Barriers to Food Insecurity

Krystal Amaral, Mary Awad, George Ciociolo, Danielle Iskander, Johnny Jarmagin, Amanda Karampatsos, Monica Mikael, Philip Picard-Fraser, Rachel Silverman, Evan Zhang | Dr. Brodowski MD, MPH | UMass Medical School

Background

What is food insecurity?  
“A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food”

Low food security
“Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little/no indication of reduced food intake”

Very low food security
“Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake”

Who is food insecure?  
• 1 in 10 people in Eastern MA is food insecure  
• 4.4% of Eastern MA has very low food security  
• 1 in 7 children is food insecure

Who is food insecure?  
• 140,000 Eastern MA residents eat from GBFB each month  
• GBFB serves 190 cities / towns in Eastern MA  
• 57.7M lbs distributed annually  
• 48.1M meals annually  
• 82% of meals met the highest nutrition standards

Methods

Students from Harvard School of Public Health went into the community to distribute surveys as part of a quality improvement project to:  
(1) GBFB food distribution sites  
(2) Individuals receiving food assistance (clients)

Goal: Assess the barriers that limit the distribution of food from the GBFB and its agencies to those in need. We aim to use these barriers to compile a programmatic tool to assess food insecurity.

Barriers: GBFB Distribution Sites

50% of pantries:  
• Social stigma  
• Lack of physical access to transportation

25% of pantries:  
• Elderly  
• General lack of awareness of services  
• Lack of translators at pantry  
• Lack of financial access to transportation

12.5% of pantries:  
• Disability  
• Lack of knowledge of eligibility requirements  
• Lack of translated notices/flyers  
• Fear of illegal immigration status  
• Housebound  
• Cultural stigma

How does the GBFB distribute food?  
3

Negative Health Outcomes  
4

Children with FI experience:  
• 2.3x higher odds of anemia  
• 1.4-2.6x higher risk for asthma  
• 30% increase in self-reported hypotension  
• 1.79x higher chance of depression  
• 2x higher chance of both decay  
• 2x risk of developing diabetes  
• 2.3x higher risk of suicide ideation

Pregnant women with FI experience:  
• 2.3x higher rates of mental health issues  
• 2.2x higher risk of iron deficiency

Adults with FI experience:  
• 3.3x higher risk for oral health problems  
• 1.4-2.6x higher risk for asthma  
• 30% increase in self-reported hypotension  
• 20% increase in self-reported HTN  
• 2x risk of developing diabetes  
• 2x risk of developing diabetes  
• 2.5x higher risk of iron deficiency

Barriers: Clients receiving food

Suggestions for Future Improvements

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