



Jonnycake Center
of Peace Dale



Visitor Survey Summary



Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale

A closer look at our visitors and their needs

South County Rhode Island is known as a vacation destination, with world class restaurants, beachfront homes, and a beloved fishing community. But for many local residents, the very jobs that exist to make South County so special are seasonal and pay wages that are too low to support a family. Seniors who live on fixed income can find it increasingly difficult to meet the high cost of living in our sought-after community.

The Jonnycake Center helps our struggling neighbors put food on the table when income falls short of meeting basic needs. This includes healthy food such as fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs, and frozen meats and poultry.

Our visitors can also get free clothing for their families through our retail store, as well as items such as diapers, school supplies, and nutritional supplements through several other programs designed for children, teenagers, and seniors.

The demand

More than 1,800 residents of South Kingstown and Narragansett registered to use our food pantry in 2015. There were 7,536 food pantry visits in total. On average, we served 630 individuals each month. More than one in three of our visitors is a child; one in ten is a senior.

We distributed more than 215,000 pounds of food which allowed visitors to prepare 170,000 meals. This included more than 15,000 school vacation meals and 8,100 meals that were delivered to homebound seniors through monthly food baskets.

The good news is that the number of households we serve has declined as the economy recovers. The bad news is that those who continue to seek our help are still hungry. A recent survey of our visitors indicates that despite our help, many are still food insecure.

Getting to know our visitors better

We invited everyone who came to us for a Thanksgiving basket in 2015 to complete a questionnaire which asked about satisfaction with our food pantry, as well as their health, financial needs, and food security. Close to 160 people out of a total of 210 individuals who visited the pantry that day answered our questions. While this was not a random sample of the approximate 600 households who were registered with us last year, we believe that those who completed the survey are among our regular visitors and can provide important insights into our services and their ongoing challenges.

Satisfaction with the food pantry

The Jonnycake Center gets high marks from its visitors when asked about quality of service and our facilities, but lower marks on questions related to the quality, variety and amount of food given out (see table 1).

Visitors are able to get to the pantry; seventy one percent (71%) said it is “not difficult”. When asked if there were things about the pantry they would change, twenty eight percent (28%) of respondents answered yes, with the majority of those suggestions related to the quality and quantity of the food distributed.

How satisfied are you with the food pantry services?	Very	Somewhat	Not at all	No Answer
Customer service	83%	9%	0%	8%
Staff	82%	12%	1%	5%
Volunteers	87%	8%	0%	5%
Quality of food	65%	27%	3%	5%
Amount of food	59%	30%	6%	5%
Variety of food	62%	29%	3%	6%
Location of facility	84%	8%	2%	6%
Cleanliness	87%	7%	1%	5%
Accessibility	80%	11%	3%	6%
Hours	74%	16%	4%	6%
Registration process	80%	11%	3%	6%

Hunger and food security

Many of our food pantry visitors are regular users. Three out of four respondents visit our pantry every month (46%) or every other month (29%). The remainder indicated they come for food two to four times a year (7%), only once or twice a year (13%), and a small share report they had not been during the previous year (4%).

Currently food pantry visitors can come once a month and receive a week’s worth of food for every member of their household. When asked if this was enough for their household to meet their food needs, only one in four (26%) said “always.” The remainder answered “sometimes” (61%) and “never” (11%). Not surprising, a fair number of our visitors had used another food pantry in the area (see Chart 1).

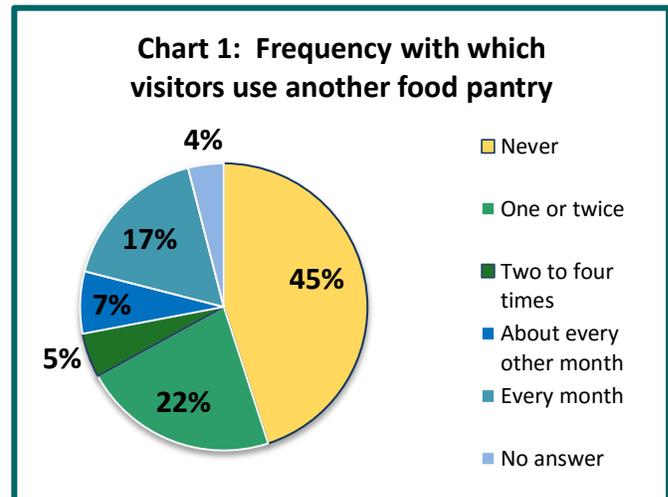
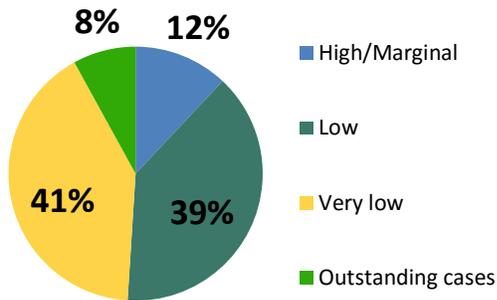


Chart 2: Food Security Status



Perhaps the most disconcerting finding was related to food insecurity. The survey included a USDA measureⁱ with questions about having enough food, being able to afford balanced meals, cutting the size of meals and going hungry. According to the responses, eighty percent (80%) of respondents are food insecure; the majority having very low (41%) or low (39%) food security. Just one in ten (12%) have high or marginal food security (see chart 2).

