San Francisco Food Security Task Force
Food Security Screening Policy Recommendations

BACKGROUND: San Francisco invests heavily in meeting the food and nutrition needs of its most vulnerable residents. This investment includes a robust privately- and publicly-funded safety net of food support and implementation of food insecurity screening in diverse settings.

An important goal of San Francisco's Food Security Task Force is to provide city-wide coordination of food security efforts in order to maximize their impact. Consistent assessment of food insecurity across diverse settings would allow San Francisco to more effectively track progress toward eliminating hunger, coordinate services, and assess the impact of new policies and programs. Therefore, the San Francisco Food Security Task Force recommends the adoption of a consistent, city-wide food security screening protocol.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: Tracking food insecurity in San Francisco requires assessment of 2 essential components:

1) ***Food security***: The USDA's Household Food Security Survey Module is recognized nationally as the gold standard for food security screening. We recommend the use of either of two validated, shortened versions of this survey module. These items are intended to be administered to adults and are also validated in Spanish (page 5) and Chinese (page 6). The SF Food Security Task Force is working on obtaining translations into other languages. Food insecurity assessment in children/adolescents may differ (page 4).

2) ***Food program utilization***: A strength of San Francisco's mature hunger safety net is its capacity to offer frequent, reliable food access to people who need it to meet their caloric and nutritional needs. Our system is often so good at achieving this goal that many people who regularly use it no longer view themselves as food insecure. This is good; it shows our programs are working. However, it is problematic from a tracking perspective because we have no way to capture the high-risk population of residents who are only food secure because they rely on San Francisco's food programs. Assessing food program utilization ensures that we are also tracking the needs of individuals who would be immediately food insecure in the absence of the hunger safety net. This question is also designed to allow organizations to efficiently assess the extent to which their programs are reaching target populations and inform coordination of programmatic efforts.

	BRIEF Assessment	**COMPREHENSIVE Assessment**
Food security (Page 2)	2-item Advantages: minimizes respondent and administrator burden Disadvantages: can only differentiate food security and food insecurity	6-item Advantages: allows differentiation of food security, low food security, and very low food security Disadvantages: requires additional administration time
Food program utilization (Page 3)	1-item Advantages: minimizes respondent and administrator burden Disadvantages: does not capture utilization of all services; lower sensitivity and specificity Ideally, "yes" responses are followed with the COMPREHENSIVE food program utilization assessment.	Advantages: captures utilization frequency and types of services used Disadvantages: requires additional time

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SCREENING QUESTIONS - Food Security

2-Item Assessment (BRIEF)
Read the statements below that people have made about their food situation. For each statement, please check the box for whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months.
1. "We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true
2. "The food that we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for your household in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true
Scoring: A response of "often true" or "sometimes true" to either or both questions is considered "Food Insecurity"

6-Item Assessment (COMPREHENSIVE) (Note this scale is historically referred to as the "6-Item Assessment" even though two of the original items are combined into one in order to facilitate self-administration.)	
Read the statements below that people have made about their food situation. For each statement, please check the box for whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months.	
1. "The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you/your household in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true	
2. "We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you/your household in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true	
3. In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? If yes, how many days did this happen? ☐ Yes, almost every month (in the last 12 months) ☐ Yes, some months but not every month (in the last 12 months) ☐ Yes, only 1 or 2 months (in the last 12 months) ☐ No	
4. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
5. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
Scoring: Add up points as described below: Item 1: "often" or "sometimes" gives 1 point. Item 2: "often" or "sometimes" gives 1 point. Item 3: "yes, almost every month" or "yes, some months but not every month" gives 2 points. "Yes, only 1 or 2 months" gives 1 point. Item 4: "yes" gives 1 point Item 5: "yes" gives 1 point	Total score 0 = Food security 1 = Marginal food security 2-4 = Low food security 5-6 = Very low food security

Notes:

1. The two-item version has been validated across populations. See Erin Hager et al, Pediatrics, 2010 and Craig Gundersen et al, Public Health Nutrition, 2017. It is also referred to as the **Hunger Vital Sign™** (http://childrenshealthwatch.org/public-policy/hunger-vital-sign/).
2. These questions are validated in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The SF Food Security Task Force will be working to obtain translations into other languages.

