

Food Insecurity and Mental Health: A Guide!

What is Food Security and Why is it Important to Consider?

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

World Health Organization

17.6 million households are food insecure

Households with children are more food insecure! Especially headed by single women

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 Pillars of Food Insecurity

1. AVAILABILITY

There is a reliable and consistent source of quality food.

2. ACCESS

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

4. STABILITY

People's ability to access and utilize food that remains stable and sustained over time.

3. UTILIZATION

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



The Four Main Components of Food Security. (n.d.). Retrieved February 08, 2017, from <http://www.counterpart.org/>

One in six school children skip breakfast
'leaving them tired and disruptive in class'

BREAKFAST NEWS AGENCY

The Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Mental Health

Children who experience food insecurity have increased hospitalizations, poor health, developmental risk and behavior problems, primarily aggression, anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorder.

Food insecurity in **Adolescents** has been linked to dysthymia, thoughts of death, a desire to die, and suicide attempts.

Adults who experience food insecurity also experience depression. Mothers of children who reported severe hunger were more likely to have a lifetime diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder or substance abuse, and anxiety

Food insecure **Seniors** are at increased risk for depression.

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The 2 Item Screen:

- 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."

Hager, E. R., Quigg, A. M., Black, M. M., Coleman, S. M., Heeren, T., Rose-Jacobs, R., & Cutts, D. B. (2010).

Other Questions:

- *Do you struggle with putting enough food on the table?
- *What role do you think this struggle plays in your current challenges?
- *Are you connected to any emergency food programs?
- *What can I do to help support you in this struggle?

Possible Interventions or Solutions

- **Assessment to understand need: Brief 2 item screen (Hager et. al., 2010)**
- **Access to Federal programs- Make sure people at risk for Food Insecurity and Hunger are connected to (if applicable):**
SNAP <http://www.ny.gov/services/apply-snap>
WIC <https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/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**

Instill Hope!

Hunger includes a lack of food and a lack of justice!

Give those you serve hope that they have support and can get what they need!

Helpful Resources

Feeding America: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/>

No Kid Hungry: <https://www.nokidhungry.org/>

Food Research and Action Center: <http://frac.org/>

Food Bank Association of New York State: <http://feedingnys.org/>

Find your Regional Food Bank in New York State:

https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/hpnap/regional_foodbank_map.htm

Food Pantries in New York State: http://www.foodpantries.org/st/new_york

Hunger Free America: <http://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/>

New York Food Banks and other assistance:

http://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/new_york_food_banks.html

Hunger Action Network of New York State: <http://www.hungeractionnys.org/how-to-get-food-help/>

New York Emergency Food Programs:

<http://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/foodbanks/NYfoodbanks.html>

How to Start Your Own Backpack Program:

<http://www.hungerfreecommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/HFC-Toolkit-for-starting-a-BackPack-Food-Program.pdf>