

Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County

Technical Report

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Mecca Burris, M.A., Sarah Bradley, M.A., and David Himmelgreen, Ph.D.
University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology

Kayla Rykiel
University of South Florida, Department of Chemistry

Paige Tucker, M.A. and Danielle Hintz, M.A.
Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County

Elisa Shannon, M.B.A.
Feeding Tampa Bay

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About this report:

This evaluation was carried out by a team of students from the University of South Florida in collaboration with the Juvenile Welfare Board, the Childhood Hunger Initiative, Feeding Tampa Bay, and the Hunger Action Alliance. This study was approved by the USF Institutional Review Board for research integrity and compliance.

This technical report summarizes the data collected through the research project and recommendations for increasing teenage food security in Pinellas County.

Introduction:

Teenagers are a unique demographic category and have physical and social needs distinct from other age categories. The incidence and prevalence of food security among teenagers is an understudied issue that has not been considered in relation to teens' unique social and biological circumstances. This study aims to identify issues related to food insecurity among teenagers in Pinellas County, Florida. Specific focus is given to food access for teens, teen perceptions about food and food availability, barriers to food access for teens, and consequences of teenage food insecurity.

Methods:

Teen participants were recruited from community centers identified for their geographic location, relationship to JWB, and student demographics. Following parental permission, teens (aged 11 to 17) participated in focus groups where topics relating to teen food access and food insecurity were discussed and filled out a survey about concerning their demographics and household food access (n=38). Focus group participants were given the opportunity to participate in the photovoice phase of the project, and then returned for another focus group to discuss their findings (n=13). Photovoice participants were asked to take photos based on two prompts: (1) what does food insecurity or not having enough food look like in your community? (2) how can food insecurity or not having enough food be fixed? Results were analyzed using SPSS Version 24.0 and Dedoose Version 8.0.39.

Results:

The participating teens on average were experiencing low food security, however the rates of food insecurity varied significantly by recruitment site. In this study population, race was significantly associated with food security status, with white teens having the highest rates of food insecurity (71.4%), followed by biracial teens (50%) and black teens (30%).

Participants felt that school locations represent both the greatest barrier to food access, and the greatest site for opportunity for supporting teen food security. Perceptions about the quality of the food, food preference, the amount of food served, and the amount of time teens were given to eat food were discussed as barriers. Stigma was another important barrier to food access, as teens with less economic access to foods did not want to reveal their food insecurity to their peers.

Coping mechanisms for teen food security included food received from community locations (churches, pantries, and other community centers) and community members (including neighbors, family, teachers, and friends). Teens were not likely to utilize food banks or pantries for food access. Illegal strategies were also listed as potential coping mechanisms (including stealing, selling drugs, or prostitution). Some teens felt as if it was their responsibility to get a job to help support their family or to meet their own food needs. The most common coping mechanism for food insecurity was a reliance on affordable, high calorie foods with a low nutritional benefit. Teens were highly aware of the physical, social, and educational consequences of a diet with insufficient calories or that was nutritional deficient.

Recommendations:

In order to increase teen food security in Pinellas County, schools could be encouraged to consider teen preference in development of school lunch programs. If students cannot be given a longer lunch hour, then it is recommended that they are allowed to eat healthy snacks in the classroom to reduce the experience of hunger throughout the school day. If stigma and bullying around poverty and hunger can be reduced in schools, students may be more willing to take advantage of assistance programs. Peer driven initiatives that encourage teens to learn about nutrition, gardening, and food knowledge may also be effective. Overall, teens in this study wished to have some element of autonomy over their food supply and wished to access free foods in ways that did not make them targets for bullying.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, 6.8 million teenagers were considered to be food insecure in the United States (Popkin et al. 2016). Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as having limited or uncertain access to adequate amounts of safe and nutritious foods (USDA ERS 2017a). Experiencing food insecurity has negative impacts on one's health and wellbeing, including increased risks for chronic diseases, obesity, and mental health disorders (Hadley and Crooks 2012). However, food insecurity is especially consequential for adolescents. Adolescence is a critical time of growth within the life course, both physically and cognitively. It is essential that teens receive an adequate diet and nutrition in order to develop and mature properly and avoid future long-term health consequences. Poor health outcomes are associated with both overnutrition and undernutrition. Malnutrition stemming from food insecurity during childhood can result in lowered immunity, growth stunting, early or delayed puberty, and heightened risks for adult-onset diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension (Brenton 2014; Cook and Frank 2008; Locher et al. 2005). In addition, food insecurity is associated with mental stress such as worry and anxiety surrounding food, socioeconomics, and, especially among adolescents, a fear of judgement from others (Connell et al. 2005). Ultimately, the stress of food insecurity can lead to depression (Connell et al. 2005).

