



# Introduction to Policy

Derek Polka - Policy & Research Manager

[dpolka@lafoodbank.org](mailto:dpolka@lafoodbank.org)

323-318-0730



# Agenda

- What is food insecurity?
- What is policy and advocacy and how does it address food insecurity?
- Who participates?
- When, where, and how to get involved?
- Questions and Answers

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# What is food insecurity?



# Food Insecurity

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.
- Different from **hunger** - someone can be food insecure without being hungry
- Lack of consistent access can be caused by:
  - Not enough financial resources to purchase healthy food
  - Not enough physical access to healthy food
    - Food deserts
    - Mobility issues
    - Time to purchase healthy foods



## Nutrition Security

Means consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being, prevent disease, and, if needed, treat disease, particularly among racial/ethnic minority populations, lower income populations, and rural and remote populations including Tribal communities and Insular areas. - [USDA](#)

## WHY DOES NUTRITION SECURITY MATTER?



Poor nutrition is a leading cause of illness in the United States.



**600,000**

Americans die each year due to diet-related diseases



Obesity



Diabetes



Heart Disease



Diet-related chronic diseases disproportionately impact historically underserved populations and hit hardest in communities with high food insecurity.

**— 3x —**

Black households experience food insecurity at more than triple the rate of white households.



Beyond health, this has negative impacts on other things.

**— 85% —**

of health care spending is related to diet-related chronic disease



Military Readiness



Healthcare Costs



Productivity

# A Conceptual Framework: Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease



Adapted: Seligman HK, Schillinger D. N Engl J Med. 2010;363:6-9.

Source: Feeding America

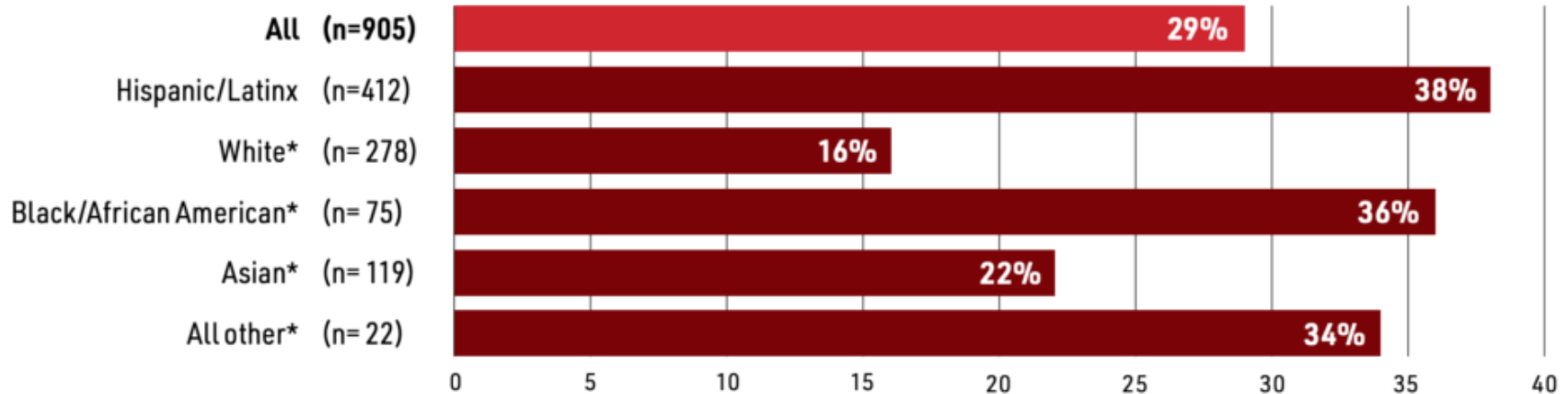
# 10.5% vs 28.9%

- In 2019, the [USDA found](#) that 13.7 million households nationwide were food insecure at some point that year.
    - Rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average for the following groups: households with incomes near or below the Federal poverty line, including those with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty line; all households with children and particularly households with children headed by single women or single men; women and men living alone; Black- and Hispanic-headed households; and households in principal cities and nonmetropolitan areas.
  - In 2020, [USC found](#) the food insecurity rate in LA to be close to 30%, totaling 955,466 households
-



## Figure 1. Food insecurity in April and May 2020 across racial and ethnic groups

29% of the L.A. County population were food insecure between April and May. This graph shows the percentage of the population within a given racial and ethnic group who experienced food insecurity during this time.



\* Following the U.S. Census Bureau's guidelines, ethnicity is categorized as Hispanic/Latinx or Non-Hispanic/Latinx. In this figure, the race categories White, Black/African American, Asian, and All other are Non-Hispanic/Latinx.