SCREENING QUESTIONS - Food Program Utilization

1-item Assessment (BRIEF)

In the last 12 months, have you or anyone in your household gotten food from a free food program like a food pantry, free dining room, shelter meal, or senior congregate meals? Include school meals, CalFresh, and WIC.

☐ Yes
☐ No

COMPREHENSIVE Food Program Utilization Assessment

For the COMPREHENSIVE food program utilization assessment, organizations may omit rows that are not of interest or relevant to the population served.

In the last 12 months, how often did you or anyone in your household get free or low-cost food from:

	Often (about weekly)	Sometimes (about monthly)	Rarely (about yearly)	Never
A food pantry or monthly food box	O	O	O	O
Home-delivered meals or groceries (like Project Open Hand, Meals on Wheels, HPUniti)	O	O	O	O
Free dining room (like Glide or St. Anthony's)	O	O	O	O
Congregate meals or senior center meals	O	O	O	O
Shelter meals	O	O	O	O
CalFresh, Food Stamps, SNAP, or EBT	O	O	O	O
WIC	O	O	O	O
School or child program (free or reduced cost meals at school, pre-school, home day care, after school, or summer program)	O	O	O	O
Vouchers (like EatSF or Senior Farmers Market)	O	O	O	O
Other (please tell us which one): _____	O	O	O	O

For more information about these resources, call 2-1-1.

Notes:

1. The COMPREHENSIVE assessment was tested in January and February 2017 among more than two dozen vulnerable San Francisco residents. It was chosen over other assessments because it was *simpler, more acceptable,* and often *faster* to complete than shorter versions.
2. Assessments such as these often generate respondent questions about how to access additional resources on this list. Organizations may wish to prepare for such questions. 2-1-1 is a helpful resource.

Food Insecurity Screening for Adolescents

Unlike food insecurity screening in adults, there is no gold standard brief screening measure for adolescents. One brief food insecurity screener for adolescents is described below. If possible, these questions should be asked confidentially, or not in the presence of a parent or caregiver.

2-Item Assessment for Adolescents
For each statement, please tell me whether the statement **was often true, sometimes true, or never true** based on your experiences in the past 12 months.
1. "I worried about not having enough to eat." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true
2. "I tried not to eat a lot so the food at home would last." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months? ☐ Often true ☐ Sometimes true ☐ Never true
Scoring: A response of "often true" or "sometimes true" to either or both questions is considered food insecure.

Notes: For more information, see Fram et al, Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 2013.

Appendix A: Food Security Assessment – Spanish:

2-Item Assessment (BRIEF)

Lee las declaraciones abajo que las personas han hecho sobre situaciónes alimentarias. Para cada uno, favor de indicar si ha ocurrido frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en su hogar en los últimos 12 meses.

1. "Nos preocupamos que la comida se podía acabar antes de tener dinero para comprar más." En su hogar, ¿ésto ocurrió frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en los últimos 12 meses?
   ☐ Frecuentemente ☐ A veces ☐ Nunca
2. "La comida que compré no duró mucho tiempo y no había dinero para comprar más." ¿Esto paso frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en los últimos 12 meses?
   ☐ Frecuentemente ☐ A veces ☐ Nunca

Scoring: A response of "frecuentemente" or "a veces" to either or both questions is considered "Food Insecurity"

6-Item Assessment (COMPREHENSIVE) (Note this scale is historically referred to as the "6-Item Assessment" even though two of the original items are combined into one in order to facilitate self-administration.)

Lee las declaraciones abajo que las personas han hecho sobre situaciónes alimentarias. Para cada uno, favor de indicar si ha ocurrido frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en su hogar en los últimos 12 meses.

