

Child hunger in america research paper examples

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English

Introduction

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and yet children are still going to bed hungry. Many people are unaware of the growing problem of poverty and childhood hunger in their own country. Food insecurity has become growing problem in the United States. Food insecurity is defined as “ the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited, or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable ways, while hunger is more narrowly used to mean the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food or the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food” (Maume and Arrighi 18). Poverty rates have increased in America as a result of changes in income, expenses, and access to state and federal assistance programs. The greater income lowers the risk of being food insecure, but even at incomes above the poverty level; there are children in food insecure households. Families and children do not feel hunger just at the kitchen table.

Food insecurity effects health, education, and economic success. There are many people in poverty depending on the government and charities to help them provide food for their children. The government has established several different agencies that are committed to fighting child hunger in America.

Thesis Statement: The charities and non-profit organizations throughout the country are key resources in the fight against hunger in America since government programs alone cannot resolve food insecurity.

Government Policies

It is important to know the different government policies that have been enacted to fight poverty and child hunger. The hunger insecurity really did not take off until the late 1960s, when doctors found third world diseases and hunger in the south. In 1963 the federal government came up with its “poverty line” to determine who was poor and should receive government benefits. The federal government’s poverty line is based on multiplying an inexpensive food budget by three to get the minimum income to meet basic needs. At that time, a typical low-income family had spent about a third of their budget on food (Sreenivasan 87). The Food Stamp Act of 1964 made the food stamp program permanent. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Child Nutrition Act. The Child Nutrition Act provided funding to give free lunches to poor school children through the National School Lunch Act which took effect in 1946 (Sreenivasan 91). The Child Nutrition Act was created to help safeguard the health and nutrition of the nation’s children (Drake 1). The law was further amended in 1968 in order to add summer camps and day-care centers to provide meals to the children. Currently, even churches and other nonprofits took an active part in handing out meals to kids through this program (Drake 1).

In 1972 the federal government created the Special Supplemental food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children with incomes of up to 185 percent of the federal poverty line, and who are anemic or have other nutritional risks, and eligible to receive vouchers or coupons with which they can purchase nutritious food at stores. Unlike the food stamp program, the WIC vouchers

can be used to purchase only certain high-nutrition foods.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Act of 2010 was signed by Barack Obama on December 13, 2010. This law was created for the purpose of reauthorization of budget, and to allocate additional funds to support child nutrition. This program is to support the Child Nutrition Act, which was enacted in 1966, by then President Johnson for the purpose of expanding the National School Lunch Program. The Child Nutrition Act initiated a pilot school breakfast program that was later permanently funded in the 1970s. The Healthy Hunger-Free Act is program that is intended to provide funding for free lunch programs in campuses for the next five years. At the same time, the law has provided a new set of nutrition standards that are imposed upon schools, which provided them a budget of at least \$4.5 billion to implement the program.

The USDA has implemented the core child nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NLP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program, which all aim to feed the hungry children across America.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) was created as a direct certification continuous improvement plans required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The rule has superseded the NSLP regulations to incorporate provisions of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) (Row 12221). The purpose of the law is to encourage States to improve direct certification efforts with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP). The provisions have mandated the state agencies to agree on certain direct certification performance benchmarks, and to implement the continuous improvement plans if the provisions have not been complied with (Rowe 12221).

The goals of the NSLP are twofold. The first is to be able to safeguard the health and well-being of all the school children in the U. S. The second goal is to encourage the domestic consumption of the agricultural commodities of the country (Mortazavi 1704). At present, local and independent schools which had voluntarily enrolled in the federal school-lunch program were entitled to receive cash subsidies and surplus commodities from the USDA. The government has rewarded these schools for their compliance with federal nutritional guidelines and providing low cost and free lunches to needy children (Mortazavi 1704). The consumption of agricultural surplus was the clear goal of the NSLA (Mortazavi 1704). The responsibility of USDA is to be able to serve two masters, one is the public health and the other is the economic viability of the agricultural sector. These dual objectives of using agriculture surplus and feeding poor children do not come easy as it may seem. The primary issue that has to be resolved is to help the poorest among the Americans in the post-war years and the result was a simple calorie deficit. The motivation behind the NSLA is to prevent the weakness and malnutrition that are present in military recruits (Mortazavi 1704). The HHFKA was hailed as a bipartisan success and has instituted effective reforms on the childhood nutrition policy. The law has proven to be a significant shift away from the food paradigm that was practiced in the past. However, careful examination of the law will show that it had failed to

unwind the complex connections between domestic eating habits and ancient farm subsidies. Recent Statistics

Based on statistics, there are about 16.2 million children who suffer from food insecurity. Food insecurity refers to the limited or unavailability of adequate supply of safe and nutritious food for the family. Food insecurity is present in at least 17.2 million households in the U. S. Within that number, there are about 3.9 million children who are not given the right amount of food that is necessary for their growth and development (No Kid Hungry).

