

# COALITION BUILDING IN GREATER NEW HAVEN IMPROVES ACCESS TO FOOD ASSISTANCE

The Greater New Haven Coordinated Food Assistance Network (CFAN) is a coalition of local food assistance providers, people who have experienced hunger, and community organizations that strive to improve access to food, especially healthy food, while addressing equity and justice.

CFAN aims to create a unified system of food assistance that ensures equitable, dignified, and culturally appropriate access to nutritious food for all residents of Greater New Haven. The network works to improve neighborhood-based food programs, reduce barriers to access, and ensure that resources are distributed fairly across the food system.

For more information about CFAN, visit [caenhv.org/cfan](http://caenhv.org/cfan) or contact Alycia Santilli at [santillia1@southernct.edu](mailto:santillia1@southernct.edu)

## THE APPROACH

Founded in 2019, CFAN brings together food assistance providers and local leaders across the Greater New Haven area with two backbone organizations serving as neutral conveners – the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement and the United Way for Greater New Haven. The coalition meets monthly to share updates and collaborate on resolving gaps in the food assistance system. While CFAN strives to address immediate needs, the primary focus is on policy, systems, and structural change to improve access to healthy food for all.



*The biggest strengths of having CFAN as a coalition in New Haven are being able to network with others and share information that helps serve those of us who are indeed food insecure. ... The CFAN coalition makes space for those of us with lived experience, to have a seat at the table to figure out best practices to get our needs met.*

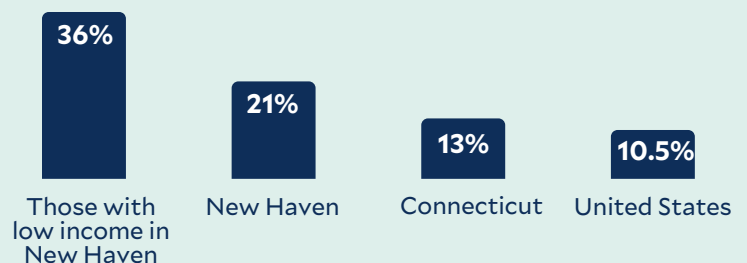
– Kim Hart, CFAN Co-Chair



## THE CHALLENGE

Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle. It often has the greatest impact on people living in neighborhoods with fewer economic resources and communities of color. Food insecurity may also lead to a range of health problems including chronic diseases and poor mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened inequities, leading to even higher rates of food insecurity among vulnerable populations.

### ADULTS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY IN 2019<sup>1,2</sup>

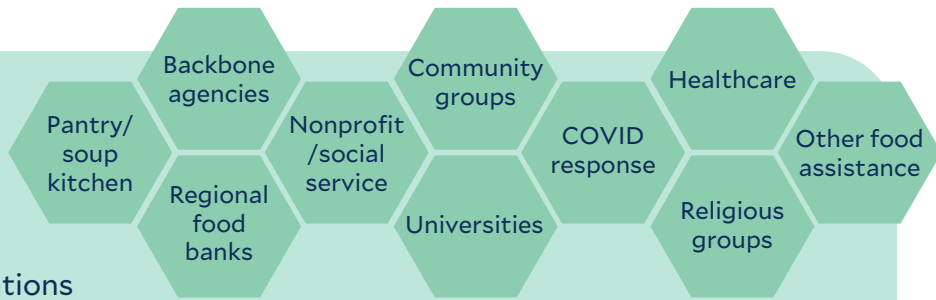


More than **4 IN 10** New Haven residents lost their job, used emergency food services or suffered financially during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

# WHO IS CFAN?

CFAN has mobilized partners from across New Haven to take community-driven action to improve equitable access to the food assistance system.

**10** types of organizations



**165** individuals

**63** organizations

**50** actions

- 21** actions to improve access to food and resources
- 11** system improvements
- 10** COVID-related actions
- 8** strategic planning initiatives

**81%** of actions were committed to ensuring equitable resource distribution and support across the food system

**45%** of actions focused on coordinating neighborhood-based food programs to ensure that the needs of underserved communities were met

# WHAT WE DO



## SHARED REFRIGERATION

so that smaller pantries had a place to store their food



## PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE

for food programs to function safely during COVID



## COVID RESPONSE

to help distribute PPE and host vaccine clinics



## DELIVERY PROGRAM

to continue free, weekly food deliveries past the initial COVID response

# WORKING GROUPS

As the COVID-related emergency food crisis waned and CFAN refocused on long-term goals, five working groups emerged to focus on specific systems-level changes in the food assistance system:



## PROCUREMENT

new avenues to obtain food for distribution



## RESOURCE EQUITY

ensuring equitable resource distribution



## TRAINING

opportunities for CFAN members to help build capacity



## UNIVERSAL INTAKE

streamlining and improving the intake process



## FOOD GAP

providing meals to children during vacations

# SUSTAINING SUCCESS

## POLICY CHANGE WORKING GROUP

CFAN has a strong relationship with the City of New Haven and has included the City's Food Systems Policy Director on its leadership from the outset. In order to continue focusing on structural change, CFAN may establish a working group focused on policy change to develop a detailed short- and long-term strategy.

## LONG-TERM FUNDING STREAMS

With strong support from a variety of members, CFAN has the potential for much greater impact. A steady funding source would allow CFAN to hire dedicated staff, as well as support internal operations to keep the coalition coordinated and moving towards fulfilling its mission and goals.

## GOVERNANCE

While CFAN has begun developing bylaws and internal governing rules, they will now focus on more explicit details such as length of terms and election of Steering Committee members and co-chairs, general network membership, directing policy, and the role of the conveners in the process.