

Engaging Food Insecure Families on the Weekend to Improve Nutrition and Health

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What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- To evaluate the potential effect of a community-based program that delivers free meals to children and fresh produce to their families on the weekends combined with cooking classes.

What Is the Problem?

- Food insecurity is a major public health problem in the United States that has been associated with numerous negative health outcomes in children and adults.
- Households with children are at higher risk of being food insecure.
- The school meals program provides free and reduced priced meals for children during the week, but there is limited evidence on how to address the needs of families with food insecurity on the weekend.

What Are the Findings?

- We found that a community-based program that combines food delivery with cooking classes might be an effective strategy to assist food insecure families on the weekends.
- Parents/guardians reported that the program provided some relief knowing that they had access to free produce.
- The cooking classes helped them to eat healthier on a limited budget.
- Because of the multiple generations involved in the care of children, parents/guardians did recommend using programs that include children, parents, and grandparents to more effectively address food insecure families' needs.
- Additionally, parents and guardians felt broader policy changes were needed to provide sustainable access to low-cost healthy food.

Who Should Care Most?

- Community-based organizations focused on addressing food insecurity.
- Partners involved in community-based participatory research to improve community health.
- Local government and public health officials.
- Health care providers.

Recommendations for Action

- A community-based program that provides food delivery combined with cooking classes may be an effective strategy to assist food insecure families on the weekends.
- Community or public health interventions should consider incorporating a multigenerational approach in addressing food insecurity.
- Broader public health and policy changes that address the underlying causes of food insecurity maybe necessary to significantly improve adult and child health.
- Despite working with local community leaders and members, retention in a study can be challenging among families with multiple competing demands.