



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON CHILDHOOD HUNGER



April 2013

Program Overview

The *Research Program on Childhood Hunger* seeks innovative and policy relevant research on the underlying causes of food insecurity among children in the United States.



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Research Program on Childhood Hunger



BACKGROUND

Food security is fundamental to health and well-being. For children, even a modest compromise may impair physical, intellectual and social development. Thus food insecurity is considered a serious problem facing children in the U.S.

In 2011, 14.9% of all households containing 50.1 million people experienced food insecurity. There were 16.6 million children in these food insecure households. A subset of those households experienced the most severe form of food insecurity measured by the USDA – 12.1 million adults and 4.8 million children lived in households with very low food security (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2012).

That children in the U.S. are going without sufficient amounts of food is of concern in its own right. Previous research, spanning numerous empirical studies, has found that children in families suffering from food insecurity are more likely to suffer from a wide array of negative health, nutrition, and educational outcomes. Despite an array of government policies geared toward its alleviation, food insecurity remains stubbornly high and indeed has increased over 30% since the onset of the Great Recession in 2007.

THE PROGRAM

With core funding from the Food and Nutrition Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research competitively awards grants to qualified individuals and institutions for rigorous research that will assist policymakers achieve the nation's goal of eradicating childhood hunger.

In the 2011-2013 fiscal years 34 awards were made totaling \$5.25 million. These projects use data from a myriad of nationally representative sources such as the Current Population Survey and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, from more targeted surveys such as Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study and the Three City Study, as well as qualitative interviews in selected sites around the country. Table 1 contains a list of our grantees and their projects, with additional information available at <http://www.ukcpr.org/>.

PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILIES WITH FOOD-INSECURE CHILDREN

This area focuses on the general characteristics that distinguish families that are food insecure from those that are not. The ultimate goal being to develop a feasible means of identifying food-insecure children so that target interventions at the community, state, or national level may be implemented.

DESCRIPTION OF COPING STRATEGIES OF AT-RISK FAMILIES TO AVOID OR REDUCE CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY

This topic seeks to discover what coping strategies are more effective for avoiding or reducing children's food insecurity and if these strategies are effective when applied across various family characteristics and circumstances. The research goal is to find coping strategies which can lend themselves to large scale initiatives to end childhood food insecurity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROCESSES IN FAMILIES WITH FOOD INSECURITY

Under this category, we seek to understand more about the circumstances and processes of families who experience food insecurity with a close look at household structure (nuclear, extended family, neighborhood/community, or state-level), as well as variations in food prices, and the temporal aspect of food insecurity over the course of the month. The research goal is to identify how these circumstances ameliorate or exacerbate the likelihood of childhood food insecurity.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND FAMILIES WITH FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN

This topic seeks to define who and to what extent participation in nutrition assistance programs reduce food insecurity and to define what program changes, if any, are likely to enhance food security among participants.



PREVIEW OF INITIAL RESULTS:

Most of the research supported by the program is ongoing and will not be completed until late 2013 or 2014. The 2011 cohort of small grants, which focused attention on the more severe form of very low food security among children, completed their projects in the fall of 2012. Complete reports are available at <http://www.ukcpr.org/CHRecipients.aspx> and some highlights from these studies include:

- ***Children raised in immigrant families, or with a disabled parent, face heightened risk of hunger.*** Kelly Balistreri in her study finds that even though fewer than 25% of children in the U.S. today are born into families of immigrants, over 40% of the very low food secure is from these families. The risk is especially high in single-parent or complex family structures and in those families where the adult is disabled.
- ***There is a significant amount of churning into and out of Childhood Hunger.*** Alison Jackowitz and Taryn Morrissey find that the most important triggers that cause a family to enter very low food security are housing and income instability, as well as declines in maternal and child health. Exits from childhood hunger are most associated with increases in income, improvements in maternal mental health, and increases in the number of adults in the household, whether spouse, partner, or grandparent, suggesting the importance of resource sharing of both time and money.
- ***The WIC Program leads to significant reductions in food insecurity among children.*** Brent Kreider and John Pepper find that WIC reduces food insecurity among children by one-third, and the more severe very low food security by about 60%. What is striking is that these large positive effects of WIC even adjust for the fact that some families misreport their participation in the program to survey interviewers, while others self-select into the program based on their food security status.
- ***The wider social safety net reduces child hunger.*** Lucie Schmidt, Lara Shore-Sheppard, and Tara Watson find that the combined bundle of safety net programs (TANF, SSI, EITC, SNAP, and Medicaid) result in a 16% reduction in food insecurity among single parent families with income below three times the poverty line, and as much as a 36% reduction in very low food security. Each \$1000 increase in annual SNAP benefits leads to a 5% reduction in food insecurity among these families, and to an effect twice as large for families living closer to the poverty line.



TABLE 1

2011 GRANT RECIPIENTS

LARGE GRANTS

Food Hardship in the Low Income Population: Child-Focused Evidence from the Three City Study

Robert Moffitt, Johns Hopkins University

David Ribar, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The Dynamics of Food Insecurity and Effective Coping Strategies for Households at Risk of Childhood Hunger

Gregory Mills, Urban Institute

Karla Hanson, Cornell University

Understanding Very Low Food Security among Children in the U.S.

Neeraj Kaushal, Columbia University

Irv Garfinkel, Columbia University

Jane WaldFogel, Columbia University

Vanessa Wight, Columbia University

How can Communities and Households Protect Children from Very Low Food Security?