Approximately 12% (15.6 million) households in the U.S. are food insecure, and 5% (6.1 million) households have very low food security (Feeding America 2017). U.S. households with children tend to be at an even higher risk of food insecurity, with 17% of households currently food insecure (Feeding America 2017). Furthermore, research shows that households with *older* children have higher rates of food insecurity. While there has been a growing amount of research focusing on the effects of food insecurity, there has been little research concentrating specifically on the prevalence and experiences of teens in regard to these conditions.

Teens are especially vulnerable to both food insecurity and its consequences due to their unique biological and social circumstances. On the one hand, adolescence is a time of substantial growth and development, which is subsequently related to increased nutritional needs. On the other, teens have a distinct awareness of their social and economic environments, which can influence their risk as well as responses to

food insecurity. This awareness may keep teens from asking for or accepting food assistance based on stigma, embarrassment, bullying, and peer pressure (Connell et al. 2005). Furthermore, teens are situated between childhood and adulthood and, therefore, are often faced with conflicting responsibilities. Teens may feel a sense of responsibility to provide for their families in times of food insecurity and make use of various strategies to assist the family. As a result, some teens may engage in risky or illegal behaviors that could be harmful to their development.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to identify issues related to food insecurity among teenagers in Pinellas County, FL as well as better understand the experiences and coping strategies involved with teen food insecurity. Teenagers are in a position where they understand and acknowledge their family's food security environment, and many find the ability to take on strategic roles to help with their needs and the needs of their family. Ultimately, the objective was to generate ideas for improving food assistance programs for teenagers by talking to teens themselves. Since teens have a unique set of needs, both nutritionally and emotionally, that set them apart from adults and children, it is important to understand the barriers of teen food security to mitigate the consequences and ensure communal efforts are effective and sensitive to the needs of this group.

BACKGROUND

Social Determinants of Food Insecurity

Geography

Two geographical factors that influence food security are food deserts and food swamps. A food desert is an area that is one or more miles away from sufficient amounts of nutritious foods. Living in a food desert can limit one's ability to obtain adequate foods on a consistent basis, especially for those without reliable transportation (American Nutrition Association 2015). There is a significant food desert issue in Pinellas County, with an estimated 36,000 low-income individuals living in these areas (Pinellas County Health and Community Services, 2013). This food desert issue keeps many families from having access to foods through a local, major supermarket (Johns et al. 2013). In contrast, a food swamp is an area that is dense in food options

that have low nutritional value, such as fast-food restaurants and convenience stores (Hager et al. 2017). For those that are economically disadvantaged, these fast-food restaurants and convenience store options may be the most reasonably priced given their financial circumstances. Other circumstances, such as having children or limited availability due to long work hours, can increase the prevalence of consuming fast and convenient foods (Dubowitz et al. 2007). Lastly, lack of transportation services remains a major hindrance to food security and access to sufficient food sources (Joslin 2017).

Issues with Current Food Assistance Programming

Support through programming and community organizations is a prominent source of food assistance for food insecure individuals (Feeding America 2016). Resources for adolescents may include food pantries, after school programs, the National School Lunch Program, and Summer BreakSpot, which is part of the Federal Food Program.

However, teens may not fully utilize the resources that are available due to lack of access, inefficiencies, misinformation, or stigmatizations surrounding food assistance programs (Feeding America 2016). Teens often note that they feel food assistance programs are not targeted directly towards their age group and are more often being marketed towards younger children (Feeding America 2016). Furthermore, teens may feel that the food being provided through these programs does not have enough sustenance in order to keep them full (Feeding America 2016). Some teens will offer the food they receive through assistance programs to their younger counterparts, as they feel that younger children need the food more than they do (Feeding America 2016).

