Food Insecurity and Health: Strategies to Address Community Needs

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1 in 10 US Households Food Insecure in 2021

U.S. households by food security status, 2021

- Food-secure households: **89.8%**
- Food-insecure households: **10.2%**
  - Households with low food security: **6.4%**
  - Households with very low food security: **3.8%**

Disparities in Food Insecurity Rates by Race, 2020

Food Security

Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Nutrition Security

WHAT IS NUTRITION SECURITY?
Consistent access to nutritious foods that promote optimal health and well-being for all Americans, throughout all stages of life.

Food Security + Diet Quality + Equity

HOW DOES NUTRITION SECURITY BUILD ON FOOD SECURITY?
Food security is having enough calories. Nutrition security is having the right calories.

Source: US Department of Agriculture
Dietary Divide ➔
Health Inequities in the US

High Rates of Food Insecurity
- 1 in 10 US households

Lack of Access to Nutritious Food
- Geographic Access

Unhealthy Intake
- Healthy foods as luxury items

Chronic Disease
- Poor diet is the #1 cause of death in US

Health Care Costs
- Over $50 Billion dollars*

Food Insecure Americans Have Higher Health Care Costs

$77.5 billion additional health care expenditures annually

Bidirectional relationship between food insecurity and poor health

- Food insecurity
- Poor health (Development/worsening chronic conditions)
- ↑ Healthcare expenditures
- ↓ Household income/competing demands (e.g. choosing between medical care and food)

Diabetes, congestive heart failure, depression, hypertension, pregnancy complications, ...

Social Determinants of Health as the Root Cause of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Including Severe Negative Outcomes from Covid-19.

Social Determinants of Health
- Racial and ethnic discrimination;
- Access to healthy food;
- Access to health care;
- Location and physical environment;
- Socioeconomic status;
- Education;
- Social and community context.

Obesity

Severe Outcomes from Covid-19

Chronic Diseases
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Pulmonary dysfunction

Is Re-Alignment Between Health Care & “Social Care” Needed in the US?

Figure 1. Health and Social Care Spending as a Percentage of GDP
“Meeting Individual Social Needs Falls Short Of Addressing Social Determinants Of Health,” Health Affairs Blog, January 16, 2019. DOI: 10.1377/hblog20190115.234942
Prescribing healthy food in Medicare/Medicaid is cost effective, could improve health outcomes

New study finds that health insurance coverage for healthy food could improve health, reduce healthcare costs, and be highly cost-effective after five years.

Medicare/Medicaid: Healthy food prescriptions

- Insurance covers 30% of cost of eligible food
- $100 billion less in healthcare utilization over model population’s lifetime
- Cost-effective after 5 years
  - Less diabetes: 120 thousand cases prevented or postponed
  - Less cardiovascular disease: 3.28 million cases prevented or postponed
  - As or more cost-effective than many currently covered medical treatments

For more information, see “Cost-effectiveness of financial incentives for improving diet through Medicare and Medicaid: A microsimulation study” by Lee et al. (2019). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002761

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Thank You!