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INTRODUCTION

- Food insecurity (FI) has been linked to ill health in adults, and negative effects on development, behavior, and mental health in children and adolescents.
- Sources of FI include financial stress, inadequate food preparation skills and nutritional knowledge, and cultural food habits (van der Velde et al., 2019).
- In 2021, 10.2% of households in the U.S. and in 2018, 25.8% of active-duty military personnel experienced food insecurity at some point during the year (Asch et al, 2023).

DEFINITION AND MEASURES OF FI

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as, “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life,” (Economic Research Service, 2021b).
- USDA four levels of food security within households:
 - **High:** No anxiety about, consistent access to food.
 - **Marginal:** Some anxiety about access to food. Food intake and quality not reduced.
 - **Low:** Quality and variety of food reduced, not intake quantity.
 - **Very Low:** Quantity of food intake reduced.
- **FI research measures:** An 18-item survey with 10 items for adults and eight items for families with children.
- **FI clinical measures:** A 6-item survey that can be conducted sensitively by discussion of family needs.

BARRIERS TO MILITARY FAMILIES

- Military service members and families may be reluctant to disclose FI due to military culture’s value of self-sufficiency.
- Military families tend to lack knowledge and awareness of resources available to assist with finances and obtaining food assistance (Asch et al., 2023).

USDA 6-Item Clinical Assessment of FI (Economic Research Service, 2012)

Response options: “often, sometimes, never or don’t know/refused” or “yes/no”

1. The food that we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.
2. We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.
3. In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
4. If yes How often did this happen?
5. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?
6. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry, but didn't eat, because there wasn't enough money for food?

RESOURCES

- Federal programs are listed at feedingamerica.org. These include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and others.
- Local military installations can provide a list of region-specific food assistance programs and some have voluntary food banks and food delivery services.

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