In other instances, food assistance programs are targeted towards adults. Feeding Tampa Bay, a leading food pantry distributor in the Tampa Bay region, requires that food pantry clients be 18 or older in order to receive food (one box per client). For any USDA pantry, a teen must be accompanied by an adult and the household must meet income requirements (USDA 2017b). While the likelihood of a teen being turned away from a pantry may be low, the sentiment of these regulations leaves teens feeling discouraged from using food assistance resources. They may be apprehensive about being turned away or fear they will get themselves or their families in trouble. Teens fear that community members or social services may view their parents as unfit

guardians if they were aware of their food insecure status (Popkin et al. 2016; Connell et al. 2005). A more comprehensive understanding of how teens experience food insecurity can assist to identify where the gaps in food assistance exist and help to ensure programs efficiently market towards teens.

Another factor that makes teenagers a unique demographic category is that adolescents spend most days of the year in school. Therefore, teens must get the food they need in order to properly focus, feel energized, and have fewer behavioral issues throughout the school day (Stuber 2014). Furthermore, schools are often a main source of food for teens. According to the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment III (SNDA-III), approximately 60% of middle school students and 40% of high-school students receive lunch provided by their schools (Poppendieck 2011). During the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 51% of students in Pinellas County were eligible for free or reduced lunch (Kids Count Data Center 2016). In the 2017-2018 school year, free breakfast was provided in all Pinellas County schools. However, multiple studies have reported that the majority of students do not eat the lunches provided (Janavi et al. 2016; Contento et al. 2006; Hamersa and Kim 2016; Poppendieck 2011; Savige et al. 2007). Underlying causes for this trend include students being dissatisfied with the quantity or quality of the food they are provided or the stigmatization that is associated with receiving free or reduced lunch (Janavi et al. 2016; Poppendieck 2011; Hamersa and Kim 2016; Popkin et al. 2016).

Stigmatization

Adolescents are acutely aware of their peers and their surroundings. Teens who receive free or reduced lunch in school are susceptible to feelings of stigmatization. The presence of stigma surrounding food insecurity and food assistance programs, accompanied by feelings of embarrassment and shame, often keeps teens from eating school lunch or participating in assistance programs (Connell et al. 2005; Popkin et al. 2016; Hamersa and Kim 2016; Poppendieck 2011). Adolescents may also be unlikely to ask for assistance from people they do not know and trust (Popkin et al. 2016).

Due to feelings of embarrassment, teens will often try to actively hide issues of food insecurity (Popkin et al. 2016). The National School Lunch Program provides free or reduced-priced food to children who qualify. However, participation in the program heavily contributes to stigmatization surrounding food insecurity and

lower income through the presence of competitive foods. Competitive foods are items that are for sale within the school that have to be purchased separately from items included in the National School Lunch Program (Poppendieck 2011). The availability of competitive foods within schools can easily distinguish between students of higher and lower incomes. In Pinellas County, at least 75% of middle and high schools have competitive foods available (Pinellas County Schools Summary Report 2017). Researchers believe that this fear of stigma and bullying as a result of participation is what influences students to not eat school lunch through these programs (Hamersa and Kim 2016; Popkin et al. 2016). Furthermore, teens may also skip lunch and go hungry if they are dissatisfied with the food being provided at schools due to preference or dietary restrictions.

Family Support and Household Structure

As previously mentioned, households with children are at a greater risk for food insecurity. This risk is further increased in single parent households. Of the households in poverty in Pinellas County, approximately 38% of households are supported by a single parent (United Way 2017). In single-female headed households, 39% are in poverty and 34% are considered to be ALICE households (United Way 2017). For single-male headed households, 19% are in poverty and 47% are considered to be ALICE households (United Way 2017). This means that around 70% of single-parent households are struggling in Pinellas County.

More recent research has suggested that the age of household members may be a considerable contributing factor in the prevalence of food insecurity. In a report by the United States Department of Agriculture, the prevalence of food insecurity and very low food security was found to be significantly higher in households with adolescents in comparison to homes with children below the age of nine (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012; Gregory and Coleman-Jensen 2013). In 2012, a study found that households with children aged nine to seventeen encompassed 70% of food insecure households with children (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012).

Household structure and age of household members may influence food security through a variety of circumstances. One possible explanation for increased food insecurity in households with adolescents is the increased nutritional demands of that particular age group. However, older child household members may have the ability to get jobs in order to contribute financially. Also, younger children in the household may result in child care expenses. Older adults in the home could cause increased expenses due to health issues. Thus, food

insecurity is multifaceted and there may be multiple contributing factors at play within the household. In addition, intra-household variation in food access and security may be found in households with multiple generations or genders (Himmelgreen et al. 2016).

