

Food Insecurity: Who is Food Insecure?

Compilation of activities suitable for grades 6 and up

Objectives

Students will understand difference between food insecurity and hunger (use “Background on Food Insecurity” for introduction to food insecurity and hunger). Students will be able to identify at least three health or behavioral consequences of food insecurity. Students will be able to identify groups affected by food insecurity and list major barriers to obtaining food. To conclude students will be able to develop a plan of action in order to fight hunger in their community.

Sections

- I. Populations Facing Food Insecurity:
“Who Is Hungry” Activity
- II. Effects of Food Insecurity:
“How Does Food Insecurity Affect Us?” Activity
- III. Conclusion:
“How Can You Help Fight Hunger?” Activity



I. Populations Facing Food Insecurity

“Who Is Hungry?” Activity

Description

Students will list and discuss groups affected by hunger and food insecurity in the United States, and specifically in their community. Prevalent myths surrounding the hungry and the poor will be explored. Adjust this activity based on grade level to ensure comprehension.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the groups affected by food insecurity
- List major barriers to obtaining food

Materials

Blank sheets of paper

Pens or pencils

Chalkboard or PowerPoint/Projector

Total time: 20-30 minutes

Activity

- Separate students into groups of 3-5, or complete activity as a class. Have groups brainstorm and make a list of groups of people that go hungry and reasons for their hunger/lack of food security. Encourage students to think of as many groups and causes as they can.
- Have each group appoint a spokesperson to contribute their group’s ideas. Call on each spokesperson and write their group’s idea on the chalkboard or PowerPoint slide. Add to the students’ ideas as needed to cover the following list, but do not limit discussion to these groups.
- As students present their lists, make sure to debunk any myths. Use the following list to explain why certain groups of people are going hungry. For example, one common myth is that people are food insecure because they are too lazy to work. In this case it would be effective to refer to the populations of the unemployed (who lose their jobs and have difficulty finding consistent employment) and the working poor (who work minimum wage jobs that do not pay enough for high living costs).
- Educate students on food insecurity in your community. In the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s service area, more than 247,000 people turn to emergency feeding programs, such as food pantries and soup kitchens. Check out the [Hunger in American 2014 Key Findings](#) for more information about people who visit hunger programs in our area.



Food Insecure Population	Common Causes of Food Insecurity
Children	Poverty, lack of family resources and support, lack of transportation to summer meal programs
Seniors	Poverty or limited finances, lack of transportation, inadequate social support, physical limitations or chronic illness, medical bills, fixed income
Homeless	Poverty, few resources, no facilities to prepare food, low skill levels for potential employment, chronic illness, disabilities
Acute or Chronically Ill	Transportation barriers, unable to prepare food or shop for food, special dietary needs, medical bills, barriers to consistent employment
Unemployed	Poverty or limited finances, lack of financial stability or resources
Mentally Disabled	Medical bills, transportation barriers, low skill levels for potential employment
Undocumented Immigrants	Low wages, language barriers, no access to government assistance programs
Undereducated	Inability to attain higher wage jobs, difficulty navigating government assistance programs, low wages
Working Poor	Low wages, limited hours, transportation barriers
Ex-offenders	Barriers to finding steady employment, low wages, lack of resources
Veterans	Barriers to finding steady employment, lack of resources, homelessness
Women	Lower wages, poverty among female headed households, inadequate social support and/or child care



II. Effects of Food Insecurity

“How Does Food Insecurity Affect Us?” Activity

Description

Students will participate in an activity that will help foster their understanding of the health and behavioral consequences of food insecurity.

Objectives

Students will be able to identify at least three health or behavioral consequences of food insecurity.

Total Time: 15 minutes

Materials

Chalkboard or PowerPoint/Projector

Activity

Brainstorm with students about the health and behavioral consequences of food insecurity. Make two columns on a chalkboard or PowerPoint slide and label one column “health” and the other “behavior.” You may need to start the activity by listing one example for each category so students understand what the activity entails. Try to elicit group participation and interject ideas when students seem stuck. See the list below for some health and behavioral consequences of food insecurity.*

Note: The following list was created to read to students **following the brainstorming activity; students are unlikely to list these specific items without prior instruction. Do not limit your activity to these consequences alone; students may list other health or behavioral consequences that are also applicable (such as headaches, fatigue, impatience, etc.).*

Health Consequences

- Food insecure seniors have a higher risk of suffering from a heart attack or asthma than food secure seniors.
- Young children in food insecure households are more likely to be in fair or poor health than their food secure peers.
- Young children in food insecure households are more likely to be hospitalized and suffer from iron-deficiency anemia than their food secure peers.
- Food insecure children are more likely to be at risk of developmental delays than food secure children.
- Parents/caregivers in food insecure households with children are more likely to be in fair or poor health than their counterparts in food secure households.
- Food insecure adults have a higher risk of developing diabetes than food secure adults.



Behavioral Consequences

- Food insecure children are more likely to have repeated a grade than food secure children.
- Food insecure children are less likely to be engaged in school due to poor emotional and physical health.
- Parents/caregivers in food insecure households with children are more likely to suffer from depression than parents/caregivers in food secure households.
- School age children experiencing higher rates of food insecurity report increased anxiety, chronic illness, and internalized behavior problems.



III. Conclusion: *How Can You Help Fight Hunger?*

This is NOT the activity- pair this section with “How Can You Help?” Worksheet for grades 6+. Utilize suggestions below to help students brainstorm (after step 3 on worksheet)

Here are some ways to get involved in the fight against hunger in Cuyahoga County:

✓ **Spread the word:**

Knowledge is poverty, and advocacy is a great way to fight hunger. To start, educate your friends and family on what you learned today! Tell them about who is struggling to make ends meet and what barriers are preventing them from being food secure. Create an original presentation on food insecurity to educate your class on the topic or concentrate on a specific population struggling with food insecurity and do some research to share!

✓ **Organize a food or funds drive:**

At the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, we can make \$1=4 meals, so raising money for the food bank is the most effective way to feed people in our area. However, food drives are a great way to raise awareness and let people know about the problem of food insecurity. If you want to organize a food or funds drive, try being creative! Create a competition among grades at your school, build a castle or fun sculpture using canned goods, host a kick off assembly with fun activities, or share photos of your progress on Facebook or Twitter. The easiest way to do a funds drive is through creating a virtual food drive. If you visit <http://greaterclevelandfoodbank.org/virtual-food-drive>, you can set up a virtual food drive and get the word out to your friends on social media. It will even tell you how much food you are providing through the money you donate!

✓ **Participate in a community event fighting hunger:**

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank is fortunate to have so many great partners in the community. Fight hunger while being active- participate in the Wade Oval Walk Against Hunger this spring or challenge yourself in Human Arc’s Race to a Million 5K/2K in the fall. Always check our calendar online to see what is going on around the community and how you can raise money while having fun!

✓ **Volunteer:**

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank relies on 14,000 volunteers annually to help get food out to all members of our community who need it. While we love volunteers of all ages, volunteers between the ages of 12 and 16 must be accompanied by an adult on Family Night (these fill up fast- so book far in advance!!). Visit our website at www.greaterclevelandfoodbank.org for more information.

