

Task Force B Meeting Summary Monday, March 13, 2006

Task Force Participants: Janet Cushman – MI Department of Human Services, Diane Golzynski – MI Department of Community Health, Jane Marshall (Chair) – Food Bank Council of Michigan, Marla Moss – MI Department of Education, Barb Mutch – Michigan State University Extension, Terri Stangl – Center for Civil Justice, Karla Stratton – MI Department of Community Health, Todd Wickstrom – Heritage Foods, Jan Williams – MI Department of Human Services.

Additional Participants: Jeanne Lipe – MI Department of Agriculture.

The fifth Task Force B: Improving Access to Fresh and Healthy Foods meeting convened on Monday, March 13, 2006 from 9:00 am – 11:00 in Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Member Jane Marshall chaired the meeting.

Ms. Marshall called the meeting to order and started with a presentation of the recently completed *Hunger in America 2005: Michigan Report*, by the Food Bank Council of Michigan in partnership with America's Second Harvest. The report details the usage of food banks and emergency food services in Michigan. Ms. Marshall gave the Task Force participants a set of recommendations that include surplus crops and people in need, meeting emergency food needs, and optimizing existing food resources. The Task Force briefly discussed these recommendations. MFPC staff will further develop a recommendation around emergency food services in Michigan and include implementation strategies, and send it to Task Force members for feedback. This topic might require further discussion at the next Task Force meeting.

Recommendation B9: Increase Access to and Support for Emergency Food Resources and Needs.

- a) Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) should strengthen connections between surplus crops grown in Michigan and hungry residents through expanding the Michigan Agricultural Surplus System.
- b) Michigan Department of Human Services should meet the emergency food needs for Michigan residents by increasing grant funding channeled through the state food bank system.
- c) The state should optimize access to existing emergency food resources by working with the private and non-profit sectors to strengthen information and referral sources for those in need.

Task Force members Terri Stangl and Janet Cushman presented about the Food Assistance Program (FAP) in Michigan (food stamps). Since the FAP is a large and complex federal program, administered at the state level by the Department of Human

Services (DHS), there are fairly prescribed areas in which the state can make changes in the program's administration and effectiveness. Michigan has a participation rate of 65%, which means that 65% of the people eligible for food stamps actually receive them. Michigan is ranked 12th in the nation in terms of participation. The main goal, in any recommendations regarding the FAP, is to increase participation for those persons eligible for the program. Additionally, it is important to decrease the errors in payments to FAP participants. There is an ongoing tension between program participation and program accuracy, as increased reporting requirements (and thereby increased accuracy) are often prohibitive to people's participation in the program, while relaxed reporting (which makes the program more accessible) leads to increases in payment errors.

DHS is continually evaluating and reporting to the Michigan Legislature on the success and effectiveness of the FAP, and has several internal goals for improvement of the program. Ms. Cushman presented recommendations to the Task Force that focus on federal policy changes and the 2007 farm bill reauthorization. While the state cannot implement any of these changes, the Task Force participants and Council Members can lend its support to the recommendations and encourage the state to lobby for them if they so choose. These recommendations were developed by states in the Midwest Region to be delivered to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Ms. Stangl presented a number of policy recommendation options that could be implemented at the state level, mainly within DHS. She identified policy options that were given a range of support by DHS.

Task Force members discussed the policy recommendation options identified by Ms. Stangl and Ms. Cushman. MFPC staff will further develop a recommendation around FAP in Michigan and include implementation strategies and send it to Task Force members for feedback.

Recommendation B8: Increase Participation in the Food Assistance Program (Food Stamps)

- a) *DHS* should increase accessibility and ease of participation in the program.
- b) *DHS* should increase awareness of the FAP among eligible people.
- c) *DHS* should increase partnerships utilized to promote and administer the program.
- d) *DHS* should lead and join in efforts to protect key program components in the federal program.

The next Task Force B meeting will focus on family nutrition programs, and State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP) including opportunities with the Michigan Nutrition Network. The next meeting of Task Force B is **Monday, April 17, 2006 from 9:00 am – 11:00 am** at Constitution Hall, Brake Room.