Sonya Jones, University of South Carolina

Nonresident Fathers' Involvement and Welfare Policies: Impacts on Childhood Hunger

Steven Garasky, IMPAQ International

Daniel Miller, Boston University

Lenna Nepomnyaschy, Rutgers University

SMALL GRANTS

Family Structure and Time Allocation: Mechanisms of Food Insecurity among Children

Kelly Balistreri, Bowling Green State University

Food Insecurity across the First Five Years: Triggers of Onset and Exit

Alison Jacknowitz, American University

Taryn Morrisey, American University

The Impact of Household Labor Market Shocks on Child Food Insecurity

Bradford Mills, Virginia Tech University

George Davis, Virginia Tech University

2011 SMALL GRANTS (CONT'D)

The Effect of Safety Net Programs on Food Insecurity

Tara Watson, Williams College
Lara Shore-Sheppard, Williams College
Lucie Schmidt, Williams College

Identifying the Effects of WIC on Very Low Food Security

Brent Kreider, Iowa State University
John Pepper, University of Virginia

Availability and Accessibility of Emergency Food Assistance and Food Insecurity among American Children

Qi (Harry) Zhang, Old Dominion University

Families with Hungry Children and the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten

Colleen Heflin, University of Missouri
Irma Arteaga, University of Missouri
Sara Gable, University of Missouri

The Impact of Incarceration on the Food Security of Children

Sally Wallace, Georgia State University
Robynn Cox, Spelman College

2012 GRANT RECIPIENTS

LARGE GRANTS

Understanding the Interdependencies among Three Types of Coping Strategies Used by Very Low Food Secure Households with Children

Andrea Anater, RTI International

Understanding Very Low Food Security and Other Food Hardships Among Households with Children

Judith Bartfeld, University of Wisconsin

J. Michael Collins, University of Wisconsin

Childhood Stress: A Mixed Methods Analysis of the Intergenerational Circumstance of Child Hunger

Mariana Chilton, Drexel University

Sandra Bloom, Drexel University

Economic Shocks, Neighborhood Food Infrastructure and Very Low Food Security

Sheldon Danziger, University of Michigan

Luke Shaefer, University of Michigan

Scott Allard, University of Chicago

Connective Saving and Food Security: Evidence from an Asset Building Program for Families in Poverty

Caecilia Loibl, Ohio State University

Anastasia Snyder, Ohio State University

New Evidence on Why Children's Food Security Varies across Households with Similar Incomes

Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, Northwestern University

Patricia Anderson, Dartmouth College

Kristin Butcher, Wellesley College

Hilary Hoynes, UC Davis

Understanding Very Low Food Security among Children of Mexican-Origin: The Circumstances and Coping Strategies of Mexican-Origin Families in Texas Border Colonias

Joseph Sharkey, Texas A&M University

SMALL GRANTS

Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Prevalence of VLFS in Children among Children of Foreign Born Parents

John Cook, Children's HealthWatch

Financial Services and Food Insecurity among Households with Children

Katie Fitzpatrick, Seattle University

The Effect of Household Financial, Time, and Environmental Constraints on Very Low Food Security among Children

Helen Jensen, Iowa State University

Oleksandr Zhylyevsky, Iowa State University

Food Insecurity during Childhood: Understanding Persistence and Change Using Linked Current Population Survey Data

Sheela Kennedy, University of Minnesota

Catherine Fitch, University of Minnesota

John Robert Warren, University of Minnesota

Parenting Practices and Attitudes: Children's Food Security in the Nexus of Parent Behavior

Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois

2013 GRANT RECIPIENTS

LARGE GRANTS

Family Health Shocks and Young Children's Food Insecurity

Hope Corman, Rider University

Kelly Noonan, Rider University

Nancy E. Reichman, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Understanding the Immediate and Long Term Effects of Supplemental Nutrition Education Program-Education as an Intervention to Improve Food Security among Households with Children in Indiana

Heather A. Eicher-Miller, Purdue University

Child Food Insecurity in Families of Young Children with and without Special Health Care Needs

Ruth Rose Jacobs, Boston Medical Center

SMALL GRANTS

The Effect of In-Classroom Breakfast Feeding on Children's Food Security and Participation in the School Breakfast Program

Katherine W. Bauer, Temple University

Adam Davey, Temple University

Gary D. Foster, Temple University

Do Big Box Grocers Improve Food Security?

Charles Courtemanche, Georgia State University

Contextualizing Food Insecurity among Children: Do Neighborhood Characteristics Shape the Risk?

Justin Denney, William Marsh Rice University

Rachel Kimbro, William Marsh Rice University

Understanding the Relationship between the School Breakfast Program and Food Insecurity

David E. Frisvold, Emory University

Very Low Food Security and Teenage Labor Supply

Sarah Hamersma, University of Florida

Mathew Kim, University of St. Thomas

Unintended Consequences of Mass Incarceration: Explaining the Relationship Between Paternal Incarceration and Food Insecurity among Young Children

Kristin Turney, University of California, Irvine



About UKCPR

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY CENTER FOR POVERTY RESEARCH

The University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research (UKCPR) is a non-partisan, nonprofit academic research center focused on the causes, consequences, and correlates of poverty and inequality in the United States. Established in 2002, the Center's research informs evidence-based policymaking at the local, regional, and national levels.

UKCPR staff and faculty affiliates reflect the cross-disciplinary emphasis of the research agenda, with representatives from economics, public policy, political science, public health, sociology, and social work. The Center is governed by its Founding Director, Dr. James P. Ziliak, and an Executive Committee consisting of faculty at the University of Kentucky.

To learn more about the programs of the UKCPR please visit our website at <http://www.ukcpr.org>. If you would like to support the mission of UKCPR, offer comments on this publication, or make suggestions email us at ukcpr@uky.edu or write University of Kentucky, Center for Poverty Research, 302D Mathews Building, Lexington, KY 40506-0047. Phone: (859) 257-7641.



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