



*Together, we feed our community.*

## Meeting Essential Needs with Dignity (MEND) is a hunger relief network based in Essex County, NJ.

Our mission is to strengthen the health of our community by **increasing access to fresh and healthy food**. We envision a community in which everyone has access to nutritious food and the ability to achieve their optimal health.



MEND continually seeks feedback from pantry leaders and community partners, prioritizes the needs of patrons, and focuses on sourcing **high-quality, culturally relevant, fresh, and healthy food**, with the goal of transforming hunger relief from the traditional "emergency food" model to one that is focused on dignity and respect.

## Pantry Partnerships

MEND regularly convenes leaders from **23 food pantries** in *Bloomfield, East Orange, Irvington, Maplewood, Montclair, Newark, Orange, South Orange, and West Orange, NJ*. Working in partnership, we source supplemental fresh and healthy food, connect resources, and raise funds to increase the pantries' capacity.



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# MEND's Support for Its Network



## MEND on the Move

Launched in 2022 as a year-round program, MEND's **mobile markets** and **home deliveries** are designed collaboratively with **32** community partners to reduce barriers to accessing nutritious food. **96%** of partners report the program is **reducing food insecurity in their communities**.

"The fresh produce they provide makes a big difference in my meals and my health."

- Elmwood Presbyterian Church Pantry Patron

## Beyond Food

In 2024, MEND launched the **Food & Health Equity Coalition of Essex County (FHEC)** to address the root causes of hunger through collaboration. Growing to 243 members and 136 organizations, the Coalition deepened its work in 2025 through working groups focused on child nutrition, maternal health, older adults, advocacy, agriculture, and more.



MEND's **Community Resource Specialist** brings access to benefits directly to the community. Funded through the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, she works across food pantries, schools, health fairs, and partner sites, **helping neighbors navigate eligibility, apply for SNAP, and connect to additional resources**, including Community Health Workers.



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