ZERO DEGREES OF SEPARATION
THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

Economic Stability  
Health & Healthcare

Neighborhood & Environment  
Social & Community Context

Education
What’s Food Got To Do With It? Food Insecurity and Mental Health

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Agenda

‣ Understand the definition of hunger and food (in)security, including the differences.
‣ Learn the prevalence and measurement of food insecurity in the United States.
‣ Understand and begin to think critically about how their clients are impacted by food insecurity and hunger.
‣ Identify some ways to attend to food insecurity in their setting.
‣ Learn about “Family and Food Matters”, a current research study that focuses on increasing family strengthening and decreasing food insecurity.
“To many people hunger means not just symptoms that can be diagnosed by a physician, it bespeaks the existence of a social, not a medical problem.”

U.S. President, Task Force on Food Assistance, p. 36
Food Security-

“When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.”

World Health Organization
FOOD INSECURITY:
The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

USA National Research Council
The Relationship between Hunger and Food Insecurity

- Hunger has been defined as the discomfort, weakness, illness or pain caused by a lack of food.

- Although the United States has been called the “land of plenty,” about one in thirty U.S. households—about 4 million—reported experiencing hunger during 2014 because they could not afford enough food.

- Almost one in seven U.S. households—over 17 million—suffer from food insecurity, a condition that includes:
  - Hunger, in more extreme cases;
  - Having to skip meals;
  - Having to compromise on nutrition;
  - Relying on emergency food sources such as food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens.

- The presence of hunger and food insecurity in the United States raises questions of how to measure them, why they prevail, how they should be addressed and who should be responsible for doing so.
The History of Food Insecurity
Overview: Food security

- U.S. policymakers have expanded their attention from a narrow focus on hunger to a broader lens that examines food security—a concept that includes the conditions that lead to hunger.

- Food security is a measure of having consistent access to safe, adequate and nutritious food for an active and healthy life.

- For a household to be considered food secure, its members must be able to acquire this food without resorting to emergency food programs, scavenging, stealing and other coping strategies.

- If a household does not meet these conditions for any part of the year, or if these conditions are uncertain, it is considered food insecure.

- Food insecure households include those that are:
  - Unable to afford balanced meals;
  - Worried their food will run out before they have money to buy more;
  - Forced to skip meals because they can’t afford enough food;
  - In more severe cases—hungry because they can’t afford enough food.
What it means to be food insecure

**Low food insecurity**
Household food insecure without hunger

Household members are concerned about the foods they can afford, so they adjust household food management, including purchasing less expensive (usually lower-nutrient) foods. Children are largely unaffected.

**Medium food insecurity**
Household food insecure with adult hunger

Adults in the household often reduce the quantity of their food intake, causing them to repeatedly experience hunger. Children are not generally hungry because adults shield them from the effects of food insecurity, but their diets tend to be extremely poor in nutrients.

**Severe food insecurity**
Household food insecure with child hunger

In addition to the hunger that caretakers experience, they are forced to reduce household children's food intake to such an extent that the children experience hunger. Lack of nutrition is severe.
The Four Main Components of Food Security

1. **AVAILABILITY**
   There is a reliable and consistent source of quality food.

2. **ACCESS**
   People have sufficient resources to produce and/or purchase food.

3. **UTILIZATION**
   People have the knowledge and basic sanitary conditions to choose, prepare, and distribute food in a way that results in good nutrition.

4. **STABILITY**
   People’s ability to access and utilize food that remains stable and sustained over time.
Food production per capita index 1961-2005
Food Insecurity is a Global Issue

- In the years 2011-2013, an estimated **842 million people** were suffering from chronic hunger
Food Insecurity is a National Issue

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (2014), in 2013:

- Approximately 14 percent of households (17.5 million households) were food insecure and half experienced very low food security.
- Households with children reported food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than those without children, 19.5 percent compared to 11.9 percent.
- Food insecurity was especially high within households with children headed by single women (34.4 percent) or single men (23.1 percent), Black non-Hispanic households (26.1 percent) and Hispanic households (23.7 percent).
- Research has shown that food insecurity and health outcomes are directly correlated (Leung, Epel, Willet, Rimm, & Laraia, 2015; Framm Ritchie, Rosen, & Frongillo, 2015).
Highest Prevalence of Household Food Insecurity

- African Americans
- Latinos
- Households with children < 6 years of age
- Households headed by single mothers
1 in 4 children experiences food insecurity or hunger.

