

# Identifying and Screening for Food Insecurity: Webinar Takeaways

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by the Office of Nutrition and Health Promotion Programs, Administration for Community Living

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## What is food insecurity?

- Per USDA: “The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”

## Factors Influencing Food Insecurity

- Income
  - Risk of food insecurity increases when money is limited. Limited employment opportunities, low wages, and health care expenses limit the ability to buy food.
- Disparities
  - Black non-Hispanic households nearly twice as likely to be food insecure than national average.
  - Among Hispanic households, prevalence of food insecurity was 18.5%.
  - LGBTQ+ individuals’ poverty rate is much higher than national average.
  - Divorced seniors, those never married, and older women more likely to be food insecure.
- Food deserts
  - Limited access to full-service supermarkets and grocery stores.
  - Convenient stores often lack variety and quality food items.
- Transportation
  - Distance to grocery stores or food programs can make it difficult to get food.
  - Public transportation may be limited, especially in rural areas.
- Social isolation
  - Older adults may have limited access to children, family, and their community.
- Homeownership
  - Older adults who rent are more likely to be food insecure.
- Education
  - Lower literacy skills can have a detrimental impact on nutritional status.

## The Impact of Food Insecurity

- Food-insecure older adults are:
  - 78% more likely to experience depression.
  - 40% more likely to experience chest pain.
  - 55% more likely to develop asthma.
  - 10% more likely to experience high blood pressure.
  - 21% more likely to experience limitations in activity.

## The Importance of Food Insecurity Screening

- Understanding the extent of food insecurity is crucial to program/policy development.
- States can focus on food insecurity in their regulations, policies and procedures, targeting/prioritization, state plan, and/or initiatives.
- Research on food insecurity of older adults is limited; screening can be critical to program evaluation.
- Understanding severity/specifics revealed by screening can help with public assistance referrals (e.g., emergency food, SNAP).

## Validated Food Security Survey Modules

- [18-Item U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module](#) (USDA)
  - Administered annually to around 45,000 households in the Food Security Supplement of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.
- [10-Item U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module](#) (USDA)
  - Advantages: less respondent burden, no children's food security questions, and improved comparison of households with and without children.
  - Limitation: does not provide information about food security of children.
- [6-Item Short Form of the Household Food Security Survey Module](#) (USDA)
  - Advantages: less respondent burden, identifies food insecure and very low food security, high specificity and sensitivity, and minimal bias.
  - Limitation: does not measure the most severe level of food insecurity.
- [Hunger Vital Sign™ two-question screening tool](#) (Children's HealthWatch)
  - Advantages: less respondent burden, high specificity and sensitivity, and validated for children and adults.
  - Limitation: does not measure the most severe levels of food insecurity.

## Georgia Food Insecurity Measures

- Has used a validated six-item food insecurity measure since 2011. This measure:
  - Found statewide statistics of clients comparable to federal statistics.
  - Identified critical unmet need for nutrition services.
  - Shows contribution of receiving nutrition services to achieve food security.
  - Highlights difficulty meeting food and health care needs of food-insecure Georgians.

## When to Assess Food Insecurity

- Timepoints based on state and agency requirements.
- Can assess at initial intake, in conjunction with other assessments, when identified by concerned staff/volunteer, during reassessments, and/or when services change.

## Resources

- [Brief Assessment of Food Insecurity Accurately Identifies High-Risk U.S. Adults](#) (Children's HealthWatch)
- [Consensus of the Nutrition Screening Initiative: Risk Factors and Indicators of Poor Nutritional Status in Older Americans](#) (PubMed)
- [Definitions of Food Security](#) (USDA)

- [The Effects of Aging Services and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program on Food Insecurity among Older Georgians: 2018-2020](#) (Wiley Online Library)
- [Food Insecurity](#) (Healthy People 2030)
- [Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes](#) (Health Affairs)
- [Food Insecurity and Hunger in the United States: An Assessment of the Measure](#) (National Research Council)
- [Food Insecurity in Older Adults](#) (The Journal of Nutrition)
- [Food Insecurity in Older Adults: Much More than Food – Understanding It Before Taking Action](#) (MedCrave)
- [The Food Security Continuum: A Novel Tool for Understanding Food Insecurity as a Range of Experiences](#) (SpringerLink)
- [Hunger in Older Adults](#) (Meals on Wheels America)
- [Implementing Food Security Screening and Referral for Older Patients in Primary Care: A Resource Guide and Toolkit](#) (AARP Foundation and IMPAQ)
- [Nutritional and Health Consequences are Associated with Food Insecurity among U.S. Elderly Persons](#) (The Journal of Nutrition)
- [Older Americans Act Nutrition Program](#) (ACL)
- [Screening for Food Insecurity: Short-Term Alleviation and Long-Term Prevention](#) (PubMed)