

IMPACTING FOOD INSECURITY

Dear Families and Caregivers,

Food insecurity is common globally, nationally, and likely in your community. A study by the United States Department of Agriculture found that the number of households facing food insecurity reached 17 million in 2022. A rise in food costs and an end to many pandemic-era programs continue to affect U.S. families. But it can be hard to identify who around you needs help. And it can be hard for those who need it to ask for help. The resources below can get conversations started and help you and your child take action to meet your needs and the needs of others.

Sparking Conversations

Ask your child about the difference between a want and a need. You might give the example of wanting hats to match different outfits and needing a warm coat for winter. Go through some of the basic needs, such as shelter, food, and transportation, and compare them to wants in those areas. Once kids have a full understanding of the difference, ask them if they or people they know have ever not had their needs met. If you can, share a personal story about a time when you experienced or witnessed a situation that involved food insecurity, specifically. It can be you, someone in your community, or even a character in a book or movie. How did this affect your understanding of the impact food insecurity can have? Have a conversation about why food is important and how lack of regular access to it can affect the mind and body.

Get Active

How can you ensure regular access to food for your family and for families in your community? Start by identifying groups or organizations that focus on food insecurity. Research food banks in your area, holiday food drives, and/or backpack programs at school. If there are not enough, advocate for change. Contact your state representative with your opinions and ideas about how to support those facing food insecurity. Donate or volunteer to existing organizations, if you're able. Or take advantage of a resource, in the knowledge that everyone needs help sometimes. Positivity and joy can go a long way in breaking the stigma attached to asking for help. Engage in reflective conversations with your child about how this experience feels, and what they've learned.

Groups That Give Kids Opportunities to Make a Difference

Feeding America, feedingamerica.org

- Feeding America is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States, comprising a nationwide network of food banks, food pantries, and community-based organizations. Navigate the "Take Action" page to explore various ways your family can make a difference. Enter your zip code to find a local food-pantry location and, if there is one, an associated school pantry.

Lasagna Love, lasagnalove.org

- Lasagna Love is a community impact program that connects neighbors through homemade meal delivery. Lasagna Love aims to spread kindness and strengthen communities while eliminating the stigma associated with asking for help when it is needed most.