Share Our Strength® is a national organization that works hard to make sure no kid in America grows up hungry. They weave together a net of community groups, activists and food programs to catch children facing hunger and surround them with nutritious food where they live, learn and play.

http://strength.org/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City residents receiving food stamps</td>
<td>1.3M</td>
<td>1.8M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City households receiving food stamps</td>
<td>732,798</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City residents using food pantries or soup kitchens</td>
<td>1.2M</td>
<td>1.4M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens can face an hour-long wait at Harlem Food Bank.
http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2014/overall/New%20York
Food Deserts

23.5 million people live in urban neighborhoods and rural towns with limited access to fresh, affordable, healthy food, according to the USDA.

2.1 million households do not own a vehicle and live more than 1 mile from the nearest grocery store.

People of the poorest socioeconomic status have 2.5 times the exposure to fast food restaurants compared to those living in the wealthiest areas.

Low income zip codes have 30% more convenience stores, which tend to lack healthy items, than middle-income zipcodes.

150-200 jobs can be created by a large retail grocery market.
Measuring Food Insecurity

- Household Food Security Scale (HFSS) - measures national food security status annually.
- Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) – measures the degree of food access in the household in previous month.
- Household Dietary Diversity Scale (HDDS) - measures the number of different food groups consumed over a specific time period (24hrs/48hrs/7days).
- Household Hunger Scale (HHS) - measures the experience of household food insecurity.
- Coping Strategies Index (CSI) - assesses household coping behaviors (i.e. "What do you do when you do not have enough food, and do not have enough money to buy food?")
- Food insecurity is measured in the United States by questions in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.
# Measuring Food Insecurity Nationally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FSQ item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HH1. Enough food in house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH2. Worry about food running out before I get money for more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH3. Food did not last and did not have money to get more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH4. Could not afford to eat balanced meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD1. Cut size of meals or skip meals because not enough money for food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD2. Eat less because not enough money for food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD3. Ever hungry but didn’t eat because not enough money for food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD4. Lost weight because not enough food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD5. Not eat for a day because no money for food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 2-Item Screen to Identify Families at Risk for Food Insecurity!

1) “Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more”

2) “Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more.”

Why is it Important to Us?
The Impact on Health

Food Insecurity and the Impact on Health

According to the study Hunger in America 2014, which surveyed 60,000 Feeding America clients and 32,000 partner agencies:

- More than 48 million Americans lived in food insecure households in 2014.
- 24% of households had at least one member in poor health.
- 66% of households had to choose between food and medical care.
- 33% had a household member with diabetes.
- 58% had a household member with high blood pressure.
Food Insecurity is associated with:

- Higher consumption of foods rich in fat and sugar in children
- Decreased consumption of vegetables in children
- Decreased physical activity in children
- Decreased height in children
- Adverse non-cognitive development and social skills
- Depression

(Ramsey, Gikes, Turrell, & Gallegos, 2011; Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Bernal, Frongillo, Herrera, & Rivera, 2014; Howard, 2010; Huang, Oshima, & Kim, 2010; Jyoti, Frongillo, & Jones, 2005; Slopen, Fitzmaurice, Williams, & Gilman, 2010)
Optimal physiological, cognitive, and emotional development and function in children and adults requires access to food of adequate quantity and quality at all stages of the lifespan.
Food Insecurity Influences Health, Mental Health and Development
Impact on Infants

- Children growing up in food-insecure families are vulnerable to poor health and stunted development from the earliest stages of life.
- Pregnant women who experience food insecurity are more likely to experience birth complications than women who are food secure.
- Inadequate access to food during pregnancy has been shown to increase the risk for low birth weight in babies.
- Folic acid and iron deficiency during pregnancy
  - Prematurity
  - Intrauterine growth restriction
- Impact on breast-feeding: initiation, duration

Impact on Children

- Maternal depression highly correlated with food insecurity as well as with adverse effects on their children’s development
  - reduced ability to provide needed care
  - impaired mother-child interaction and attachment
  - child neglect and abuse
Good nutrition, particularly in the first three years of life, is important for establishing a good foundation that has implications for a child’s future physical and mental health, academic achievement, and economic productivity. Unfortunately, food insecurity is an obstacle that threatens that critical foundation.

Although food insecurity is harmful to any individual, it can be particularly devastating among children due to their increased vulnerability and the potential for long-term consequences.

Twenty percent or more of the child population in 30 states and D.C. lived in food-insecure households in 2014, according to the most recent data available.

Mississippi (27%) and New Mexico (27%) had the highest rates of children in households without consistent access to food.

Proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children. While almost all (94%) of client households with school-aged children (ages 5-18) report participating in the National School Lunch Program, only 46 percent report participating in the School Breakfast Program.

