Social Assistance during COVID-19
Food Security and Income Support
Columbia School of Social Work

Office of Professional Engagement

Robert Paul Hartley, MDiv, PhD
John Robertson, MSW, LMSW, PhD

Special guest: Bradley Hardy, PhD, American University

Thank you to Nasia Daley, Tiffany Rasmussen, and Jania Stewart-James.
OVERVIEW

• Food security and the pandemic
• Nutrition assistance policy response
  • Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  • Other USDA programs and sources of food assistance
• Vulnerable groups and inequality
  • Senior health and hunger
• Income support policy; relief checks
• Questions throughout (live chat discussion welcome!)
Food Insecurity in the United States

https://www.hamiltonproject.org/blog/the_covid_19_crisis_has_already_left_too_many_children_hungry_in_america
Food Security by Race/Ethnicity

Food didn’t last, not enough money

Food Service Workers

Uninsurance rate of food service workers by state, 2017

URBAN INSTITUTE

urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101931/supporting_food_service_workers_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf
Food Service Workers

Uninsurance rate of food service workers by state, 2017

Medicaid nonexpansion states (32.6% on average)

URBAN INSTITUTE

urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101931/supporting_food_service_workers_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf
Volunteers hand out potatoes donated by Washington potato famers in Auburn, Washington, on May 7. According to Grant Morris of Schneider Farms, the food service industry slowdown has resulted in a million pounds of excess potatoes in the state. Jason Redmond/AFP/Getty Images

Hunger Crisis in Photos

Cars line up for food in the Maverik Center parking lot in West Valley City, Utah, on April 24. Rick Bowmer/AP

A line for lunch at Sharing & Caring Hands in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on March 24. *David Joles/Star Tribune/Getty Images*

U.S. COVID-19 Policy Response

March 6, 2020: Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act

March 18, 2020: Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

March 27, 2020: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

April 24, 2020: Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or “food stamps”)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Child Nutrition programs; school meals
- Food Distribution Programs
  - The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)


U.S. Assistance Policy for Covid-19
CARES Act Nutrition Appropriations

appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Coronavirus%20Supplemental%20Appropriations%20Summary_FINAL.pdf

[Graph showing trends in food distribution programs, WIC, Child Nutrition Programs, and Food stamps/SNAP from 2015 to 2020.]

Appropriations above increased entitlement spending

$15.8b

$8.8b

$0.5b

$0.45b
SNAP Total Monthly Benefits

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/SNAPZip69throughCurrent.zip
https://www.covid-impact.org
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Food stamps/SNAP
Food stamps/SNAP Adjustments

**Emergency Allotments**
- Supplements to bring eligible households up to the maximum benefit (2-month limit)

**Pandemic EBT**
- Benefits to children who normally would receive free or reduced-price school meals

**Able-bodied Adults without Dependents**
- Suspended time limits associated with work requirements during national emergency

### Emergency Allotment: Who Benefits?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of units receiving the maximum benefit</th>
<th>On average (based on recent and peak est.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About 40% would not benefit from emergency allotments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Average:** 20%
- **Median:** 0%

**Families in deep poverty:**
- Already receiving maximum benefit,
- No emergency allotments

**Typical emergency allotment recipients**
- **Average:** 85%
- **Median:** 80%

**Income-to-needs ratio (percent)**

- 0
- 50
- 100
- 150

Policy Recommendations

15% ↑ Thrifty Food Plan
Suspend time limits/work requirements (until economy improves)
Fund state admin. costs
Suspend new restrictions

20% ↑ Thrifty Food Plan
Suspend time limits/work requirements (next 4 months)
Extend recertification

Bradley Hardy, American University, and Jim Ziliak, University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research

Dottie Rosenbaum, CBPP senior fellow
SNAP Adjustment Requests

How will States know what kinds of requests FNS is approving?

All incoming requests will be posted to the FNS website within 10 days of receipt. Responses will be sent to State agencies, disseminated by Regional Offices, and posted to the FNS website within 10 days of issuance. Blanket approvals issued by FNS for adjustments under FFCRA will also be posted to the FNS website within 10 days.

# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/19/2020</td>
<td>QC Case Review Extension</td>
<td>State Selected Option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/23/2020</td>
<td>Extended Certification Periods; Waive Periodic Reporting (Received: 3/21/2020)</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26/2020</td>
<td>Adjustments to Interview Requirements</td>
<td>State Selected Option</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/2/2020</td>
<td>Emergency Allotments to Current SNAP Households (Received: 3/31/2020)</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/10/2020</td>
<td>Suspend Student Eligibility Rules (Received: 4/9/2020)</td>
<td>Mass Denial</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pandemic EBT (Received: 3/25/2020)</td>
<td>Approved now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QC Hold Harmless (Received: 4/8/2020)</td>
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</table>


U.S. Assistance Policy for Covid-19
Approved: Emergency Allotment

All states are approved

fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/snap-waivers-flexibilities; updated May 2, 2020
Approved: Pandemic EBT

fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/snap-waivers-flexibilities; updated May 23, 2020
An expanding pilot program that lets food stamp recipients use their benefits online is helping them avoid lines at supermarkets like this one.

Desiree Rios for The New York Times

SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot

As of May 1, 2020:

- Participating
- Planning phase

In New York:
- Amazon
- ShopRite
- Walmart

As of May 23, 2020:

- **Participating**: Participating states in the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot
- **Planning phase**: Planning phase states in the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot

In New York:
- Amazon
- ShopRite
- Walmart

SNAP can reach more families

The Hamilton Project @hamiltonproj · 1h
“For every meal that is provided through a food bank, SNAP provides 9 meals, which is why [...] we need benefit increases to solve this issue.”
#SNAPmatters

Watch Hamilton Project's @laurenlbauer's segment on @CNNSitRoom:

The Situation Room @CNNSitRoom · 15h
A new study found that in nearly 20% of US households, young children aren’t getting enough to eat. “We’ve lost that frontline program that prevents mass nutritional problems with children, the school meals programs,” Brookings fellow Lauren Bauer says.

“For every meal that is provided through a food bank, SNAP provides 9 meals, which is why [...] we need benefit increases to solve this issue.”

https://twitter.com/hamiltonproj/status/1261287302321655808

U.S. Assistance Policy for Covid-19
Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

$19 billion intermediate relief program
CFAP will use the funding and authorities provided in the CARES Act, the Families First Act, and other USDA existing authorities.

1. Direct Support to Farmers and Ranchers: $16 billion in direct support based on actual losses for agricultural producers.

2. USDA Purchase and Distribution: USDA will partner with distributors to purchase $3 billion to provide a pre-approved box of fresh produce, dairy, and meat products to food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits.
Legislation and Food Assistance

Legislation and Food Assistance

Finding your local food bank

https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank
Feeding America, 2018

**FOOD SOURCES** (TOTAL 4.3 BILLION MEALS)
We helped provide 4.3B meals to people facing hunger last year

- 63M Meals Foodservice
- 229M Meals SNAP*
- 540M Meals Purchased Food
- 619M Meals Fresh Produce
- 687M Meals Federal Commodities
- 718M Meals Manufacturing Donations
- 1.4B Meals Retail Donations

*Meals provided by Feeding America outreach.*

https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/our-approach
NYC Food Assistance Resources

NYC.gov/getFood

• **FoodHelp NYC:** Map of free food resources across the city, including food pantries and Grab & Go meals at NYC Schools, available for all children or adults in need

• **ACCESS HRA:** To sign up for SNAP benefits or cash assistance from home

• **HelpNowNYC:** For ways to donate food, cash, or supplies to those in need

• **NYC Food Delivery Assistance:** If you cannot go out to get food, no one can bring you food, and you are not able to use private delivery options, New York City will deliver emergency meals to you for three days. Check your eligibility and sign up
Food Bank for New York City

1,202,000,000+
Free meals provided

1,800+
NYC charities served

$1,069,000,000
Returned to the community

Pantry
Soup kitchen
Mobile pantry
Mobile soup kitchen
Senior service
Home deliveries

foodbanknyc.org

U.S. Assistance Policy for Covid-19
City Harvest

Restaurants that supply to City Harvest
Mutual Aid

• Being created throughout the country to respond to COVID: [https://mutualaid.nyc](https://mutualaid.nyc)

