



April 2016
[Online Version](#)

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is pleased to release this new issue of *FRAC Focus: Obesity and Poverty*. This periodical e-newsletter focuses on obesity and low-income children and adults, looking at the intersection of obesity, low income, food insecurity, the federal nutrition programs, and federal food and nutrition policy.

This issue first features a summary of the Aspen Institute's *Advancing Health through Food Security: A Multi-Sector Approach to Address the Disease Burden and Costs of U.S. Food Insecurity on our Health System*. The report explores our current understanding of the short- and long-term impacts of food insecurity on healthcare costs as well as potential solutions to address food insecurity and its health implications.

The eight *Research Highlights* that follow provide digests of, and links to, peer-reviewed studies on a variety of topics, including the impact of breakfast at school on body mass index, association between food insecurity and obesity, and environmental influences on obesity.

The issue concludes with six summaries of, and links to, important resources and reports recently published by national organizations, government agencies, and policy researchers.

New from FRAC!

Highlights from the Aspen Institute's *Advancing Health through Food Security: A Multi-Sector Approach to Address the Disease Burden and Costs*

of U.S. Food Insecurity on our Health System

The Aspen Institute convened a discussion forum – The Aspen Dialogue on U.S. Food Insecurity and Healthcare Costs – that considered policy and economic assumptions regarding the short- and long-term impacts of food insecurity on healthcare costs. The discussion forum brought together a diverse group of experts in food insecurity, health, policy, and philanthropy (including FRAC President Jim Weill) for a series of meetings and discussions in 2014 and 2015.

In February 2016, the Aspen Institute released a report summarizing the forum’s main conclusions, *Advancing Health through Food Security: A Multi-Sector Approach to Address the Disease Burden and Costs of U.S. Food Insecurity on our Health System*. According to the report’s introduction, “two critical points must be recognized: first, that food insecurity is rooted in multiple systems (food, employment, economic, social insurance, health, culture, etc.) which should be addressed in parallel; and second, that food insecurity is not only an issue of ‘the poor.’” The report then explores the current understanding of the relationship between food insecurity, healthcare costs, poverty, and health outcomes (including obesity), and opportunities for the public and private sectors to address food insecurity. Here we highlight key findings from the report. [More...](#)

Research Highlights

Federal Nutrition Programs

Healthier standards for school meals and snacks: impact on school food revenue and lunch participation rates

Massachusetts schools implementing nutrition standards for both school meals and competitive foods initially lost school food revenue; however, longer-term revenue was not impacted and school lunch participation increased among children eligible for reduced-price meals, according to new research in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. [More...](#)

School breakfast and body mass index: a longitudinal observational study of middle school students

Middle school students who regularly eat breakfast at school, including those who eat breakfast at both home and school (i.e., double breakfast eaters), are less likely to be overweight or obese than students who skip breakfast, according to new research in *Pediatric Obesity*. [More...](#)

Improvements and disparities in types of foods and milk beverages offered in elementary school lunches, 2006–2007 to 2013–2014

The quality of elementary school lunches has significantly improved over time, but regional, racial-ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in meal quality also are evident, according to a new study in *Preventing Chronic Disease*. [More...](#)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, energy balance, and weight gain

New research in *Food Policy* finds that participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is not significantly associated with caloric intake, physical activity, or weight gain. [More...](#)

Food Insecurity and Obesity

Food hardship and obesity in a sample of low-income immigrants

Low-income, multi-racial/ethnic adults experiencing food hardship are more likely to be obese than those who are not experiencing food hardship, but the relationship varies by place of birth, according to new research in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. [More...](#)

Disordered eating behaviors and food insecurity: a qualitative study about children with obesity in low-income households

New research in *Obesity Research and Clinical Practice* finds that children who are obese and living in food-insecure households engage in a number of disordered eating behaviors, including binge eating, food hiding or secretive eating, and nighttime eating. [More...](#)

Environmental Influences and Barriers to Healthy Eating

Stuck in unhealthy places: how entering, exiting, and remaining in poor and nonpoor neighborhoods is associated with obesity during the transition to adulthood

According to a study in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, adolescents who grow up and consistently live in poor neighborhoods are more likely to become or remain obese by young adulthood. [More...](#)

Economic constraints on taste formation and the true cost of healthy eating

To foster healthful eating habits, parents are advised by pediatricians, dietitians, and other health professionals to introduce children to a variety of new foods and repeat exposure to rejected foods; however, a study in *Social Science and Medicine* explores how impractical such advice may be for low-income families. [More...](#)

In Case You Missed It!

New Reports and Resources

The reports and resources highlighted below were chosen because of their focus – in whole or in part – on obesity, hunger, and the federal nutrition programs among poor and low-income populations.

HHFKA Implementation Research Brief Series

A new series of research briefs from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) examines best practices in School Food Authorities' implementation of key provisions of the *Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010* (HHFKA). The eight briefs cover the following issues: role of school food service directors in addressing childhood obesity; maintaining food service revenue and achieving a balanced budget; strategies for

implementing the HHFKA provisions for fruits and vegetables, whole grains, sodium, and Smart Snacks; maintaining or increasing student participation in school meals; and minimizing plate waste. [More...](#)

SNAP-Ed Strategies & Interventions: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for States

This updated Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) toolkit contains new evidence-based or emerging strategies and resources to assist SNAP-Ed administrative and implementing agencies in their efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity among low-income audiences. [More...](#)

The Impact of the First 1,000 Days on Childhood Obesity

A new issue brief from Healthy Eating Research summarizes two recent, peer-reviewed literature reviews: one on risk factors in the first 1,000 days (i.e., conception through age two) for developing childhood obesity later in life, and one focused on interventions in the first 1,000 days that could prevent childhood obesity later in life. [More...](#)

Obesity in the Early Childhood Years: State of the Science and Implementation of Promising Solutions – Workshop in Brief

The Health and Medicine Division (formerly the Institute of Medicine) released a brief summary of a workshop that addressed the following early childhood obesity topics: prevalence and trends; epigenetic factors; development of food preferences; modifiable and protective risk factors (e.g., maternal weight gain during pregnancy, breastfeeding, feeding practices); effective interventions; and innovative cross-sector solutions. [More...](#)

Prevention Status Reports

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released updated state reports that highlight policies and practices in 10 leading public health topics – including nutrition, physical activity, and obesity – in a simple, easy-to-use format. [More...](#)

County Health Rankings

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute released annual county rankings, which rate the overall health of nearly every county in the nation. (Data for the District of Columbia are available, too.) This year's report finds substantial differences between rural and urban counties on a variety of measures, including much higher rates of premature death and adult obesity in rural counties. [More...](#)

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)