Introduction to Policy

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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
What is 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
POOR NUTRITION IS A LEADING CAUSE OF ILLNESS IN THE UNITED STATES.

600,000 Americans die each year due to diet-related diseases

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

Source: USDA
A Conceptual Framework: Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease

- **FOOD INSECURITY**
- **STRESS**
- **COPING STRATEGIES**
  - Dietary Quality
  - Eating Behaviors
  - Bandwidth
- **CHRONIC DISEASE**
- **HOUSEHOLD INCOME**
- **SPENDING TRADEOFFS**
- **HEALTH CARE EXPENDITURES**
- **EMPLOYABILITY**


Source: Feeding America
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.

10.5% vs 28.9%
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/Latino or Non-Hispanic/Latino. In this figure, the race categories White, Black/African American, Asian, and All other are Non-Hispanic/Latino.

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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Households upon entering SNAP</th>
<th>Same households after six months of SNAP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of households</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food insecure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of households</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>in which children were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food insecure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of households</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>with very low food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>security</td>
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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.
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
Who participates?
EVERYONE!
Jay, SSI Participant in LA - Hunger Action LA & CA4SSI
Time’s Up for SNAP’s Time Limit

JULY 7, 2021, 10:09 AM

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
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, Margarette Purvis, December 12, 2019
School Breakfast After the Bell in New York State

Source: Hunger Solutions New York
Source: School Meals for All
Free School Lunches for Every Public School Student in California

Source: CBS Los Angeles
When, where, and how to get involved?
Anytime, anywhere, and in whatever way you can!!!
Source: National Diaper Bank Network
State Legislative Process

If changed, the bill is sent back to the chamber of origin for approval or further consideration.

A vetoed bill goes back to the chamber of origin. If the veto is overridden, the bill moves to the second chamber for its reconsideration. If not, the bill dies.

Get Involved

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways to Contact Legislators</th>
<th>Legislature's website</th>
<th>Letters</th>
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<th>Social media</th>
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<th>Face-to-face meeting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ways to Participate</td>
<td>Learn the process</td>
<td>View livestream of hearing or floor session</td>
<td>Attend Committee hearing/floor session</td>
<td>Committee testimony</td>
<td>Contact your legislator</td>
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Source: National Conference of State Legislatures
Source: Congress.gov
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!**
Questions?
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