Other needs among pantry visitors

Approximately one-third of respondents indicated an interest in the Jonnycake Center introducing additional services (see chart 3). When asked whether they have a social worker, case manager or other type of helper they work with at another agency on a regular basis, 82 percent responded “no”, which might explain the interest in help connecting with local services.

Respondents were also asked about areas in which they need more help. Monthly bills seem to weigh most on the minds of our visitors with close to half (47%) affirming monthly bills are a problem for them, followed by purchasing toys at Christmas (38%), housing (32%), clothing (25%), and transportation (23%) (see chart 4).

Health of Visitors

When asked if anyone in the household has any health issues that require a special diet, forty five percent (45%) answered yes and

Chart 3: Which if any of the following services would you like to see the Jonnycake Center offer?

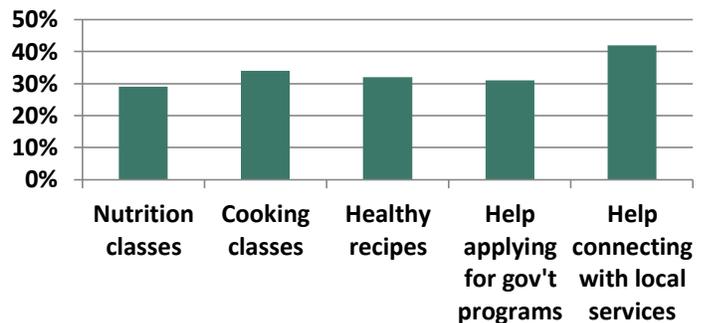
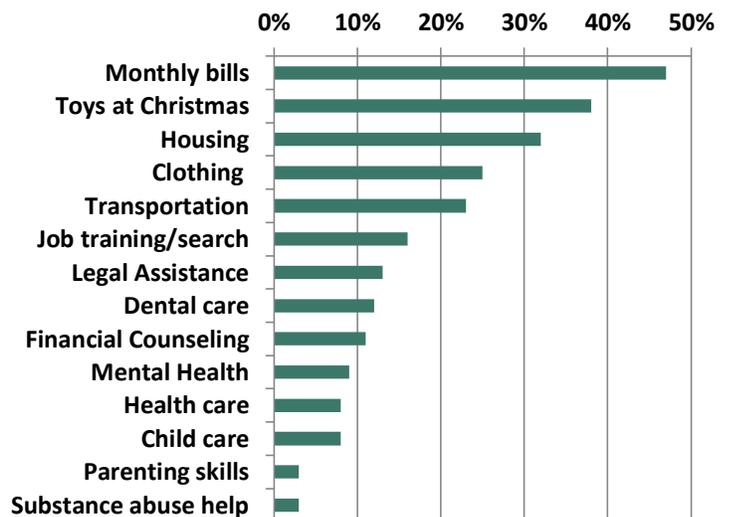


Chart 4: Share of respondents who said they need more help with certain issues



more than one-third (34%) report being in fair or poor health. Of the health conditions listed, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and food allergies, the most common illness report was high blood pressure, with almost one-third (31%) indicating it was an issue for someone in their household.

Goals for the coming year

It is clear that many of our visitors continue to have significant challenges with food security and in meeting other basic needs. In the coming year, the Jonnycake Center will work to enhance our services.

Goals: Increase the amount of nutritious food we are providing to our visitors.

- Increase the amount of food being purchased and distributed to each household
- Shift purchasing towards more produce and proteins.

Goals: Enhance our role as a broker of services and benefits for visitors, helping them to connect to public and private resources.

- Station a SNAP outreach worker at the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale.
- Offer more assistance with screening and completing applications for public assistance programs, especially as Rhode Island moves towards online applications and enrollment.
- Ramp up our efforts to connect visitors to other services in the community.
- Partner with Capital Good Fund to introduce small loans and financial coaching to our clients.
- Increase funding to help households with small financial emergencies from avoiding eviction and utility shut-offs to buying a bus pass for a job interview and other one-time needs.

¹ U.S. Household Food Security Module: Six-item Short Form, Economic Research Services, USDA. September 2012.