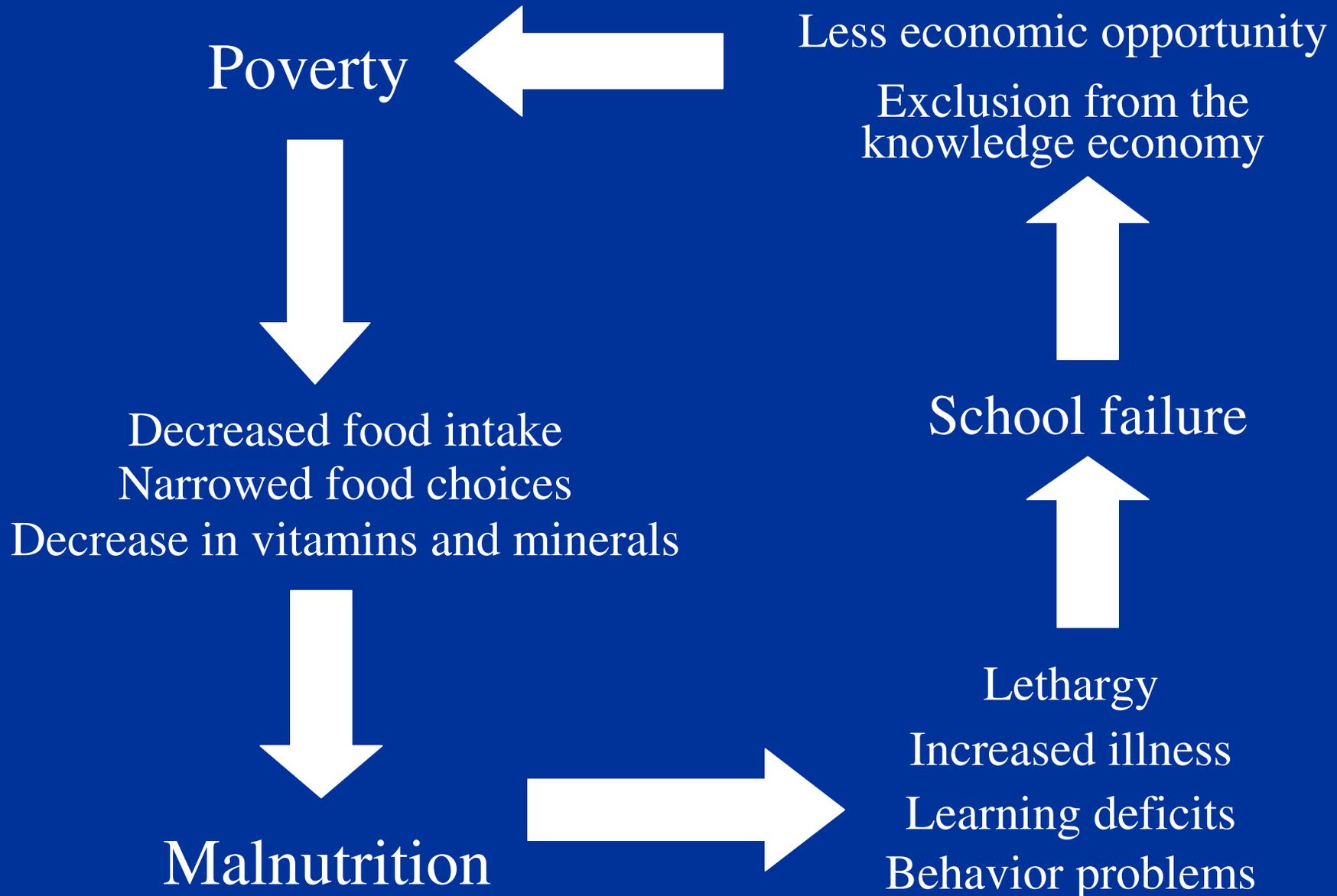


What does hunger mean for children?

- **Academic consequences**
 - impaired brain development and cognitive capacity
 - lower test scores and overall school achievement
 - increased school absence, tardiness, and suspension