The number of families suffer from food insecurity had significantly increased as compared to the national average of households with incomes that are bordering below the federal poverty level. Among these households suffering from food insecurity are those that have single parents, who represent at least 35.1 percent of female-headed households. These are the families who have children who experience food insecurity and rampant among Black and Hispanic households (No Kid Hungry). The condition of food insecurity is highly experience within in large cities, but there are also some families living in rural areas, suburbs and some areas surrounding the large cities who suffer from the crises. The number of households living in large cities that have children who are food-insecure is about 25 percent of the entire population (No Kid Hungry). Studies revealed that a normal food-secure household is spending at least 27 percent to buy food, in comparison to the common food-insecure household having the same size and number of members. Recent report shows that there are about 59 percent of food-insecure households that have participated in one or more of the federal

food and nutrition assistance programs including School Lunch, WIC and SNAP, or which has been formerly known as food stamps (No Kid Hungry).

Funding of Government Programs

Under funding has always been a serious issue for the NSLP. The law has given incentives to the schools to encourage them to offer more nutritious lunches. On the other hand, the HHFKA increases the federal reimbursement rate for free lunches at schools by six cents to \$2.74 per meal given to the needy students. The increase of a few cents appears to be insignificant however in truth, it is considered as the very first direct increase after more than thirty years. After a long time, the government has finally allocated additional budget to implement food programs for needy children (Mortazavi 1704). The HHFKA has allowed the schools to experience an increase in reimbursement if they meet the new nutrition standards set forth by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to the law. However, some of the critics pointed out that the funding for this increase was a result of cutting the budget of another vital nutrition program given to the needy in the form of food stamps.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHKA) has authorized the funding for federal school meal and child nutrition programs across America. The primary purpose is to improve the access to healthy and nutritious food for the children who come from low-income families. The bill that reauthorizes such programs has been known as the child nutrition reauthorization bill. It aims to given additional funding of \$4.5 billion to run these programs for the next ten years. At the same time, the bill reauthorizes the implementation of child nutrition programs for five years. It

can be observed that several of the programs under this bill did not provide for a specific expiration date. However, Congress is required to constantly monitor and reauthorize funding. The purpose of reauthorization is to provide an important opportunity to strengthen the existing programs and to give definite solutions to answer the needs of the poor children and young adults.

The USDA is empowered to set nutritional standards for all the food that are regularly being sold in schools. The USDA also monitors that food being sold during school day which includes vending machines, “ a la carte” lunch lines, and those snacks that are offered by school stores.

Role of U. S. Charities to Help Feeding Programs

There are several charities that have joined the cause to feed the hungry children in America. Some of the top charities that have been performing the same purpose of feeding the poor and needy children are Feeding America's Hungry Children's (FAHC), Cleveland Food Bank, Food Bank of Heartland, Houston Food Bank and Manna Food Center.

Feeding America's Hungry Children (FAHC)

The number one charity that topped the survey is the Feeding America's Hungry Children or the FAHC. The network of this charity has grown to 17 regional food banks and developed food-rescue groups who had been serving sixteen states across the U. S. Further, FAHC has also distributed food and grocery products to one hundred local hunger relief agencies for charity. Some of the hunger relief agencies engaged in Community Kitchens, soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters for women, and other communities that offer emergency food assistance. In order to fund these programs, the

FAHC generates funds through solicitations, food donation and collecting grocery products from the grocery industry, which will in turn be distribute to low-income families within the country. FAHC's report shows that it had been extending its services to thirteen member agencies within eight states in the country. These thirteen agencies had received about 1, 944, 753 pounds of food and grocery supplies. Reports show that the charities are more effective in helping lessening the number of hungry children as compared to the government programs.

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