

# Do You Have Food?



An overview on food insecurity and  
how it can be mitigated through  
various interventions

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KINE 4359-001  
19 November 2023

# Summary

Food Insecurity is when a household or individual is limited or does not have access to adequate food because of insufficient funds or other resources (Caspi, 2021). Many people all across the world suffer from food insecurity, whether it being for a temporary amount of time, or for a long period of time. Food insecurity has been seen all across the world for a long period of time now. According to the USDA, 13.5 million of U.S households were food insecure during 2021. The number of families being food insecure has only gone up since then. Most of the families who are food insecure do live in an area that can be considered a food desert. A food desert is where there are more fast food and convenient stores in the area than grocery stores that can sell healthy food. Most low-income neighborhoods lie within a food desert area which makes it hard for them to get access to the foods that they need. Food insecurity can lead to potential health problems such as malnutrition, mental health problems, and other general health problems.

## What Is the Problem?

In order to be able to get the healthier food options needed to stay healthy, most families would have to travel far to get to the places that sell them, and even then, the food may be too expensive for them. The individuals who are food insecure may not have the transportation needed in order to get to where they need to, or the income needed to purchase the healthy food options. This leaves families with only one option, use the resources in their area and eat that. This includes all of the fast-food places in their area and all of the convenient stores that sell snacks and liquor that is not good to consume frequently.



For as long as food insecurity has been around there have been many interventions that have been implemented to try and combat it. While food insecurity is a health problem that cannot yet be completely solved, there are things that can be done to mitigate it. Different types of interventions have been seen all across the U.S. Different neighborhoods in different cities have tried many interventions to see if they can help families. Some of these interventions have shown a significant amount of change in regard to families in the area, while some have not seen any improvement.

In order to address food insecurity, you first have to research and understand what has already been done to help mitigate it. As a public health professional it is important that there is thorough research that has been conducted before someone tries to intervene. Some interventions that have been used and have seen a positive effect on communities include food pantries, urban farming, and transportation. These interventions have made a difference in other communities and the hope is that after getting a better understanding on how these intervention function and how they have an impact on the community, other communities will soon follow in implementing them.

## Food Pantries

Recently, food pantries have been seen as intervention to help mitigate food insecurity in neighborhoods that are in a food desert and are food insecure. Households who suffer from food insecurity may participate in federal assistance program pantries or community program pantries (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt, 2021). Most of the pantries that are created are free of cost to those who may need to use them. These food pantries can be run by groups of volunteers who live in the community or other volunteers in general. The food products that are found in the pantries can be donated from surrounding communities, organizations in the area, or by federal assistance programs. Most of the foods that are in the pantries are products that are needed by members of the community.

## Urban Farming

Another intervention that can be seen that shows a promising change is urban farming. Urban farming is when the planting of fruits and vegetables, or any other plants, as well as the raising of livestock is occurring within or around cities (UWA, 2021). At these farms there are different types of fruits and vegetables that are being planted. A majority of what is being planted are foods that are needed by members of the community. Urban farming can be seen in many different ways within city limits. It can be seen in someone's backyard, in the balcony of someone's apartment, and even on a rooftop. This farming can be done by anyone in the community. There may be some gardens that a church or organization may be in charge of maintaining so that they can then donate or sell at a cheaper price what they have been growing in their farms. Even homeowners themselves who may be suffering from food insecurity can create gardens so that they could then have easy access to foods that they are in need of.

## Transportation

Transportation is another intervention that can be used to help mitigate food insecurity in communities. This intervention is different in the aspect that it does not go hand and hand with food. It is not directly associated with food, but rather it can help you get to where you need to go. Some households may not have a car or other forms of transportation. If there are bus stations, they may be too far of a walking distance, so they settle on walking to what they have nearby, which is not healthy. If there are bus stations available to them, it may require multiple trips to the store since they may not be able to carry everything on their own.

In order to help mitigate this problem, some cities have created new bus routes that go specifically to stores in the area. This means that people will be able to get on a bus and go to where they need to go and not have to take any other unnecessary stops. An example of this is being seen in Austin, TX. Public transportation is being expanded through its hours and routes. This is only one way that improvements in public transportation are being used to help people who may come from a low socioeconomic status. Transportation can be easily corrected and solved if more funding were to be put into it by cities, states, and the government.

## Food Desert Areas

All of these interventions can be used and implemented in areas that are located in a food desert area. As mentioned before, food desert areas is when there are not a lot of resources located within a certain community. Most communities that lie within a food desert area contain people who may come from a low socioeconomic status, low-income, and also may lack education. It is important that these areas have people who are looking out for them.



# Solutions

All of the interventions that were listed can be used as possible solutions to help combat food insecurity. By using food pantries there is now a greater opportunity for people to get what they need without having to pay anything. It will also allow for members of the community to come together and get involved. It will allow for the voices of the community to be heard because only they would know what they are in need of. By using urban farming it allows people to grow their own fruits and vegetables. As mentioned, only someone who is suffering from food insecurity knows what they truly need and what needs to be done in order to get what they need. Transportation is also a solution because it means that people will now have the mobility needed to get around and get things that they are in need of.

By implementing these interventions, cities would be helping out people from multiple communities. Once one community sees how others are working towards mitigating food insecurity, then they will take a closer look into what they are doing so that they can end up doing the same thing in their own communities. Addressing food insecurity is a health topic that needs to be discussed more. It is something that not only affects a small percent of the population, but it affects millions of people of all age, race, and ethnicities. If everyone were to come together then it would make a great difference.



# Conclusion

Food insecurity is something that thousands of Americans suffer from every day. In order to help address this problem there are many things that can be done. Some things that have been done that have shown results of helping members of a community include creating food pantries in the area, urban farms in areas and expanding transportation. With any form of new intervention there are always risks of things going wrong. In order to make sure that nothing does go wrong it is important that all of the interventions are being monitored properly. In order to make sure that everything goes smoothly then it is important that everything is being monitored from the beginning. From the start of the intervention to the very end. It is also important that everything is being tracked. In order to see if these interventions are producing results, then it is necessary that some form of surveys are being conducted within households that suffer from food insecurity. Ultimately, it is important that everyone comes and works together.



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