Consequences of Teen Food Insecurity

Over the past 25 years, there has been a consistent increase in childhood obesity in relation to food insecurity and hunger in the United States. The consequences of food insecurity and food insufficiency among children and adolescents is sufficiently documented. These consist of poorer overall health including more frequent stomach aches, colds, headaches, and hospitalizations, lower bone mineral content in adolescent boys, stunting, wasting, nutrient deficiencies such as iron deficiency anemia among adolescents, impaired social development and behavioral issues, lower mental proficiency, depression and anxiety, and lower school achievement (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012; Himmelgreen 2013; Hamrick and McClelland 2016; Whitaker et al. 2006). In addition, early-life malnutrition is highly related to overweight and obesity in childhood, as well as into adulthood, increasing the risk of chronic diseases (Hamrick and McClelland 2016).

Teens are particularly vulnerable to these consequences due to their physical and development demands and their place within society. They may feel, or others may pressure them to feel, responsible for their own and/or their families' food security. In addition, influences such as homelessness and teen pregnancy, where food sources and consumption may be more inconsistent, places teens at an even higher risk for food insecurity and later-life consequences (citation needed). Coping strategies, particularly those of risky behavior, can also lead to long-term implications for youth in the United States. Common adaptive behaviors to food insecurity is to overconsume when food is available and to eat energy-dense foods. Fram et al. found that child food insecurity was positively associated with consuming more total calories, sugar, and fat, and negatively associated with vegetable consumption (2015). These habits may become maladaptive, however, when families continue these consumption patterns when food is no longer scarce or more specifically when adequate calories are accessible (Hamrick and McClelland 2016).

Food security also plays an important role in mental and social health and has a significant effect on the emotional well-being of children and teenagers (Cook et al. 2004; Alaimo et al. 2001; Fram et al. 2011;

Peterson et al. 2014; Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014). When facing food insecurity, adolescents express concerns surrounding food availability, stressed family relationships or interactions, and fear and embarrassment caused by social stigma (Fram et al. 2011; Peterson et al. 2014; Feeding America 2016; Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014). Food security initiatives that target teens in ways that work to eliminate stigma can have a positive influence on not just food security and access but also mental and emotional health. For example, an evaluation of a school backpack program in Missouri also uncovered that students reported feeling happier and full after receiving the packs (Peterson et al. 2014). Participants also claimed they paid better attention in class, were more motivated, and performed better in school both academically and socially (Peterson et al. 2014). Teachers within the same program evaluation said the backpacks resulted in less student absences, increased attentiveness in class, and improved student work-quality (Peterson et al. 2014). Lastly, a systematic review found that since the recession, self-rated health has declined and mentally unhealthy days has increased among U.S. adolescents, particularly those from low-income households (Rajmil et al. 2014). We must ask ourselves how much of this distress is coming from worry or experiences relative to food insecurity.

METHODS

Ethics

The research study *Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County* Pro00032420, was approved by the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board for research integrity & compliance. All identifiable information remained confidential throughout the research process. Appropriate measures were taken to protect the identities of participants including omitting any names mentioned within recordings and securing files with participant's names within a locked file cabinet. No identifiable information has been included within the datasets, transcriptions, analyses, or write-up. Participants were and will be referred to by "teen" and gender.

IRB approved assent and parental permission forms were obtained for all participants before their participation. Participants were informed prior to participation of the objectives and methodologies of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary. Furthermore, all participants were aware that they did not

have to answer any question that made them comfortable and that they could stop participation at any time with no consequences.

Resource packets with local food assistance resources and counseling services were provided to teens following each focus group. The list of counseling resources was to ensure assistance to any teen who felt distressed after the conversation or who may be dealing with mental health issues.

Recruitment

The research was funded by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB). Community sites affiliated with JWB were chosen as recruitment and research sites based on their geographic location within Pinellas County, student demographics (with the goal of achieving a representative sample), and desire to participate in the research. The four initial sites included the Police Athletic League (PAL) of Pinellas County, Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center, Hispanic Outreach Center Intercultural Advocacy Institute, and the Pinellas Park's Youth Park Teen Center. One site was added as a more convenient location for the teens who participated at the PAL focus group—Boys and Girls Clubs of the Suncoast.