Source: University of Southern California's Understanding Coronavirus in America tracking survey

Source: "The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County: April to May 2020" - USC

**Food insecurity impacts many different households, but impacts different groups disproportionately.**

**COVID exacerbated the existing inequities between groups.**

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**What is policy & advocacy and how  
does it impact food insecurity?**



# What is policy?

- Policy is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions.
- Policy decisions are frequently reflected in resource allocations.
- According to the Institute of Medicine, policy development is an essential public health function.



# What is advocacy?

- Advocacy is the act of supporting, defending, or arguing for a specific cause or issue.
- Types of advocacy:
  - Self-advocacy - representing and defending **your** individual views and interests
  - Individual advocacy - advocating on behalf of **others** to advance their goals
  - Systems advocacy - the goal of systems advocacy is to change policy, rules, or laws on a particular issue that impacts a **general population**



# What does advocacy look like?

Anyone can participate in advocacy, and here are some common examples:

- Contact your member of Congress
- Attend a march or protest
- Organize a campaign in your community or on social media
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor for your local newspaper
- Start or sign a petition



# How does advocacy address food insecurity?

Advocacy can address food insecurity by fighting for policies and programs that can mobilize resources to reduce lack of access to healthy foods.

Existing programs (created through policies) include:

- Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or CalFresh
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food Program
- National School Lunch Program & School Breakfast Program (School Meals)

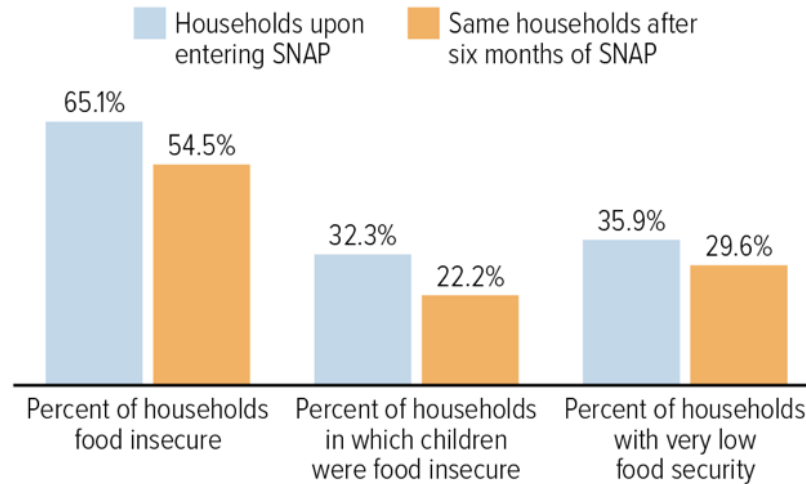
# SNAP reduces the overall prevalence of food insecurity by as much as 30%

SNAP is the primary source of nutrition assistance for many low-income people. In a typical month of 2017, SNAP helped about 42 million low-income Americans afford a nutritious diet.





## SNAP Helps Families Afford Adequate Food



Note: "Food insecure" = household lacks consistent access to nutritious food at some point during the year because of limited resources. "Households in which children were food insecure" = households in which both children and adults experience food insecurity during the year. "Very low food security" = one or more household members have to skip meals or otherwise eat less at some point during the year because they lack money.

Source: Agriculture Department, "Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security," August 2013. This chart shows the results of a study that looked at longitudinal data comparing SNAP households upon beginning to receive SNAP, and six months after SNAP receipt.

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**We have many policies and programs to address food insecurity.**

**However, persistent problems with access to these programs enables food insecurity to continue. Our advocacy work aims to reduce those access issues.**

**—**



## Examples of Access Issues & Solutions

### Problems:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients were not eligible for CalFresh despite being low-income
- Federal rules require time-limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) which would cut hundreds of thousands off of CalFresh

### Solutions:

- Californians 4 SSI advocated for years to include SSI recipients and achieved this through policy changes
- Advocates around the state rallied against the time-limits and were able to extend waivers that prevented the rule from being implemented due to higher than average unemployment throughout certain counties

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# Who participates?

**EVERYONE**

**!**

**—**



Hunger Action Day 2018 - Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
Counties



Jay, SSI Participant in LA - Hunger Action LA & CA4SSI

# Time's Up for SNAP's Time Limit

JULY 7, 2021, 10:09 AM



**Ed Bolen**

Senior Policy Analyst

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SHARE



A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [report](#) adds to the growing evidence that cutting people off the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) if they can't find at least 20 hours of work a week doesn't lead to them finding a job. By taking SNAP away, the time limit leaves people with fewer resources to buy food and puts them at risk of food insecurity, according to USDA, the federal agency that administers SNAP.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted weaknesses in our nation's supports for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Hardship in the United States [remains](#) well above pre-pandemic levels, and the economy has changed in significant and possibly permanent ways, especially for low-wage workers.

