The University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research (UKCPR) is pleased to announce the competitive awarding of four grants totaling $300,000 dollars as part of our initiative *Understanding the Relationships between SNAP, Food Security, and Health in the National Health Interview Survey*. The focus of this initiative is to provide rigorous research that utilizes data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) in order to expand our understanding of the effects of (1) the interaction between adult mental and physical health and household food insecurity, (2) SNAP on the health of both family caretaker and children, and (3) food insecurity on health and the possible mediating role of SNAP. Underwriting for the competition was generously provided by the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

All four projects will utilize restricted-access versions of the NHIS and have accordingly been through an additional review process with the National Center for Health Statistics and/or the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality. The grantees and their project summaries are

**Impact of Food Insecurity and SNAP Participation on Healthcare Utilization and Expenditures among Adults and Children**
Seth A. Berkowitz (PI), Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School
Hilary K. Seligman, University of California, San Francisco
Sanjay Basu, Stanford School of Medicine

Healthcare expenditures in the United States are disproportionately related to preventable chronic conditions due to poor nutrition (i.e., type 2 diabetes), and concentrated among the poor. Food insecurity in particular has been associated with adverse health conditions ranging from chronic disability to diabetes. In this project the authors will use restricted-access NHIS data linked to the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) to estimate the extent to which food insecurity is associated with changes in healthcare utilization and expenditures. To address possible reverse causation in the link between SNAP and food insecurity, they will employ a novel near-far matching approach with instrumental variables to determine whether SNAP participation mediates the linkage between food insecurity and health care utilization and expenditure.

**How Well Do SNAP and Other Social Safety Net Programs Protect Families Against the Risk of Food Insecurity and Poor Health During Economic Downturns?**
Thomas DeLeire (PI), Georgetown University
Bradley Hardy, American University
Jay Bhattacharya, Stanford University
The U.S. social safety net, including SNAP, exists to mitigate the deleterious effects of swings in family income, particularly among low- and moderate-income households. Learning the extent to which programs improve outcomes, such as food security, for low-income people is a challenge because households tend to receive food assistance when they are most food insecure. The authors of this project will use restricted-access NHIS data from the 1997 through 2014, along with data from the Current Population Survey and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, to examine changes in health and food security for adults and children between years in which the economy was performing poorly and years in which the economy was performing well. The “difference-in-differences” model will compare outcomes of low-versus-high income families over the business cycle, and whether participation in SNAP mitigates some of the negative health consequences of economic shocks to low-income families.

The Real Value of SNAP Benefits and Health Outcomes
Hilary Hoynes (PI), University of California, Berkeley
Erin Bronchetti, Swarthmore College
Garret Christensen, University of California, Berkeley

The maximum SNAP benefit for a given household size is fixed across the country with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii. However, there is significant variation in the price of food across the contiguous lower 48 states, and evidence shows that higher food prices lead to higher food insecurity. The goal of this project is to use restricted-access geocoded data from the NHIS, combined with the USDA’s Quarterly Food at Home Price Database, to estimate the effect of SNAP on health outcomes and food security using regional food price variation (and thus variation in the real value of SNAP benefits) as well as other local economic conditions such as unemployment. By focusing on SNAP recipients alone the authors circumvent the problem of nonrandom selection into the program, and will obtain causal estimates of the effect of the program among recipients on health outcomes.

Using Natural Experiments to Identify the Impacts of SNAP on Child and Adult Health
Daniel P. Miller (PI), Boston University
Taryn W. Morrissey, American University

As a sizeable near-cash benefit, SNAP may promote health via improvements in food security and nutrition, and may also free up resources that can be spent on health-promoting activities or directly on health care. A large body of high-quality research examines the impacts of SNAP participation and food insecurity and nutrition, but few studies have examined the effects of SNAP on health while accounting for methodological challenges regarding who chooses to participate in SNAP. Further, few studies have examined SNAP’s impacts on child health specifically. The authors will use restricted-access NHIS data to estimate whether SNAP leads to better health and nutrition among adults and children. To identify the effect of SNAP they will use the natural experiment induced by the 2013 reduction in SNAP benefits when the temporary increase in SNAP from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 expired.