A total of 38 teens was recruited from these community sites. Study staff approved by the University of Florida IRB visited each site and explained the research objectives and methods to the students. Flyers along with sign up and parental permission forms were left at the sites for teens to take home to their parents. Teens who wanted to participate returned the signed forms to the sites by placing them in a confidential box. Participants had to be a permanent resident of Pinellas County, Florida, between the ages of 11 and 17, and mentally stable to ensure their full understanding and consent. The study coordinator collected the forms and scheduled the initial focus groups with the students.

For the photovoice phase, students were recruited from the first focus groups. After finishing the initial focus group, students were asked to participate in the photovoice project. Those who wanted to participate were given disposable cameras to take photos based on two prompts: (1) what does food insecurity or not having enough food look like in your community? (2) how can food insecurity or not having enough food be fixed? Photovoice participants turned in their cameras to the sites and met for a second focus group to discuss their photos.

Research Setting

Pinellas County is one of three counties in the Tampa Bay region of Florida. There are approximately 970,637 individuals living in Pinellas County (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). Among this population, the majority minority groups consist of 10.9% Black/African American individuals and 9.3% Hispanic or Latino individuals (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). Feeding America reports that approximately 141,130 individuals are food insecure in Pinellas County, which makes up nearly 15% of the total population (Feeding America 2016). In Pinellas County, 14.1% of individuals live below the federal poverty line.

The ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) project assesses needs based on the household survival budget that is determined for each county within a state. ALICE persons are those that live paycheck-to-paycheck due to high living costs. In a recent report, it was found that 41% of household incomes in Pinellas County do not meet the Household Survival Threshold (ALICE Threshold) measured by the ALICE project (United Way 2017). As a result, approximately two-fifths of Pinellas households are struggling to pay for basic necessities but do not qualify for government-funded assistance (United Way 2017).

Data Collection

Data was collected through survey, focus groups, and photovoice. Below we discuss each method in more detail.

Focus Groups and Survey

Focus groups have proven to be a successful method in allowing teens to voice their concerns (Fram et al. 2011; Popkin et al. 2016). Teens may be reluctant to discuss matters, particularly those of sensitive subjects, within a more formal interview setting where they may feel pressured or uncomfortable. In addition, focus groups provide peer-support, spark thoughts and new questions, and ultimately can provide more data than interviews alone. In addition, talking with teens directly about their own food insecurity experiences as well as the food security situation of the community and schools has proven to be a valid and credible source of information regarding adolescent food insecurity (Popkin et al. 2016; Fram et al. 2011; Fram et al. 2015; Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014). Recent studies by Fram and colleagues show that children are aware of

household food insecurity and are the best respondents for their own experiences (Fram et al. 2011; Fram et al. 2015).

For this research study, four focus groups were held at the four study sites affiliated with the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County. Each focus group had no more than 10 participants and two facilitators. At the beginning of the focus groups, assent forms were explained and signed by the teens. After providing assent, teens completed a short survey about their demographics and food security. The survey included the USDA Self-Administered Food Security Survey Module for Children Ages 12 Years and Older (USDA 2006). Food and beverages along with bags of food to take home were provided as incentives.

The objective of the focus group discussion was to invoke discourse among teens regarding their observations of food insecurity in their communities and strategies used by teens to mitigate food insecurity. The questions included topics of food acquisition of teens, challenges to obtaining food in general, limitations to getting adequate amounts of safe and nutritious foods, and coping mechanisms teens use to deal with food challenges and insecurity. The focus group also initiated conversation about ideas for solving teen food insecurity within the teens' communities and schools.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method that has been proven successful in providing participants (often hard-to-reach or disenfranchised groups) an active role in the research and defining concerns, as well as advocacy for those groups (Streng et al. 2004). It is based on the perspective that “people are the experts of their own lives” (Wang 2009). Photovoice allows teens to “identify, describe, discuss, organize themselves and others, and act upon the issues affecting them” (Streng et al. 2004). Ultimately, it is a powerful tool in the contextualization of communal issues (Streng et al. 2004). The strengths of using photovoice include the minimization of potential research bias and prioritization of issues—it lets the community members decide what issues and experiences are important. Also, photovoice can bring up questions and invoke discussion that may have been missed in the original focus groups.

