

The Meaning of Food Insecurity in Eau Claire County

Brenda Kaczmariski & Mary Canales, *UWEC Department of Nursing*;
Nancy Coffey & Melissa Gullickson, *UW Extension*; Emily Moore, *Feed My People*

Food Insecurity Defined Purpose of the Study

Hunger Facts

Eau Claire County

Food insecurity: limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods for a healthy, active lifestyle

Children who have food insecurity	1 out of 5 (18.6%) ¹
Residents reporting food hardship	1 out of 8 (12.7%) ²
Children eligible for free or reduced price lunch	1 out of 2.5 (41%) ³
Residents receiving Food Share	1 out of 5 (17%) ⁴

¹ Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap, Child Food Insecurity 2012*.

² *Food Hardship in America – 2010: Data for the Nation, States, 100MSAs & Every Congressional District, Food Research Action Center, 3/11.*

³ *WI Food Security Project, www.foodsecurity.wisc.edu, 2011.*

⁴ *WI Dept of Health Services, FoodShare unduplicated recipients by calendar year for 2011 for ECC*

Explore extent & impact of food insecurity from perspectives of parents with young children experiencing hunger & agency staff working with families

Methods

- ◆ Qualitative approach
- ◆ UWEC Human subjects approved
- ◆ Focus groups used to collect data

Results

Food Insecurity Is

Falling Through the Cracks

...the day I call to say, 'Hey, I got a job. It's a temporary position, contracted 160 hours.' As of that day...she's like 'well, you won't get any food stamps next month then.' Meanwhile you're really hungry at work and haven't gotten paid yet. And then sometimes they hold back a check, too. Yeah, it took me 4 weeks to get my first check ... (Parent)

I think there are a lot of families that are falling through the cracks, that don't qualify for programs, but still aren't able to feed their families, especially if they have children. They aren't necessarily homeless families or anything like that, but they're falling through the cracks (Staff)

Struggling Physically & Emotionally With Hunger

...when there is enough [food], I can sleep, when there isn't enough, I just couldn't sleep – I can't fall asleep (Parent)

The anxiety not knowing what you're gonna do for the next week until your food stamps come in. Just that anxiety and worrying about what you're gonna do. I think that's one of the hardest parts about it. It causes a lot of stress everywhere else (Parent)

...mom said 'no, that's your dad's cheese; he'll be mad if you eat it.' So mom decided to give him [son] some. So she got a little cup out and gave him about this much shredded cheese to share with his [son's] one year old sister. And then he said he wanted something else to eat and she said 'no you can't have anything more' (Staff)

Juggling to Meet Life's Basic Needs

When we run short on food we go to food pantries, meal site, just to...okay it's getting towards the end of the month. We're running short, we have to find ways to stretch it. But I don't have a car so getting around is another thing, so when I'm having to spend at the gas stations it goes quick so then you have to figure out how to stretch it the rest of the month (Parent)

But we're still seeing families in our neighborhood that if they chose to use their dollars for food or even for cleaning supplies, then they're faced with, at the end of the month, being short and not having enough money for housing; it's a constant juggle (Staff)

Desiring Healthy Food Without the Means

...I would just love to just be able to eat healthy, you know, every single day. I, if I had the means I would eat healthy and feed my kids healthy... (Parent)

...getting to the food if you don't have a vehicle that works and you're relying on the city bus and you've got young kids. The best place downtown, for a lot of our families, is the little gas station where you're gonna spend a lot for your money for that kind of food and there's not a lot of healthy choices (Staff)

Recruitment Used multiple strategies



Help us tell the story of parents coping to meet food needs for their family by participating in a focus group.
\$25 grocery gift card for participants

Contact: Mary Canales, RN 715.836.5737
canalemk@uwec.edu

Demographic Data

Parent Focus Groups

Date	Focus Group Type	Number of Participants	Time	Location
May 7, 2012	Pilot group-parents	2	Morning	Children's Museum
July 16, 2012	Hmong parent group	10	Afternoon	Hmong Mutual Assistance Assoc (HMAA)
September 11, 2012	Head Start parent group & Bolton Refuge House	8	Morning	Western Dairyland
October 3, 2012	EC school district parent group	3	Evening	Children's Museum
October 5, 2012	EC school district parent group	9	Afternoon	Children's Museum
October 19, 2012	EC school district parent group	7	Afternoon	Children's Museum
November 12, 2012	Augusta & Fall Creek school district parent group	4	Morning	Fall Creek Library-community room
March 1, 2013	Staff	9	Afternoon	HMAA
Total	8 focus groups	52		

Staff Focus Group

Current Work Setting	Years in current position	Years working in field	Educational background	Gender
Government=2	1-2 yrs=3	1-2 yrs=2	High school=1	Male=1
Non-profit=5	3-5 yrs=2	3-5 yrs=3	Some college=0	Female=8
School district=2	6-10 yrs=1	6-10 yrs=0	College degree=7	
	11-15 yrs=3	11-15 yrs=1	Some graduate=0	
	>15 yrs=0	>15 yrs=3	Graduate degree=1	

How became involved in work

- "Volunteered first" Assumed full-time position w/school district
- Began as pre-school teacher and became interested in "whole" family; moved through different roles in effort to improve families' lives
- Worked initially in private sector; hired into county supervisor position
- "It found me!" Started in field out of college, loved it, and hasn't left
- "Really by accident." Project management skills needed by non-profit agency
- "Love for my community"
- "Love it!" Public health since college graduation