

Food Insecurity Incidence and Healthcare Insurance Impact on College Students

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Objective: A recent food security study done on college students in the southeast found that students were experiencing anxiety over having enough funds for food and reported that healthcare was one of the factors impacting that anxiety. This study examined the incidence of food insecurity and how healthcare may impact food insecurity.

Participants: A total of 207 college students participated in the research study

Main Outcome Measures: Food security status, healthcare coverage and sociodemographic data were included such as age, race and gender.

Methods: Researchers analyzed responses to a survey. Frequencies were calculated from Household Food Security Survey questions, healthcare questions about coverage, satisfaction, if they use Affordable Care insurance, factors that cause them to not have insurance, and if income impacts seeking medical care and medications.

Results:

Data was collected on 207 college students (Males (15.63%); Females (82.29%); 63.92% White, 22.68% Black, 7.73% Hispanic; with a mean age 21.89). 42.37% of the students stated they sometimes or often cut meal sizes or skip meals. Food insecurity in this latest survey was 38.81% and 33.33% of the students went hungry in the past 12 months. 54.92% of the students lived off campus and 47.67% had a campus meal plan. When it came to healthcare there were 40 students who had difficulties due to not having health coverage. Of those 40 students, 30.2% did not refill prescriptions due to cost and 31.77% delayed refilling their medications. When asked if students were aware of the SHIP program offered to students at the university, 78% did not know about that option. The final question on the survey asked students to provide feedback on how to help them with their financial resources when it comes to food security. The most common themes were: food scholarships, longer dining service hours, development of a financial literacy program for students, lower meal plan prices, and an on-line food bank so students could donate café cash and meal swipes, and a campus good gleaning program.

Conclusion: Food security is a significant problem on college campuses. Students need to be involved in developing the solutions to this problem. Food and medication costs are factors that hinder students' ability to attain self-sufficiency. A student-driven education initiative focused on campus programs that are available to help students with financial literacy and budgeting is important