Initiating a photovoice exhibit has also been proven to be a successful method in amplifying the voice of community members, particularly adolescents, reaching decision makers, gatekeepers, and the wider

community and raising awareness of important contextual problems (e.g., food insecurity among teens), and ultimately initiating efforts for social change (Wang 2009; Streng et al. 2004).

Photovoice consisted of four stages: stage 1— explanation and teaching of the photovoice method; stage 2— photographing; stage 3— focus group to share, discuss, and analyze photographs; stage 4— exhibit to display findings to the community and policy makers.

Stage 3 of photovoice involved teens coming together for a final focus group to discuss their photos. These took place at the approved community sites. Food and beverages were provided along with \$25 Walmart gift cards to the teens who completed the photovoice stages. Each participant chose up to 5 photographs to discuss in regards to the prompted questions. The teens took turns sharing their photos and answering the questions: 1. What do you see here? 2. What is really happening here? 3. How does this relate to our lives? 4. Why does this condition exist? 5. What can we do about it? These questions have been used consistently in preceding research and proven valuable in identifying themes and narrowing down photographs for presentation (Wang and Burris 1997). The teens provided captions for each of the photos after they were discussed.

After each teen shared their photos, the group came up with themes that they saw throughout the photos. These themes will be used to display the photographs within a community exhibit as well as for future presentations and conferences.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 24.0. Descriptive statistics were used to understand and summarize the demographics of the sample as well as food (in)security. Food security and food insecurity are determined by the USDA Self-Administered Food Security Survey Module for Children Ages 12 Years and Older. Affirmative responses are summed for each individual to provide a raw score on the scale. Scores are then classified into food security categories as follows: a raw score of 0 = *high food security*; a raw score of 1 = *marginal food security*; a raw score of 2-5 = *low food security*; and a raw score of 6-9 = *very low food security* (USDA 2006). For statistical analyses using interval variables, the raw scores are translated to scale scores based on the Rasch measurement model (USDA 2006). For binary analyses, high and marginal

food security categories are deemed *food secure*, and low and very low food security categories are considered *food insecure*.

Chi-square tests were used to assess associations between food security categories and categorical demographic variables. Non-parametric central tendency comparison tests evaluated differences in food security between groups within the sample (e.g. sites, gender, race, and ethnicity). Pearson's correlation coefficient tested for significant correlations between food (in)security and household makeup (e.g. household size and the number of children living in the home).

Qualitative Analysis

All focus groups (initial and photovoice) were transcribed and uploaded into Dedoose Version 8.0.39, an online software for qualitative analysis. Prior to analysis, the research team read through the transcription and created a flexible codebook based on the research questions and common themes throughout the data. Using Dedoose, codes were applied to the qualitative data and emergent codes were added throughout the analysis. Two researchers analyzed and coded each transcription. The codes are then used to quantify qualitative findings.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Sample Demographics

A total of 38 teens participated in the study, with 13 participating in the photovoice project. Summary statistics of the demographics in Table 1 below. The sample is racially and ethnically diverse. Almost two-thirds of the sample were male. Ages ranged from 11 to 18 years. One-third of the teens live in households that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps.

Table 1
Summary Statistics (n = 38)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Age (y)	13.7	13	13	2.026
Household Size	5.76	6	6	2.059
# of Children in Household	2.3	2	1	1.29
Grade Level	8.8	8	8	1.95
	n	%		
Race (n = 37)				
Biracial	4	11%		
Black	17	46%		
White	12	32%		
Other	4	11%		
Ethnicity (n = 37)				
Hispanic	15	41%		
Not Hispanic	22	59%		
Gender				
Female	14	37%		
Male	24	63%		
Food Assistance				
SNAP	13	34%		
WIC	1	3%		
Food Pantry	1	3%		
All	1	3%		
None	22	58%		

Table 2
Food Security (n = 25)

	n	%	
Food Insecure	11	44%	% Out of Total Sample
Low Food Security	9	82%	36%
Very Low Food Security	2	18%	8%
Food Secure	14	56%	
High Food Security	9	64%	36%
Marginal Food Security	5	36%	20%

Food Security

Due to a printing issue, some of the teens were not able to complete the food security survey. Thus, food security statistics are provided for 25 participants. Among the 25 participants that did complete the entire food security survey, 44% were food insecure. The majority of food insecure teens experience *low food security*. The amount of participants in each food security category is shown in Table 2.

