The Evolution of Food Insecurity & Its Impact on Communities

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Roadmap

• Background on food insecurity
  – How food insecurity impacts individuals
  – Trends
  – Who is most impacted and how that is related to COVID-19

• How COVID-19 has changed how we view
  – Food access and Food assistance programs

• Short- and long-term strategies on reducing food insecurity
Food Insecurity

• Lack of consistent, reliable access to food
Food Insecurity

• Academic & Behavioral Outcomes for Children & Adolescents
  – Greater absenteeism
  – Attention & behavioral problems
  – Poor academic achievement and dropping out of school

• Poor Health Outcomes for Adults
  – Depression, anxiety, obesity, and diabetes
Food Insecurity

• Pre-COVID-19 estimates (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2019)
  – 11% of households without children
  – 14% of households with children
Food Insecurity

• Pre-COVID-19 estimates (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2019)
  – 11% of households without children
  – 14% of households with children

• COVID-19 estimates
  – 20% of households with children (Brookings’ The Hamilton Project, May 2020)
  – 38% of individuals (regardless of household composition) (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020)
Trends in food insecurity in U.S. households with children, 1998-2018

Increase in SNAP benefits

Food Insecurity

• Why is there food insecurity in a country as wealthy as the US?
  – Income inequalities
Who is most impacted?

- Working poor families

- Families that live pay check to pay check
  - “Make too much money” and not eligible for public program participation
  - Difficulties making ends meet
  - Financial managerial strategies: Stagger paying bills
Trends in food insecurity by race and ethnicity, 2001-18

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How COVID-19 has Changed Food Access

• At first there were distribution challenges related to hoarding, resulting in bare food displays
• This was temporary
• Individuals that had resources to access food continued to so during this time
How COVID-19 has Changed Food Access

• More meals are being prepared and consumed at home compared to eating out

• Spending more on particular items because generic is not always available

• Online grocery shopping:
  – Grocery delivery services
  – Curbside grocery pick-up services
How COVID-19 has Changed Food Assistance Programs

• WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, & Children)
  – Additional funding has been allocated to increase program participation (WIC and School Programs)
  – Restructure of programs so that children can have access to food (School Programs)
  – Requirements related to in-person re-enrollment have been suspended (WIC)
  – Time limits associated with work requirements have been suspended (SNAP)

• School Breakfast Program & National School Lunch Program

• SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
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Several Proposals Being Considered to Reduce Food Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  – Allow restaurants to accept SNAP benefits
  – Increase the minimum SNAP benefit from $16 to $30
  – Increase SNAP maximum benefit by 15%
    • *Stimulate economic activity, increase access to food, & disaster/illness preparation*
  – Suspend all SNAP administrative rules that would terminate or cut benefits
Strategies to Reduce Food Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Allow WIC and SNAP recipients to use their benefits when engaging in online grocery shopping
  – Additional Challenges: Delivery & service fees

• Allow benefits to be used towards cleaning supplies or PPE purchases
Further Strategies to Reduce Food Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Gas or transportation voucher

• Increase allotments and include a 3-6 year grace period

• January 2020 proposals should not occur
  – To make it harder for families to qualify for SNAP
  – To make NSLP less healthy
Long-term Strategy to Reduce Food Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Holistic approach to reducing food insecurity
  – Food insecurity is not just about food
  – Addressing social determinants is key
    • Difficulties accessing food
    • Difficulties paying utilities
    • Effective strategy to address both is needed