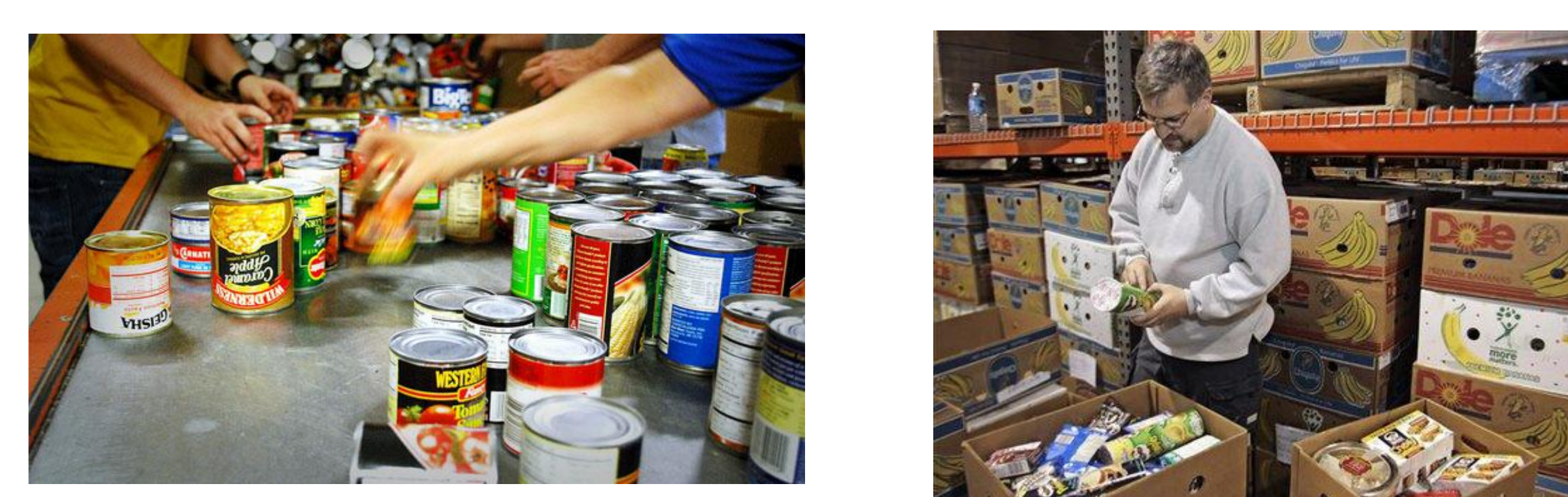


# Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention (CX<sup>3</sup>) guides planning and policy development in food banks