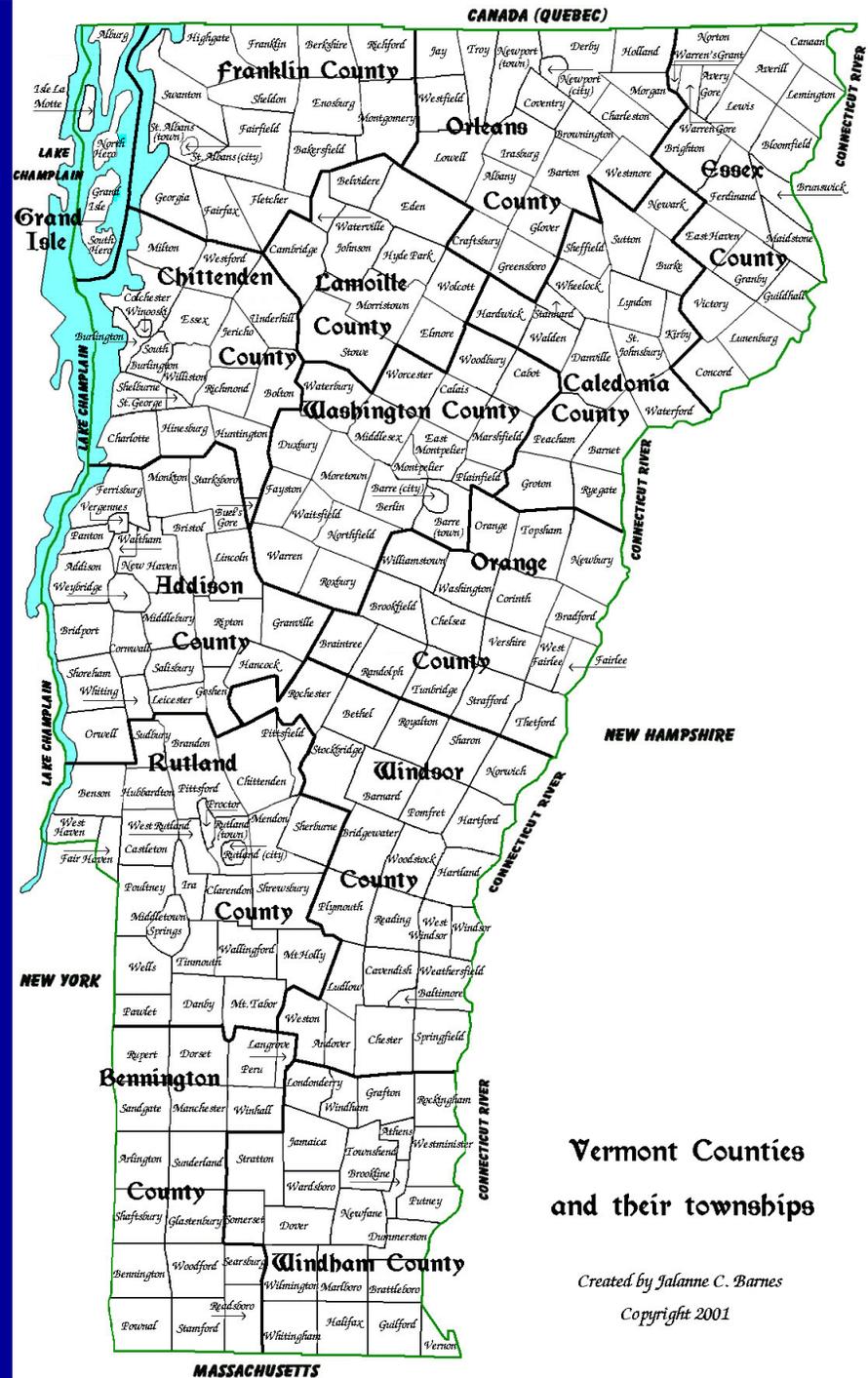


Cycle of Poverty and Malnutrition



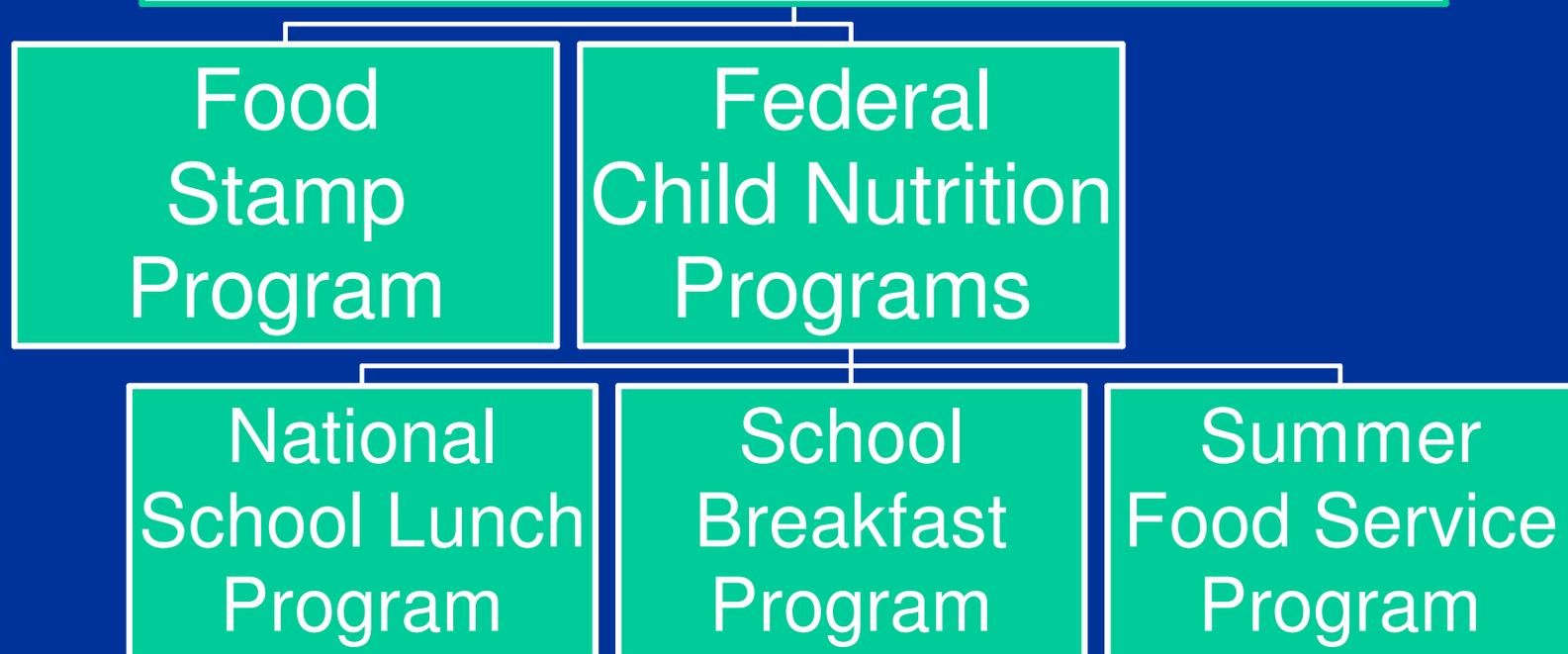
The Costs of Hunger in Vermont

- Increased health care and educational costs
- Decreased educational performance
- Decreased job productivity



Fighting Hunger in Vermont

Some Important Resources for Families and Children at Risk of Hunger



The Food Stamp Program



- In 2001, over 39,000 people in Vermont received food stamps
- Average monthly food stamp benefit in Vermont: \$138
- More than 40% of all food stamp benefits go to children
- 32% decline in food stamp participation since 1995

The School Breakfast Program



*In 2003: 266 out of 326
Vermont public schools
participate in this program.*

- Provides nutritionally-approved, federally-funded meals to school students
- Income eligible students receive breakfast free or at a reduced price
- Improves school performance and attendance

The National School Lunch Program

- Provides 1/3 of the dietary requirements for growing children
- Meets dietary guidelines for healthy diet
- Income eligible students receive lunch free or at a reduced price



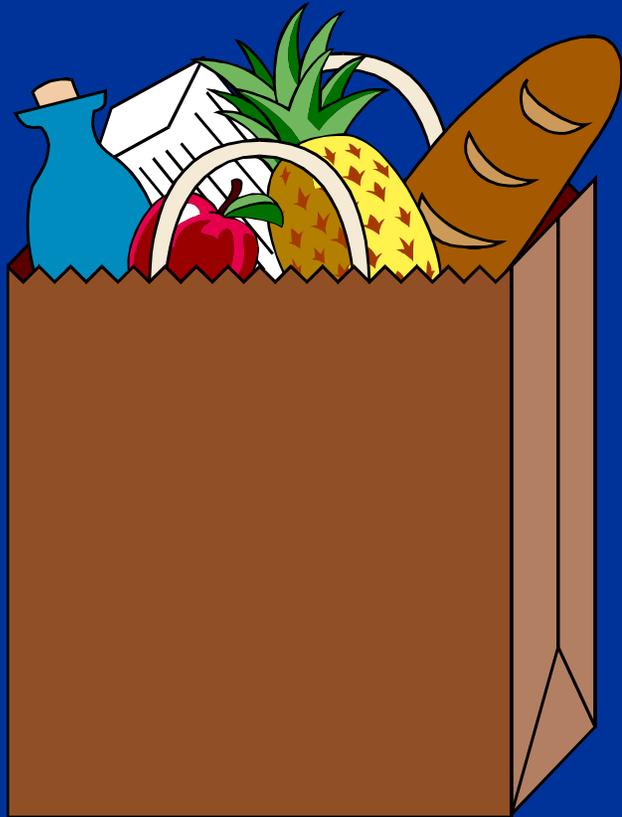
In 2003: 307 out of 326 Vermont public schools participate in this program.

Summer Food Service Program

- Provides nutrition for children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals during the school year
- Over 5,000 children receiving meals at 165 sites in Vermont
- Summer meal programs offer enrichment programming in addition to food



The Importance of Federal Programs



Federal programs

In VT: \$40 million (2001):
Federal funding for food stamps
and school meal programs



Emergency Food System

In VT: \$3.5 million (2001):
Food distributed by Vermont
food shelves

The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger



Mission Statement:

The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger develops programs and advocates for policies to prevent hunger and promote good nutrition for Vermont's families.

The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger

What We Do:

- Advocacy
- Education
- Program development
 - School meals outreach
 - Summer food service expansion
 - Food Stamp outreach
 - Nutrition education:
Cooking for Life



Participants in the 2002 Hike for Hunger

What You Can Do to Alleviate Childhood Hunger

- Support the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger
 - Become a member
- Advocate for federal nutrition programs in your community
- Educate yourself and others