1. "La comida que compré no duró mucho tiempo y no había dinero para comprar más." ¿Esto paso frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en los últimos 12 meses?
   ☐ Frecuentemente ☐ A veces ☐ Nunca
2. "Nosotros no teníamos lo suficiente para comer una comida balanceada (nutritiva)." Para su casa, ¿Esto fue frecuentemente, a veces, o nunca en los últimos 12 meses?
   ☐ Frecuentemente ☐ A veces ☐ Nunca
3. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Comió usted menos de lo que pensaba que debía porque no hubo suficiente dinero para comida?
   ☐ Sí, casi todos los meses (en los últimos 12 meses) ☐ Sí, algunos meses pero no todos los meses (en los últimos 12 meses) ☐ Sí, pero solamente 1 o 2 meses (en los últimos 12 meses) ☐ No
4. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Usted o algún miembro de su familia comió menos o dejó de comer porque no había suficiente dinero para la comida?
   ☐ Sí ☐ No
5. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Alguna vez tuvo hambre pero no comió porque no tuvo suficiente dinero para comida?
   ☐ Sí ☐ No

Scoring: Add up points as described below:
Item 1: "frequentemente" or "a veces" gives 1 point.
Item 2: "frequentemente" or "a veces" gives 1 point.
Item 3: "Sí, casi todos los meses" or "Sí, algunos meses pero no todos los meses" gives 2 points. "Sí, pero solamente 1 o 2 meses" gives 1 point
Item 4: "Sí" gives 1 point
Item 5: "Sí" gives 1 point

Total score
0 = Food security
1 = Marginal food security
2-4 = Low food security
5-6 = Very low food security

Appendix B: Food Security Assessment – Chinese:

2-Item Assessment (BRIEF)

下面的句子是關於人們的糧食狀況。根據這些句子，請你想一想句子中形容的狀況，在過去的12個月中，即是從去年的本月起，是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上。請在你選擇的答案前面的括號內，填上「X」。

1.「我/我們擔心在有錢去買更多食物之前，所有的食物已經吃完了。」
在過去的12個月中，這種情況是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上呢?
☐ 經常發生 ☐ 有時候發生 ☐ 從來沒有發生

2.「我/我們購買的食物不夠，而且沒有錢去買更多的食物。」
在過去的12個月中，這種情況是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上呢?
☐ 經常發生 ☐ 有時候發生 ☐ 從來沒有發生

Scoring: A response of "經常發生" or "有時候發生" to either or both questions is considered "Food Insecurity"

6-Item Assessment (COMPREHENSIVE) (Note this scale is historically referred to as the "6-Item Assessment" even though two of the original items are combined into one in order to facilitate self-administration.)

下面的句子是關於人們的糧食狀況。根據這些句子，請你想一想句子中形容的狀況，在過去的12個月中，即是從去年的本月起，是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上。請在你選擇的答案前面的括號內，填上「X」。

1.「我/我們購買的食物不夠，而且沒有錢去買更多的食物。」
在過去的12個月中，這種情況是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上呢?
☐ 經常發生 ☐ 有時候發生 ☐ 從來沒有發生

2.「(我/我們)無法負擔均衡的飲食。」
在過去的12個月中，這種情況是經常發生,有時候發生,還是從來沒有發生在(你/你家人)身上呢?
☐ 經常發生 ☐ 有時候發生 ☐ 從來沒有發生

3. 在過去的12個月中，即是從去年的本月起，(你/你家中的其他成年人)，有沒有因為不夠錢購買食物，而減少食物的份量，或者減少餐數？
☐ 有，幾乎每個月 ☐ 有，有些月份，但不是每個月 ☐ 有，只是1個月或2個月 ☐ 沒有

4. 在過去的12個月中，你有沒有因為不夠錢購買食物，而吃得比你該吃的少？
☐ 有 ☐ 沒有

5. 在過去的12個月中，你有沒有因為不夠錢購買食物，而感到飢餓但沒有進食?
☐ 有 ☐ 沒有

Scoring: Add up points as described below: 沒有
Item 1: "經常發生" or "有時候發生" gives 1 point.
Item 2: "經常發生" or "有時候發生" gives 1 point.
Item 3: "有，幾乎每個月" or "有，有些月份，但不是每個月" gives 2 points.
"有，只是1個月或2個月" gives 1 point.
Item 4: "有" gives 1 point
Item 5: "有" gives 1 point

Total score
0 = Food security
1 = Marginal food security
2-4 = Low food security
5-6 = Very low food security