FOOD INSECURITY AMONG CHILDREN IN MASSACHUSETTS

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Family Impact Seminar 3/27/13

What Have We Learned?

Public Policies and Economic Conditions are Written on the Bodies and Brains of Babies

Food Insecurity: 16% of Children in Many Massachusetts Counties

Because of insufficient $, limited or uncertain availability of enough foods for all household members to live active and healthy lives

Source: USDA

Children’s HealthWatch

Collect data in five urban, safety-net hospitals on children < 4 years old

Produce scientific research that is original and timely

Share evidence with state and national partners to inform policy choices

What Have We Learned?

Food Insecurity: 16% of Children in Many Massachusetts Counties

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Source: USDA
$4.2$ billion to market fast food and $10$ billion to market food to children vs $20$ million for WIC Farmers Market Vouchers

Real Cost of a Healthy Diet

Can parents afford to purchase healthy food?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Calories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottle</td>
<td>$0.79</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>$2.59</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you feed them without giving them harmful things? 
Witnesses to Hunger Mother Drewnowski 2004

The cheap foods that make adults fat starve children of absolutely essential nutrients. Children who do not receive protein and other nutrients during early development are damaged for the rest of their lives.

Dr. Margaret Chan WHO

What are the Child Health Impacts of Food Insecurity?

Food Insecurity Associated with Pregnancy Complications

FOOD INSECURITY IN PREGNANCY (Carmichael 2007)

- Is associated with anencephaly and other neural tube defects
FOOD INSECURITY IN PREGNANCY
- Is associated with “blue baby” cyanotic congenital heart disease

Poor Maternal Nutrition Associated with Low Birth Weight

Low Birth weight: Infant Mortality

Low Birth Weight Increases Developmental Risk

- Breastmilk is Best Milk but Does Not Prevent Child Food Insecurity
  - Pizza crust and Breastmilk

Post-natal Health Impacts of Food Insecurity
- Hospitalizations
- Increased inpatient costs < 1 year
- Decreased bone mineral density
- More fractures
- Iron-deficiency anemia – bad for brains
- More susceptible to lead poisoning
- Poor oral health
What are the Child Developmental Impacts of Food Insecurity?

Brain

- Brain function is sensitive to quality and quantity of foods consumed throughout life span
- Brain structure most vulnerable to nutritional insults early in development
- Brains need constant energy and cannot store it

(Lyle et al. 1984)

Developmental Functions at Risk

Language
Short Term Memory
Attention
Math Skills
Modulation of Activity and Affect

Young children from food insecure households are 40% more likely to be at developmental risk

Food Insecure Kids Fight More
Economic Hardship

Food Insecurity

Housing Insecurity

Energy Insecurity

Can We Fix It?

Clinical Care

- Grow and Nutrition Clinics
- Special formulas not durable medical equipment: prior approval should be streamlined (now takes 2-3 weeks)

WIC WORKS: Each $ Saves $4.21 in Perinatal Costs
**WHAT IS SNAP?**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Formerly Known as Food Stamps

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**SNAP: Good Medicine for Children and the Local Economy**

$5.00 SNAP benefits
Generates $9.00 economic activity
For young children
SNAP decreases risk of underweight and developmental risk

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**How Did Massachusetts SNAP Overpayment happen?**

**SNAP WORKS: Good Investment State $**

- Young children who receive WIC more likely
  - Good/excellent health
  - Food secure
  - Healthy height/weight for age
  - Lower risk – developmental delays

With Sequestration National WIC calculates: 8 thousand of Massachusetts participants at risk

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**SNAP**

- State needs to put in $ for administrative costs for frontline workers
- Advocate with USDA re overpayment

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**SCHOOL BREAKFAST AFTER BELL IN CLASSROOM**

- Massachusetts 42 in classroom breakfast
- In Lowell school breakfast
  - Decreased absenteism
  - Decreased tardiness
  - INCREASED TEST SCORES

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Source: Children’s HealthWatch, 2012
Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP)

- Better health, growth
- Fewer hospitalizations
- Streamline paperwork online
- Improve meal reimbursement

Forty Percent of Children’s Health Watch Families in Emergency Food Network in Past 12 Months: MEFAP

WHY BOTHER?

How Much Does Food Insecurity Cost Massachusetts?

$2.72 BILLION
In 2010

Can We Fix It?

Thank You!
www.childrenshealthwatch.org