• Resources: Technology, translation, design
## Mutual Aid

https://mutualaid.nyc/resources-groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Title</th>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Resource Details</th>
<th>Link to Resource</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise and Wellness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Classes: Gaga</td>
<td>Exercise and Wellness</td>
<td>In order to strengthen our bodies and refresh ourselves during this ...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.gagapeople.com/en/gaga-online/">https://www.gagapeople.com/en/gaga-online/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga Classes: Modo Yoga NYC</td>
<td>Exercise and Wellness</td>
<td>Modo Yoga Studio is a community of inspired students, joined together b ...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.instagram.com/modoyoganycc/">https://www.instagram.com/modoyoganycc/</a></td>
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<td>Free online gymnastics classes for children</td>
<td>Exercise and Wellness</td>
<td>Industry Gymnastics offers free online gymnastics and movement classes f ...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.industrygymnastics.com/online-classes">https://www.industrygymnastics.com/online-classes</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count 3</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Meals: Three free meals available daily for any New Yorker</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Any New Yorker who wants one can get three free meals a day at more ...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.opt-osfs.org/schoolfoodny/m...">https://www.opt-osfs.org/schoolfoodny/m...</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 Food Hub NYC</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Find resources like how to get funding for food and where to go t ...</td>
<td><a href="http://bit.ly/foodhubnyc">bit.ly/foodhubnyc</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus NYC Neighborhood Food Resource Guides by Hunter College</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>These guides by the Hunter College Food Policy Center list all food ...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/coronavirus-nyc-food...">https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/coronavirus-nyc-food...</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food, Social Service Guidance (e.g. su</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social services for seniors living in</td>
<td>Food, Social Service</td>
<td>The Y provides a variety of social</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ywashhts.org/em">http://www.ywashhts.org/em</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus on Seniors

Health and Hunger Issues among the Aging Population
Senior Hunger and Aging Issues

- Senior centers
- Home care; family care
- Assisted living and nursing homes
- Grocery shopping
- Health and loneliness
- Caretaker availability and well-being
Senior Hunger and Aging

- Social Security, SSI & SNAP, VA pensions, other pensions
- Senior center
- Meals on wheels
  - Public or Voluntary
  - Some senior centers are delivering
  - Some emergency provision by the NYC and possibly other local government
  - $1200 is a big replacement of the loss of senior centers
- Home care
  - Impact on home care workers
- Assisted living and nursing homes
  - Impact of infection on workers and residents.
- Family care
  - Need for support and respite
- The role of Medicaid and Medicare
• Older Americans Act emergency guidance and supplemental funding
  
  • Transportation and personnel costs if sites close where older adults receive meals
  
  • Preparedness for food stocking, delivery and preventative health measures
Income Support

Economic Impact Payment, “relief rebate”, and other sources of support
CARES Act “Recovery Rebate”

Rebate amount:

- $3,500  Married, two children
- $3,000  Married, one child
- $2,500  Married, no children
- $2,000  Head of household, two children
- $1,500  Head of household, one child
- $1,000  Single, no children
- $500
- $0

Adjusted gross income:

- $0
- $50,000
- $100,000
- $150,000
- $200,000
- $250,000
COVID-19 Relief Money Intended Use

GALLUP

Percent

Do not expect payment
Donate to charity
Save or invest it
Nonessential items
Essentials (food, gas)
Pay bills

Household income

Less than $36,000
$36,000 - $89,999
$90,000 or more

9%
18%
26%
9%
18%
26%

4%
4%
5%
3%

3%
17%
10%

24%
30%
32%

Economic Impact Payment?

IRS.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments

**Filers: Get Your Payment**
Use the "Get My Payment" application to:
- Check your payment status
- Confirm your payment type: direct deposit or by mail?
- Enter your bank account information for direct deposit if:
  - We don't have your direct deposit information and
  - We haven’t scheduled your payment yet

[Get My Payment]

**Non-Filers: Enter Your Payment Info Here**
Use the "Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info Here" application if:
- You are not required to file federal income tax returns for 2018 and 2019 for any reason including:
  - Your income is less than $12,200
  - You’re married filing jointly and together your income is less than $24,400
  - You have no income
- You have qualifying children under age 17 and you receive SSI or VA benefits (you must enter your info by May 5)

Do not use this tool if you are required to file a 2018 or 2019 tax return; you should file as you normally would.

[Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info Here]
When will the check arrive?

- Up to 200 million Americans will receive a payment

- IRS will be mailing approximately 5 million checks per week, prioritizing lower-income filers

- Disbursement may occur over 6 months


Where is help coming from?

Assistance sources: Income < $100k

USDA Food and Nutrition Services provides a series of Questions and Answers related to COVID-19:

SNAP: More information

• Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the basics:
  https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

• Center on Poverty and Social Policy:
  https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/news
  • 34% of children in poverty do NOT receive SNAP
     (Parolin and Harris, March 2020)
  • Recent policies have restricted access:
     • Limiting state waiver requests for work requirements
       (Hartley, Wimer, and Waldfogel, March 2019)
     • “Public charge” rule affecting non-citizens’ participation
       (Wimer, Maury, and Bahl, December, 2018)
     • Proposed spending cuts and eligibility restrictions
       (Laird, Hartley, Pac, Wimer, and Waldfogel, January 2018)
“The 2020 CPI forecast indicates a continuation of low inflation at grocery stores and supermarkets. While it is likely that month-to-month volatility will increase as supply chains and the economy adjust to the coronavirus outbreak, we do not now expect big changes to food-at-home prices for the year overall. In 2020, food-at-home prices are expected to increase between 0.5 and 1.5 percent, potentially the fifth year in a row with deflating or lower-than-average inflating retail food prices. Food-away-from-home prices are expected to increase in a range between 1.5 and 2.5 percent in 2020.”

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), April 2009

“ARRA made two important changes to SNAP. The first affected benefit amounts and, in combination with BBCE, expanded the range of incomes at which households would be eligible for some SNAP benefit. The second substantially reduced work requirements for jobless ABAWDs.”

https://research.upjohn.org/up_press/257
Nineteen states, the District of Columbia, the City of New York, and three private plaintiffs have moved to enjoin preliminarily and to stay this new federal rule, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), that would limit state-implemented waivers of the work requirements on which receipt of food assistance from SNAP may be conditioned.

• See Final Rule, SNAP: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, 84 Fed. Reg. 66782 [Dec. 5, 2019]

https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2020cv0119-51
The low-income Americans targeted by USDA’s Final Rule depend on monthly SNAP benefits to avoid hunger. These SNAP participants may wield little political or economic power, but, nonetheless, USDA’s proposed changes to take away nutrition benefits from almost 700,000 people prompted more than 100,000 comments, the majority of which the agency concedes were opposed to the proposed changes.
SNAP Benefit Determination

- Benefits are calculated as normal, and emergency allotments are added up to maximum
  - CARES Act rebates are excluded from income for SNAP eligibility/benefit determination
  - CARES Act unemployment benefits are treated as income similar to usual practice
- ABAWDs may continue regardless of time limits, or if previously disqualified by limits must reapply
SNAP Program Flexibility

• Application filing (mail, telephone, online)
• Interview by phone instead of in-person
• Use maximum allowable certification periods
• Reduce verification burdens using technology
• Work requirement exemptions?
• Internal capacity for operating call centers or web-based interfaces
SNAP ADJUSTMENTS: MASS DENIAL

- Waiving restrictions on students’ eligibility
- Providing emergency allotments that exceed the maximum benefit for a household’s size
- Waiving the state agency’s responsibility to reduce or terminate benefits when a household’s circumstances change or found to be ineligible
- Treating all applications as if they are eligible for expedited processing
- Waiving requirements to use documentary evidence as the primary source of verification for all items except residency and household size
- Waiving requirements to verify gross non-exempt income

SNAP Adjustment Requests

Due to Covid-19 [check all that apply]:

- Residents of the State are confirmed to have contracted Covid-19
- Some or all areas of the State are containment or quarantine zones
- Businesses have closed or significantly reduced their hours
- The State’s residents have experienced economic impacts due to job suspensions or losses
- The State’s residents have been directed to practice social distancing
“The outcome of the lawsuits will dictate how the stimulus funds and any future relief are distributed among the 574 federally recognized tribes, tribal leaders and advocates said. But it also all but guarantees that some of the aid will remain frozen, leaving tribal citizens without critical federal assistance even as the number of virus-related deaths on some reservations eclipses that of entire states.”