

Food Insecurity and Healthcare in Low-Income Communities

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An issue that needs to be addressed is the level of poverty within American communities. The gap between the rich and poor in the U.S. is continually growing and has more than doubled since the 70s. Though poverty is measured by yearly income of a household, it has more to do with the resources available and the location of their community. In addition to the growing economic inequality, there are even more families put in poverty due to the covid pandemic. The pandemic has a larger effect on poorer families because they aren't able to work while rich families may still have some form of income. Living in poverty is a difficult situation and has caused many families to struggle with food insecurity and healthcare.

One of the problems of living in poverty is the higher chance of experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity has a big effect on children as it has a negative influence on their physical and mental development. Children who live in food-insecure households have significantly lower test scores and are more likely to struggle socially (Alaimo, Olson, and Frongillo, 2001). The pandemic has amplified food insecurity in children because it forced schools to shut down. This pressures families living in poverty to provide meals such as breakfast and lunch for their children when this used to be the school's responsibility. A majority of a families income is spent on expenses such as rent, utilities, and entertainment, but there should be a greater focus on their quality of food. However, poorer families and individuals don't have much flexibility in their budgets to allocate more money towards their diet. This causes families to end up over or underweight due to eating mostly junk food or not enough food. Surveys from a 2006 study showed BMI and obesity was greater in food-insecure households than food-secure households (Holben and Pheley, 2006). Households who live in poverty are

limited on their food choices, so their health suffers due to eating unhealthy food. This creates another obstacle because healthcare is usually harder to obtain for individuals living in poverty.

People living in poverty face barriers that limit their access to healthcare such as living conditions, money, and a complex healthcare system. Individuals living in low income conditions tend to have more problems when trying to receive healthcare. Due to the large number of people needing healthcare, many people are not able to receive immediate and full attention. Problems such as shortage of providers and non-covered services have discouraged others from applying for healthcare services (Devoe, Graham, Angier, Baez and Krois, 2008). Many low-income persons express their dissatisfaction with their healthcare and are not able to receive basic health needs (Becker and Newsom, 2003). There are many healthcare plans that are affordable, but they often leave the user's health needs unmet. Another problem with healthcare is the cost and complexity of receiving care and medicine. The need to pay out-of-pocket for prescription drugs and complexities such as income requirements have made it hard for many low income people to afford healthcare (Devoe, Graham, Angier, Baez and Krois, 2008). Many people who are able to sign up for healthcare, but still are not to get better health because the prescriptions are too expensive.

There are many problems that cause poverty, but there are many policies that can lower the amount of people living with food insecurity and make healthcare more accessible to people. A good way to provide children with healthier and abundant meals would be to increase the funding for schools so that they can provide lunch and breakfast to all students. Setting up better food stores around the community can provide people with healthier choices for their meals so that they can avoid eating too much junk. For better healthcare for people living in poverty, there needs to be more doctors available and affordable healthcare should be able to cover more

services such as dental cleaning and check ups. There also needs to be more flexibility in income requirements so that the complexity of the services are easier to obtain. Since there is no regulation of prescription drugs, the price is too high right now, and many families would be able to afford healthcare if they are lowered. Assisting in food and healthcare problems will allow families to worry less, to save more money, and get out of poverty

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