Rather than returning to the way things were, this can be an opportunity to make needed adjustments and improvements to government policies for low-income households. One policy ripe for reconsideration is SNAP's time limit for un- and underemployed workers who are not living with a child.

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities



OPINION

# The SNAP Rule Will Cause More Hunger Than We Can Handle

I run a food bank and I know no amount of charity will make up  
for this cruel policy.

Dec. 12, 2019

Source: [“The SNAP Rule Will Cause More Hunger Than We Can Handle”](#) - NY Times Opinion, Margarett Purvis, December 12, 2019



Source: [Hunger Solutions New York](#)





Source: CBS Los Angeles



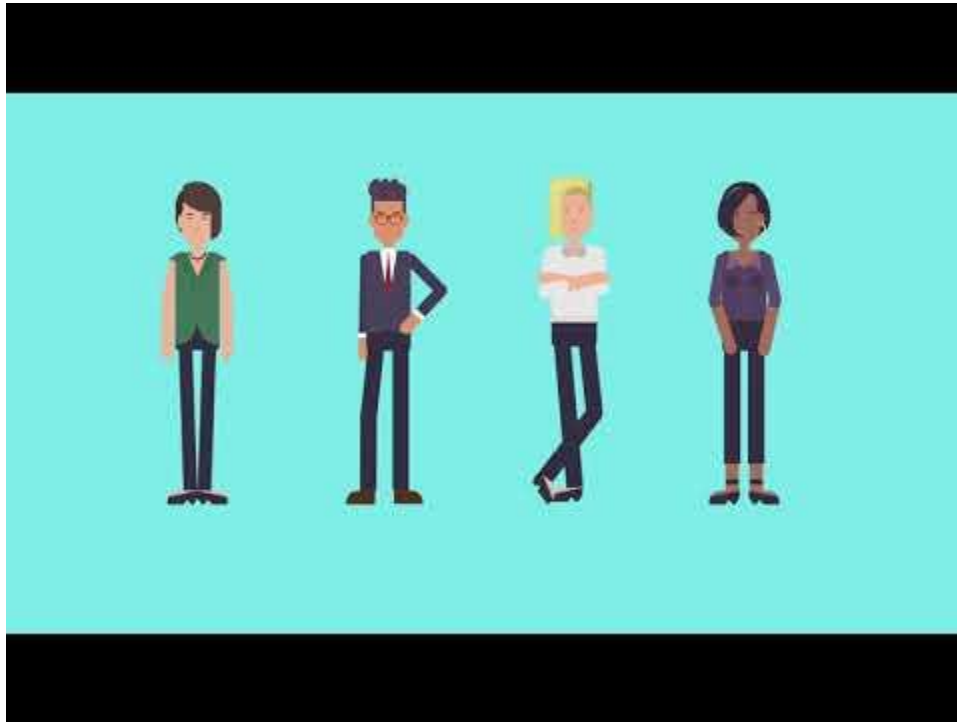
Five steps to becoming an advocate | Joseph R Campbell | TEDxAdelaide

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**When, where, and how to get  
involved?**

**Anytime, anywhere, and in  
whatever way you can!!!**

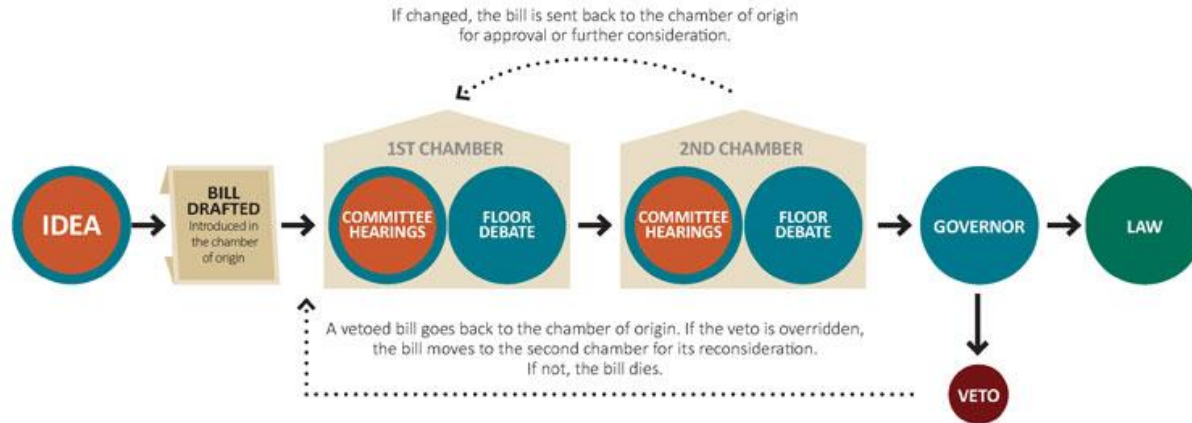
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Source: National Diaper Bank Network