**Alyssa Ghirardelli, MPH, RD**  
**Valerie Quinn, MEd**  
**Barbara McKnelly, MS**  
**Erin McCarty, MPH**

## Introduction

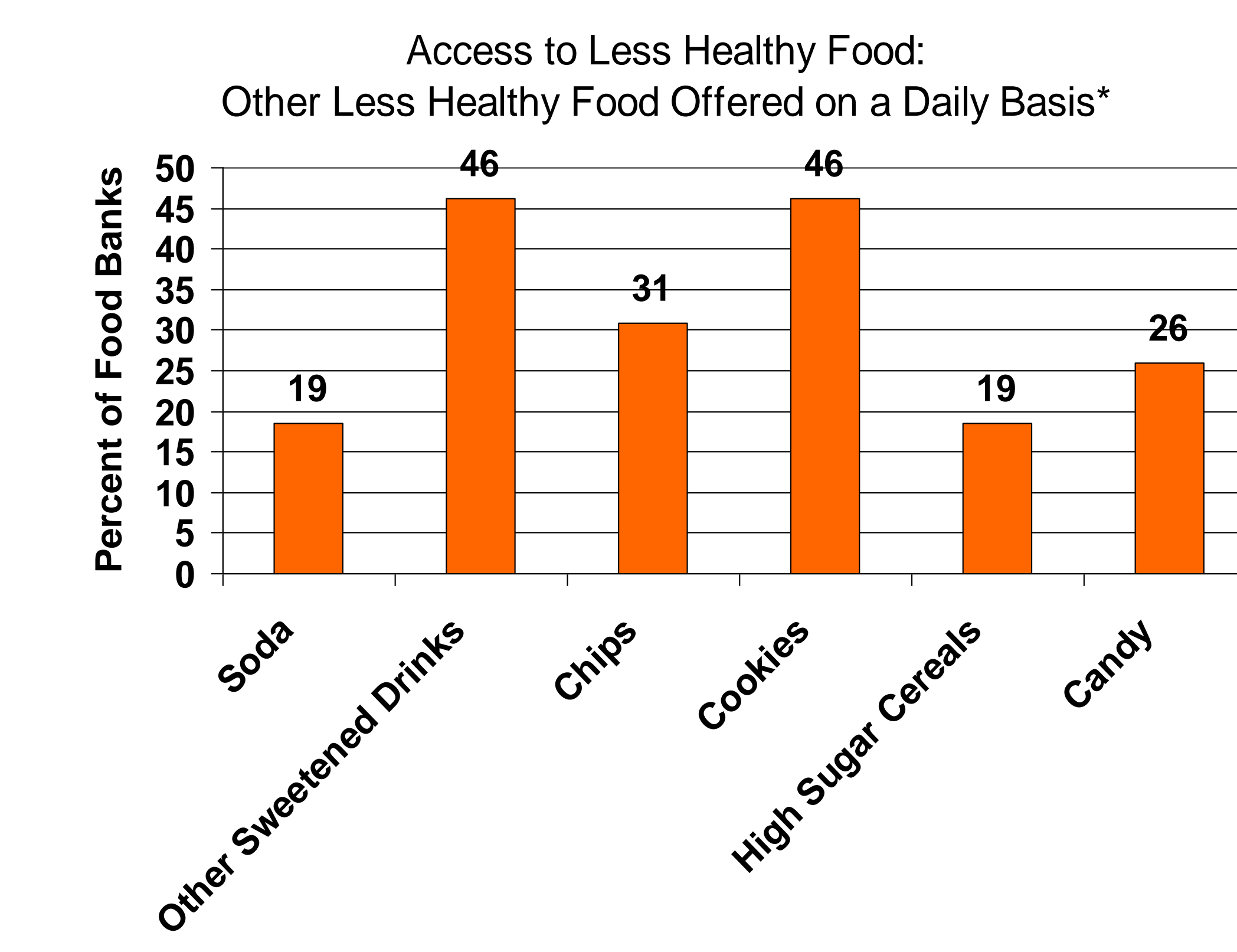
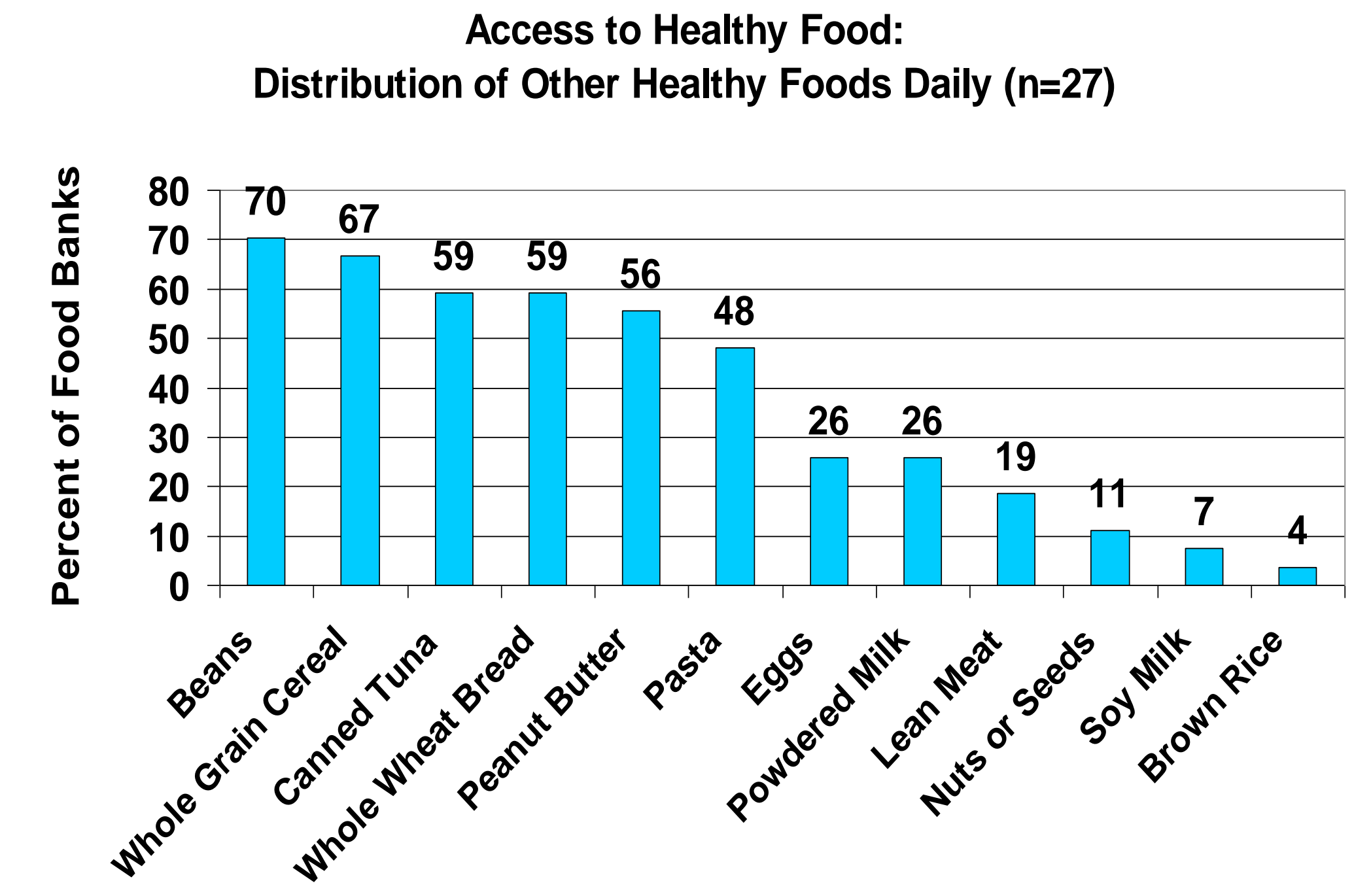
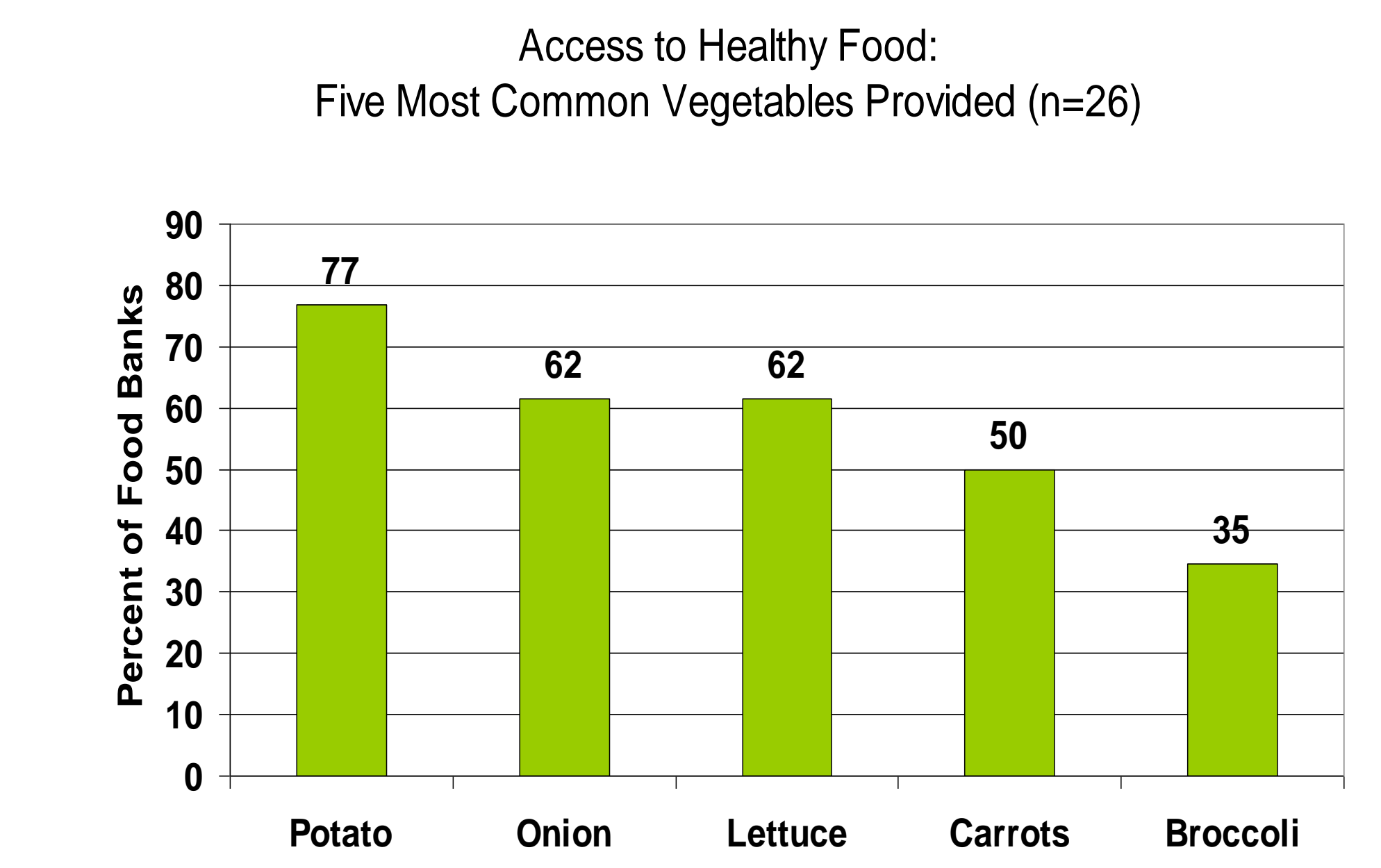
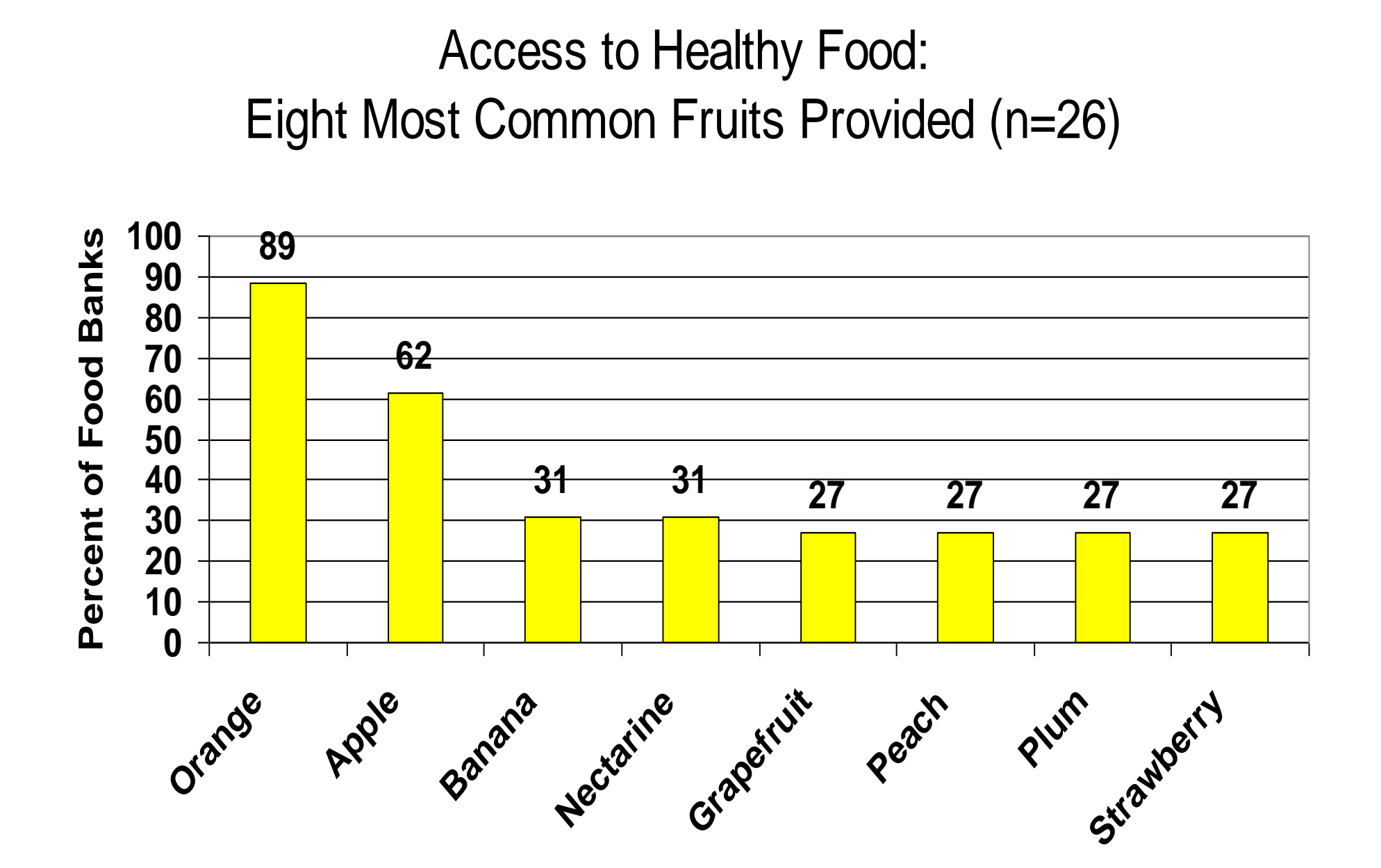
- Families experiencing food insecurity should receive healthy and nutrient dense foods when requesting assistance
- Food banks and their member agencies which distribute food at diverse community-based venues have tremendous potential for improving the diet quality of nutritionally at-risk and vulnerable populations.
- Standardized tools have been developed with input from food bank association experts to gather data on types of foods, policies and nutrition education practices in food banks
- Since 2006, over 25 food banks and other county-based distributors in California have been surveyed through Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (CX<sup>3</sup>)
- Developed by the *Network for a Healthy California*, California Department of Public Health, CX<sup>3</sup> is an evidence-based, program planning and policy promotion framework