Nearly one in four (24%) client households with children report participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The majority (53%) of client households that are unstably housed (such as a shelter) have one or more children that are five years old or younger.
Impact on Children

- More likely to have their health rated by caregivers as fair/poor vs excellent/good
  - Higher odds of fair/poor health at increasingly higher levels of severity of food insecurity
  - 140% greater odds of having iron deficiency anemia
- "Developmental risk" rating by caregivers
  - Noted in 4-36 mo old food insecure children even after controlling for maternal depression and education levels
One in six school children skip breakfast 'leaving them tired and disruptive in class'
Impact on Children

- Household food insecurity has insidious effects on the health and development of young children, including increased hospitalizations, poor health, iron deficiency, developmental risk and behavior problems, primarily aggression, anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorder (Cook & Frank, 2008; Whitaker, Phillips, & Orzol, 2006).

- These concerns early in life increase children’s risk of poor school readiness, poor school performance and subsequent health disparities and poverty. Research among school-age children has found associations between household food insecurity and low scores on measures of health, behavioral functioning and academic performance (Yoo, & Slack, & Holl, 2009).

- Findings related to the association between household food insecurity and children’s growth have been controversial, with some studies showing overweight/obesity and others showing underweight (Larson & Story, 2011).

- The lack of clear associations between food insecurity and children’s growth means that it is often invisible. Without asking specifically about food insecurity, providers are unlikely to recognize children and families who are food insecure.
Impact on Children/School

- Lower math scores
- More likely to have repeated a grade
- Noted by teachers to have more difficulty getting along with peers
- More likely to have seen a psychologist
Impact on Adolescents

Significantly more likely to have had:

- Dysthymia
- Thoughts of death
- A desire to die
- A suicide attempt
Impaired Daily Functioning

- Kids <12 categorized as hungry or at risk of hunger were twice as likely as non-hungry kids to be reported as having impaired functioning by either a parent or the child him/herself.

- Teachers were more likely to note:
  - Hyperactivity
  - Absenteeism
  - Tardiness
Impact on Adults

- Poor quality of diet
  - Fewer fruits, vegetables, and dairy products
  - Vitamin and mineral deficiencies
- Increased risk of obesity/overweight esp in women
Impact on Adult mental health

- Depression
  - A study among homebound older adults of how unmet needs influence depressive symptoms showed that food insecurity (more than housing or health) was the most salient influence on depressive symptoms.
Food Insecurity and Adult Employment

Which came first?

- Poor mental health is associated with keeping families food insecure by limiting employment
- Food insecurity and severe hunger are also associated with mental health symptoms
Impact on Seniors

- More than 5 million senior citizens age 60 and older face hunger. Seniors face a number of unique medical and mobility challenges that put them at a greater risk of hunger. After a lifetime of hard work, many find themselves struggling with health issues on fixed incomes. Many of these individuals are forced to choose between paying for groceries and buying medicine.

- 63 percent of client households with seniors report making choices between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care.

- More than 33 percent of client households have at least one member who is age 60 or older.

- Two out of five (41%) client households with an adult age 50 and older have at least one member with diabetes, and more than two-thirds (70%) of client households with an older adult have at least one member who has high blood pressure. These rates increase with age. However, among older adult clients, those who are younger report significant health challenges. Fifty-nine percent of those ages 50 to 64 described their own health as fair or poor, a higher rate than that of seniors ages 65 to 74 (53 percent) and age 75 and older (51 percent).
Impact on Seniors

- Food insecure seniors are at increased risk for chronic health and mental health conditions, even when controlling for other factors such as income:
  - 60 percent more likely to experience depression
  - 53 percent more likely to report a heart attack
  - 52 percent more likely to develop asthma
  - 40 percent more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure

- The number of food insecure seniors is projected to increase by 50% when the youngest of the Baby Boom Generation reaches age 60 in 2025.

- For seniors, protecting oneself from food insecurity and hunger can be more difficult than for the general population.
  - For example, a study that focused on the experience of food insecurity among the elderly population found that food insecure seniors sometimes had enough money to purchase food but did not have the resources to access or prepare food due to lack of transportation, functional limitations/health problems.

- Elderly households are much less likely to receive help through the SNAP than non-elderly households.

- The health and medical needs of seniors can become compromised when there is not enough food to eat.
  - A study which examined the health and nutritional status of seniors found that food insecure seniors had significantly lower intakes of vital nutrients in their diets when compared to their food secure counterparts. In addition, food insecure seniors were twice as likely to report fair/poor health status and had higher nutritional risk.

Intolerable Conclusion

- Food insecurity even at the least severe household levels is a highly prevalent risk to the growth, health, cognitive, and behavioral potential of America’s poor and near-poor kids.
Impact: LET’S CHAT

Have you witnessed or experienced any of these effects with the people you are working with or have worked with in the past?
Poverty Statistics

- In 2015, 14.5 million or approximately 20 percent of children in the U.S. lived in poverty.