# State Legislative Process

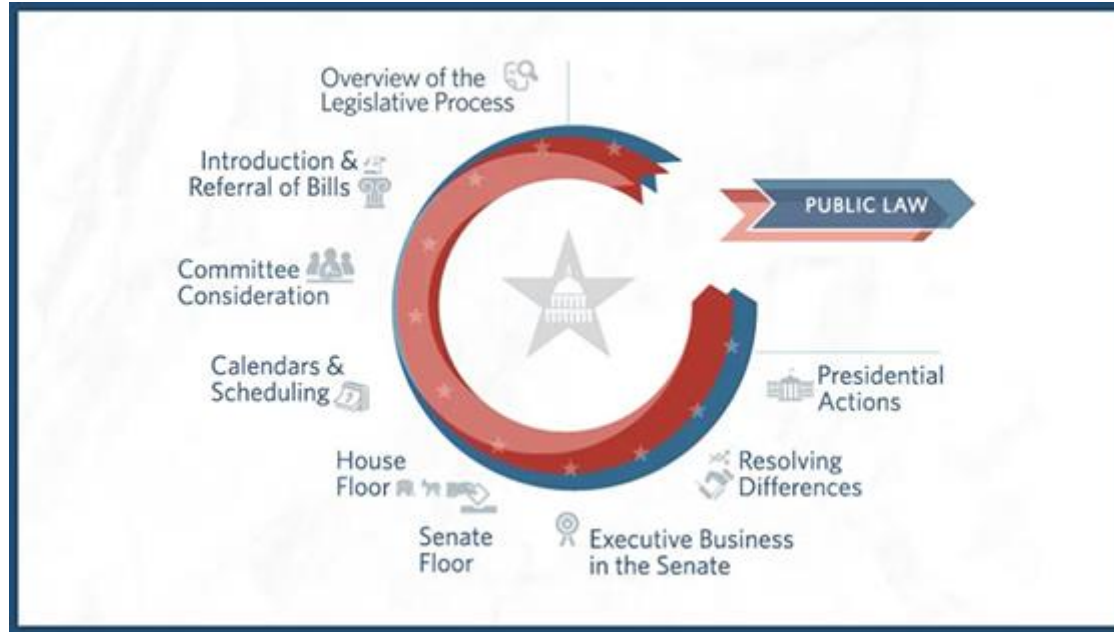


## Get Involved

The colors indicate how the public can affect legislation at different points in the legislative process above:

Ways to Contact Legislators	Legislature's website	Letters	Emails	Social media	Phone calls	Town halls	Face-to-face meeting
Ways to Participate	Learn the process	View livestream of hearing or floor session	Attend Committee hearing/floor session	Committee testimony	Contact your legislator		

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures



Source: [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procedures\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procedures_of_the_United_States_Congress)

# Advocating for a hunger-free America

Federal nutrition programs matter. A child who cannot rely on dinner at home is assured breakfast at school because of the [School Breakfast Program](#). A working mother who is struggling to make ends meet knows she can get help to feed her family through the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#).

But our federal programs are only as strong as the support they receive on Capitol Hill. Feeding America works every day to protect and expand these vital programs to make sure that no one in America goes hungry.



## Appropriations, Budget and Taxes ›

Feeding America advocates for funding in programs that help feed people facing hunger and federal tax policies that enhance nonprofit giving tax incentives.



## The Farm Bill ›

Feeding America works to ensure the Farm Bill - the largest piece of legislation impacting the nation's agriculture policy and nutrition program - protects funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), strengthens The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and enables vital food donations.



## The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act ›

Feeding America advocates for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act - a bill that provides federal funding for programs that help children most in need and ensures they get the nutrition to grow and learn.

Source: [Feeding America](#)



## In Conclusion: How?

- **Define** what you are passionate about and what you want to change
- **Educate** yourself and others about the subject
- **Participate** in or **create** campaigns:
  - Letters of support
  - Social media campaigns (hashtags)
  - Op-eds and letters to the editor
  - Video testimonials
  - In-person or virtual visits with key influencers such as legislators and the media
  - Create new data through research (surveys, interviews, etc.)
- **Stay involved!**

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Questions?

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**Derek Polka**

**Email: [dpolka@lafoodbank.org](mailto:dpolka@lafoodbank.org)**

**Work phone: 323-318-0730**