

FOOD SECURITY UPDATE
Seniors and Food Stamps and
School Breakfast in Wisconsin

From the desk of Kadi Row
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With the recent release of three interesting reports, I thought it was a good time to circulate this update. Below you will find a summary of a report on the School Breakfast Program in Wisconsin; research about seniors' views of the Food Stamp Program; and a review of research that links hunger and food insecurity in children with poor health status.

The State of Breakfast in Wisconsin - A report by the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee

This report shares findings from a recent survey of school officials regarding the school breakfast program in Wisconsin. The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee conducted this survey to gain insight into why Wisconsin performs so poorly in regards to the breakfast program. Wisconsin consistently ranks at the bottom nationally for participation in School Breakfast Programs. Thirty-nine percent of Wisconsin schools that offer lunch programs participate in breakfast programs. Only 23% of low income students who receive school lunch also received school breakfast.

Some key findings include:

- School officials in many schools indicate that hunger is an issue they encounter frequently.
- The breakfast program is heavily underutilized at schools that offer it.
- School officials with experience administering the program overwhelmingly give the program a positive rating.
- There is support from school officials for providing universal free breakfast to all students, regardless of students' income.

Important points to glean from this study for WNEP:

- Helps us better understand one portion of what is working with the school breakfast program (school officials in participating schools are generally supportive of the school breakfast programs, and therefore are not a likely a barrier to its implementation). This information is useful in that we might find officials to be important partners in expanding school breakfast participation and recruiting more schools to the program
- Reinforces what we already believe to be some key barriers to participation (busing and time to eat at school in the morning).

View the entire report at: http://www.hungertaskforce.org/1_5_1_27.shtml

Seniors View of the Food Stamp Program and Ways to Improve Participation

A report just released by the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) provides interesting insight into seniors' views of the food stamp program. Researchers determined that:

- Many seniors felt that the food stamp program provided a valuable benefit, but many felt that the benefit levels were too low to make the effort of applying worthwhile
- Seniors reveal two important barriers when applying for food stamps – the stigma attached to receiving what they see as welfare, and misinformation about food stamp rules (for example, because of language barriers)

Implications for WNEP:

- Understanding barriers to food stamp participation among seniors is an important step to improving outreach to eligible seniors
- Our FNP guidance asks us to convey the availability, benefits and how to apply for the Food Stamp Program. This report provides recommendations from seniors that Food Stamp Program outreach efforts should focus on encouraging participation by one-on-one outreach combined with informational sessions in small group settings and individualized enrollment assistance.

To view or print the full report, visit: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02012>

The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children: Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies

This report, published by the Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University, examines recent research literature to demonstrate a connection between hunger and food insecurity in children and poor health outcomes. The report states that children receiving inadequate food “have poorer overall health status: they are sick more often, much more likely to have ear infections, have higher rates of iron deficiency anemia, and are hospitalized more frequently”. In addition, the report cites research that draws connections between food insecurity in children and psychosocial and learning consequences.

The report is particularly useful for its succinct review of 21 research studies and serves as a helpful bibliographic reference for current research in the field.

To view or print a full copy of the 16 page report, visit:

<http://www.centeronhunger.org/pdf/ConsequencesofHunger.pdf>