- Participation in Federal Nutrition Programs
  - In fiscal year 2014, more than 20 million or 44 percent of all SNAP participants were children under age 18.
  - During the 2014 federal fiscal year, 21.7 million low-income children received free or reduced-price meals daily through the National School Lunch Program.
Hunger and poverty often go hand in hand, but poverty is not the ultimate determinant of food insecurity. People living above the poverty line are often at risk of hunger as well. Research demonstrates that unemployment, rather than poverty, is a better predictor of food insecurity among people living in the United States.
Weight Gain
Stress
Poverty
Chronic Disease
Food Insecurity
Obesity
Weight Gain
For one year Tammy, Connor and Dakota got the food they needed thanks to the programs championed by the No Kid Hungry campaign.
Interventions and Possible Solutions
Let’s Chat!

‣ What do you currently do to intervene or attend to this issue of hunger and food insecurity in your organization?
Potential Interventions or Solutions

- Assessment to understand need - Brief 2 item questionnaire
- Access to Federal programs - Make sure people at risk for Food Insecurity and Hunger are connected to (if applicable):
  - SNAP
  - WIC
  - Summer Food Program
  - Backpack Program
  - School lunch and breakfast programs
- Programs that attend to the whole person
- Connecting those in need directly to food
  - Set up a food pantry in your program
  - Get involved for policy change
What Else is Going On?

• Food insecurity exists in relation to multiple societal, contextual, individual and socioeconomic factors.
• There is a need to examine the other challenges of families that are food insecure in order to effectively serve them.
• In times of budget cuts and austerity, programs such as SNAP serve an important role in meeting the needs of families in poverty, especially female-headed households facing food insecurity.
• The deleterious effects of food insecurity may be vast and deeper than we realize.
• Therefore, investigating the relationship between caregiver stress, family functioning, and food may be of utmost importance in the future.
The Relationship Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Food Insecurity for Caregivers of Young Children
Food and Family Matters Research!

- The project employed mixed-methods research to explore the following among food insecure families:
  - Experience with SNAP, emergency food services, informal sources of support; Caregivers’ participation and experience in the SNAP program.
  - Buying, cooking, and eating patterns in families
  - Family life, food insecurity, and sources of economic service and social support
Are families who visit food pantries experiencing other challenges?

- Recruited through convenience sampling across six food pantries in upstate and downstate NY
- Eligibility criteria included being the primary caregiver of at least 1 child between 4 and 12 years
- Collected data at the food pantry (Summer 2014 through Winter 2015)
- Questionnaire (e.g., food insecurity, childhood adverse experiences for child, adverse childhood experiences of caregiver) and Interview
- Provided a resource manual with hotline numbers, local information (e.g., food pantries), and adult and child programs (e.g., vocational and after-school)
Findings: A Web of Challenges

- Unemployment
- Struggling to get services
- Low wage
- Absence of affordable grocery stores
- Cost of food
- Lack of Transportation
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Food Insecurity
- Housing
- Unexpected expenses
- Lack of Social Support
Applied Implications

- Recommendations for Stakeholders at all levels
  - Families
  - Service providers
  - Policy makers

- Development of a comprehensive Curriculum
  - Addresses food insecurity
  - Helps to strengthen families
Family and Food Matters!

The goals of this curricula include:

1. Strengthen families in addressing the stresses and strains associated with poverty and food insecurity which can simultaneously challenge family routines and protective family functioning.

2. Promote overall access to and intake of nutrition dense foods for families rearing pre and early adolescents

3. Reduce potential youth behavioral health challenges and engagement in risk taking behaviors.

- Expertise around curricula development, food insecurity, and family functioning and incorporate the suggestions from the focus group
- Created a curriculum to pilot at a food pantry that provides healthy and affordable ways to cook while also strengthening families in addressing the stresses and strains associated with poverty and food insecurity
Community Food Security

- It’s a systems approach
- Recognizing relationships between farmers, distributors, retailers, community residents, researchers, non-profits, policymakers and other participants in the food system. (rather than responding to food insecurity with isolated interventions)
- Food policy councils bring together representatives from different groups to examine the food system and develop recommendations to improve it.
- Many community food security projects help to build relationships between farmers and consumers. These projects can provide community members with better access to fruits and vegetables, while providing greater transparency into how their food is produced, processed and distributed.
- To this end, the Community Food Security movement works to establish:
  - Community gardens;
  - Farmers markets;
  - Community supported agriculture (CSA) programs;
  - Urban farms.
“Why should there be hunger and privation in any land, in any city, at any table when man has the resources and the scientific know-how to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life?”

Martin Luther King, Jr. 1964
References

- Roth D. FOOD STAMPS: 1932 –1977: From Provisional and Pilot Programs to Permanent Policy. USDA ERS
References


References


References


- www.nokidhungry.org
- www.feedingamerica.org
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Questions?

Q & A
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