## Methodology

- Representatives from local health departments conducted in-person interviews and site surveys at 27 food banks in 18 counties in California
- Food banks are located in both coastal and inland regions, as well as in rural, suburban and urban communities
- Survey tool assess:
  - Neighborhoods served by the food bank
  - Variety and quality of food distributed at the food banks
  - Frequency of food distribution
  - Type of health promotion and nutrition education provided by the food bank
  - Food banks healthy food policies
- Scoring criteria developed for public health and nutrition professionals to engage with food bank staff, identify areas for improvement and develop steps to implement policies and activities that enhance offerings and provide nutrition education
- Scoring standards set by California Department Public Health staff in collaboration with local health department nutritionists

## Results



Standards	Range of Scores	Percent of Food Banks Meeting Standard
Standards for Making Healthy Foods Available (Max Score 14)	6 - 14	64.7
Standards for Limiting Distribution of Less Healthy Foods (Max Score 7)	0 - 6	17.6
Standards for Providing Nutrition Education Information (Max Score 4)	0 - 4	52.9
<b>Total from Combined Set of Standards (Max Score 25)</b>	<b>8 - 20</b>	<b>23.5</b>

**Other Results**

- 73.1% of food banks distributed fresh produce every day
- 48.1% of food banks provided nutrition education to their clients
- 25.9% of food banks had a policy limiting the amount of soda distributed
- 7.4% of food banks had a healthy food policy regulating the amount of less healthy food distributed

## Summary

- Most food banks (73.1%) offered fresh produce daily and the majority provided good or mixed quality produce
- The most commonly distributed vegetables were potatoes, onions, and lettuce
- While many food banks distributed healthy foods, such as beans, whole grain cereal, and canned tuna, on a daily basis, many also distributed empty calories in the form of sweetened beverages, chips, cookies, and candy
- Forty-eight percent of food banks provided nutrition education to their clients
- Scores showed 64.7 % of food banks met the standard for making healthy foods available and 62.8 % met the standard for providing nutrition education, but only 17.8 % met the standard for limiting the distribution of less healthy foods
- Only 23.5 % of food banks met the combined standard for providing healthy food and nutrition education

## Conclusions

- In order to improve their scores, food banks could implement policies restricting the amount of less healthy food they distribute
- Banks could ask donors to aid in maintaining the health of families experiencing food insecurity by only contributing nutrient dense foods
- Food banks could build on their success in providing healthy foods by increasing their distribution of brown rice, a good source of whole grains, and soy milk, a good source of nutrients for populations with high prevalence rates of lactose intolerance

## Next Steps

- Share data with state-wide association of food banks
- Encourage more nutrition education in food banks and their member agencies through *Network* funding with health departments and other contracts
- Develop guides for food drives and other food donation requests that highlight healthy foods and limit less than healthy foods
- Local health departments survey again after 3 years

This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health, Network for a Healthy California, with funding from the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. In California, food stamps provide assistance to low-income households, and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For food stamp information, call 877-847-3663. For important nutrition information visit <http://www.cdph.ca.gov>.

