

FRAC WEEKLY NEWS DIGEST

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Pediatricians and Child Hunger

[New Resource Available to Help Pediatricians Identify and Treat Child Hunger](#) - FRAC, February 9, 2017

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Food Research & Action Center jointly released a new toolkit, [Addressing Food Insecurity: A Toolkit for Pediatricians](#), a comprehensive resource on how to identify and address childhood food insecurity. "Food insecurity is not an isolated or concentrated phenomenon, it impacts every community in the nation," said Jim Weill, president, Food Research & Action Center. "Pediatricians are an important part of the solution to ending the problem, and this toolkit provides the information and resources needed to help ensure that no child in the U.S. goes hungry."



[Childhood hunger can have a lasting effect](#) - South Carolina Now, January 21, 2017

The American Academy of Pediatrics has called on pediatricians to screen all children for food insecurity and connect hungry children with nutrition resources in their communities, writes Dr. Karen R. Hill, a pediatrician with McLeod Pediatric Associates in Florence, S.C., in this op-ed. Hill notes that childhood hunger has many short- and long-term negative effects on the immune system, brain development, and school performance. "Poor nutrition in childhood also might cause problems in adulthood with diabetes, heart disease and high cholesterol," writes Hill.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

[Arkansas panel rejects bill to restrict food-stamp purchases](#) - Arkansas News, February 8, 2017

An Arkansas State Senate committee rejected a House bill calling for the state Department of Human Services to request a federal waiver allowing restriction of SNAP purchases to food items with sufficient nutritional value. Those who spoke against the bill said it would be costly for retail stores to implement and could hurt families with limited food purchase options.



[Study: State Policies Have Increased Food Insecurity in Maine](#) – Maine Public, February 9, 2017

Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative and Good Shepherd Food Bank released a report finding that nearly 60 percent of households interviewed said they used food pantries more this year than last. The findings show that SNAP time limit and asset test policies have not helped people thrive, said Kristen Miale, director of the Good Shepherd Food Bank. Miale also said she hopes that the Maine legislature will roll back the recent changes and strengthen the safety net programs rather than placing further restrictions on them.



[Mailbag: Federal anti-poverty programs work](#) – Lockport Union-Sun & Journal, January 31, 2017

“If poverty and inequality are truly important to the new Congress,” then SNAP must be protected, and the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit should be expanded, writes Kelly Ann Kowalski in this letter to the editor. In 2015, the tax credits lifted 9.2 million people out of poverty. The child nutrition programs must also be protected, notes Kowalski.



[It Appears Republicans Want To Tell Poor People How To Use Food Stamps](#) – The Huffington Post, February 7, 2017

Officials are expecting to see proposals to reduce SNAP funding or add program restrictions as the 2018 Farm Bill debate begins. “We’re not making leaps of assumptions until we see what it is that actually gets put into play,” said Ellen Vollinger, legal director at the Food Research & Action Center. “[B]ut we are being very diligent to be prepared for any policy debate.” Craig Gundersen, a University of Illinois agriculture professor, said, “SNAP works and has been an amazing success. I can’t think of another program that is more successful at accomplishing its goals.”



[Summit County, other ski resort areas miss out on millions in federal food aid](#) – Summit Daily, January 19, 2017

In Summit County, Colorado, nearly 80 percent of SNAP-eligible people do not receive benefits, while in Pitkin County, also in the state’s ski resort country, nearly 89 percent of those eligible are not enrolled. These areas have high numbers of seasonal workers, who “may not go to the trouble of applying for SNAP benefits,” said Michelle Webster, manager of research and policy analysis at the Colorado Center for Law and Policy. “The application can be cumbersome, and generally requires an in-person interview. In rural areas that could be a barrier.” Hunger Free Colorado reports that ski resort areas have high per capita and median household incomes, which may mask food insecurity, leading those eligible to believe they are not qualified for food assistance.



[NYC food pantries and soup kitchens starved for supplies as funding stays low and cuts to food stamps loom](#) – NY Daily News, February 7, 2017

The Food Bank for New York City reports that 76 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens surveyed said they do not have sufficient food to serve their visitors. The New York State House of Representatives' budget proposes cuts to SNAP that would result in \$8 billion in lost benefits by 2026. The cuts "could intensify the need for emergency food as New Yorkers who lose access to this vital nutrition and income support increase their reliance on food pantries and soup kitchens," noted the food bank.



Safety Net Programs

[Detroiters leave \\$80 million unclaimed for tax credit](#) – Detroit Free Press, January 29, 2017
Nearly 26,000 Detroit households were eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) last year but did not file tax returns, leaving unclaimed \$80 million in refunds. For struggling families, EITC can help deliver a \$3,000 to \$4,000 tax refund check. Some of those who are eligible do not understand the credit, may not have qualified in the past but now have children and qualify, made more in the past and did not qualify, or fall below the income requirement for filing a tax return.



[Turning the safety net over to states is a way to erode it, not reform it](#) – The Spokesman-Review, February 3, 2017

Because of welfare reform in 1996, which gave states broad flexibility with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, "[f]amilies received less money, benefits stagnated against inflation, and many states simply used the welfare money for other things," writes Shawn Vestal in this editorial. According to a Center on Budget and Policies Priorities (CBPP) report, just half of TANF dollars in 2014 went toward "core welfare" activities, with some money going into general funds for unrelated purposes. "There is no evidence that giving states this broad flexibility has improved outcomes for poor families with children," concluded the CBPP report.



Economic Inequality

[Chicago's racial wealth gap far worse than U.S. average, report finds](#) – Chicago Tribune, January 31, 2017

The Corporation for Enterprise Development reports that about 65 percent of African-American, Latino, and Asian households in Chicago have so little in assets and savings that they would end up in poverty in three months due to a job loss, medical emergency, or other income disruption. Median income for whites, who make up one-third of Chicago's residents, is \$70,960, while median income for blacks is \$30,303. The racial wage gap is the widest it's been in nearly four decades.

