

# Identifying & Discussing Food Insecurity

Case managers have an opportunity to significantly impact the lives of their clients. This is especially true when it comes to food insecurity, where they can connect vulnerable individuals with much-needed nutrition—ultimately helping to drive positive health outcomes and lower the overall cost of care.

## Key Terms

**FOOD INSECURITY:** A lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life

**NUTRITION INSECURITY:** A lack of consistent access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy life

**FOOD DESERT:** Geographic areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthful foods

**FOOD SWAMP:** Geographic areas that are overwhelmed by low-quality food sources like fast food restaurants and convenience stores

## Food Insecurity & Chronic Conditions

Food insecurity is linked not only with worse diet quality but also with a higher probability of chronic conditions, including:

- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Kidney disease
- Cancer
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Obesity

While strategies for managing chronic conditions are typically multi-dimensional, the role of nutrition is critical—as diet is a modifiable risk factor for most chronic conditions that exist as single condition or in comorbid states.

Source: Ojo O. Nutrition and Chronic Conditions. Nutrients. 2019;11(2):459. Published 2019 Feb 22. doi:10.3390/nu11020459

## FACTS

### HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

**38.3 million Americans** lived in households that struggled against hunger in 2020.

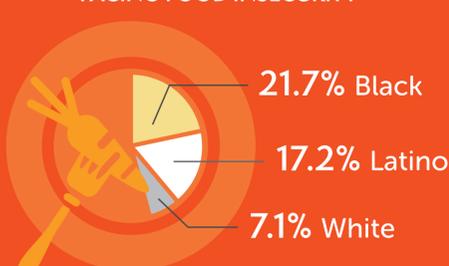


**10.5% of U.S. households** were food insecure at some time during 2020.



### RACE/ETHNICITY

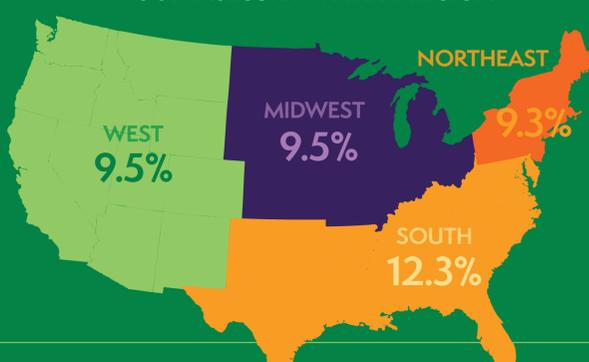
#### PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS FACING FOOD INSECURITY



Black and Latino households are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, with rates in 2020 triple and double the rate of White households.

### GEOGRAPHY

#### FOOD INSECURITY RATE BY REGION



Households in rural areas experienced deeper struggles with hunger compared to those in metro areas, with higher rates of food insecurity overall.

Rural areas  
**11.6%**

Metro areas  
**10.4%**

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Food Research & Action Center

## What You Can Do as a Case Manager

### 1 Screen For Food Insecurity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture annually collects data on food insecurity through its 18-question Household Food Security Survey Model (HFSSM). Screening is critical, especially among low-income populations, as case managers can connect vulnerable individuals with much-needed resources.

Below is a two-item food insecurity screen based on Questions 1 & 2 of the HFSSM that has been validated for use as a screening tool in the healthcare setting. Case managers can incorporate these into their dialogue with patients whom they feel may be food insecure or at risk for food insecurity.

I'm going to read you two statements that people have made about their food situation. For each statement, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true or never true for your household in the last 12 months.

**1** "We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more."

- often true
- sometimes true
- never true

**2** "The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more."

- often true
- sometimes true
- never true

**A response of "often true" or "sometimes true" to either question = positive screen for food insecurity.**

Source: [https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FA\\_Clinical-Training\\_2017.pdf](https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FA_Clinical-Training_2017.pdf)

### 2 Set The Stage For Successful Dialogue

- **Be private.** Conduct screenings in an environment that supports privacy and confidentiality.
- **Be empathetic.** Understand the hardship a person might be experiencing, and avoid language that may be perceived as judgmental or critical. At the onset, let the individual know you're asking everyone about their access to food since nutrition is essential for health.
- **Be informative.** Discuss the importance of reliable access to good nutrition when it comes to managing health and chronic conditions.

### 3 Communicate Solutions

Refer someone who test positive for food insecurity to resources that can connect them with nutritious foods.

- Many **health plans** provide their members with a home-delivered meals benefit, a healthy foods card, nutrition counseling and other nutrition-related benefits.
- **Community organizations** like Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), mission-based organizations, the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program and food banks provide those in need with a host of services—from home-delivered and congregate meals to groceries.
- **Federally assisted programs** like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program provide money to eligible individuals to purchase nutritious foods.

Mom's Meals® works with case managers across the nation to bring their clients a dependable, quality home-delivered meals program. By offering your clients choice in what they eat, we make it easy for you to support better health outcomes. We offer condition-specific menus including cancer support, diabetes-friendly, general wellness, gluten free, heart-friendly, lower-sodium, pureed, renal-friendly and vegetarian.

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