The mean food security raw score is 2. Therefore, the sample on average is experiencing *low food security*. The mode is 0 and the median score is 1. The standard deviation is 2.29. Figure 1 on page 20 shows the frequency distribution of the food security scores is skewed to the right as there is one positive outlier.

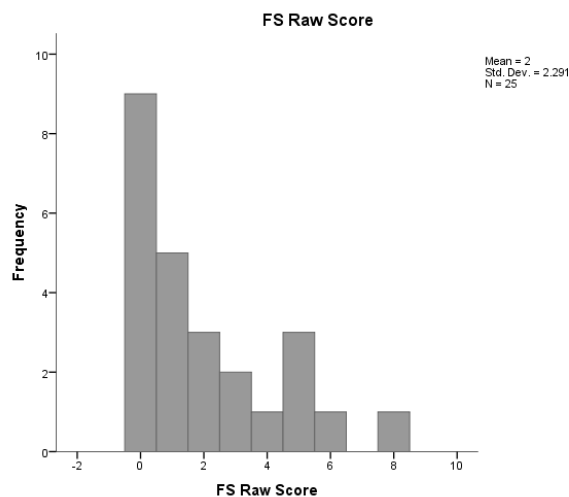


Figure 1: Histogram of food security scores

Table 3

Chi-Square Crosstab for Food Security and Research Site

Center	Food Insecure	Food Secure	Mean Raw Score	Raw Score Translations
HOC	3	0	4.33	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0—High food security• 1—Marginal food security• 2-5—Low food security• 6-9—Very low food security
BGC	5	0	4.2	
PP Teen Center	3	7	1.2	
Sanderlin	0	7	0.57	
Total	11	14		

When removing the outlier, the mean becomes 1.75, which is just below low food security in the module (low food security = 1.9 - 3.4), but the median and mode remain the same.

Categorical Associations with Food Insecurity

A chi-square analysis found that center participation, gender, race, and ethnicity are significantly associated with food security status. Students from the Boys and Girls Club of Suncoast (BGC), located in Largo, and the Hispanic Outreach Center (HOC), located in Clearwater, have higher rates of food insecurity compared to students from the other sites ($p < 0.001$; Table 3). A non-parametric mean analysis further supports this finding. The Kruskal Wallis test shows that significant differences in mean food security scores exist among the sites, where teens from HOC and BGC have significantly higher mean food security scores (raw) of 4.33 and 4.2 (= low food security) when compared to the other sites ($p = 0.007$).

Approximately 44.4% of males are food insecure, while 42.9% of females are food insecure ($p < 0.001$). However, when observing females who are food insecure in Table 4 ($n = 3$), the majority have *very* low food security ($n = 2, 67\%$) versus *low* food security. In opposition, all food insecure males fall into the *low* food security category with none of the males experiencing *very* low food security. Thus, the significant association between gender and food insecurity may be that females experience more severe food insecurity than males.

Table 4
Chi-Square Crosstab for Food Security and Gender

	High Food Security	Marginal Food Security	Low Food Security	Very Low Food Security
Female	1	3	1	2
Male	8	2	8	0
Total	9	5	9	2

Looking at the mean food security raw scores, females have a mean score of 2.7, which is classified as low food security, and males have a mean score of 1.7, which is classified as marginal food security. While the difference in mean food security scores are not significant ($p = 0.446$), it appears that female teens in this sample report a higher severity of food insecurity when compared to males.

Race is also significantly associated with food security status ($p < 0.001$), where white participants have the highest rate of food insecurity (71.4%) followed by biracial teens (50%) and black teens (30.8%). In addition, Hispanic self-identification significantly associates with food security ($p = 0.02$), where teens who are not Hispanic have a higher rate of food insecurity (47%) than Hispanic teens (43%). See table 5 for a visual representation of food security among the groups.

For both race and ethnicity, the sample sizes are uneven. Furthermore, both parametric and non-parametric comparative analyses are nonsignificant when comparing the mean and median food security scores between the racial and ethnic groups. Thus, these findings should be taken with reservation.

Table 5
Chi-Square Crosstab for Food Security and Race/Ethnicity

	Food Insecure	Food Secure
Race		
Biracial	2	2
Black	4	9
Native Hawaiian	0	1
White	5	2
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	3	4
Non-Hispanic	8	9

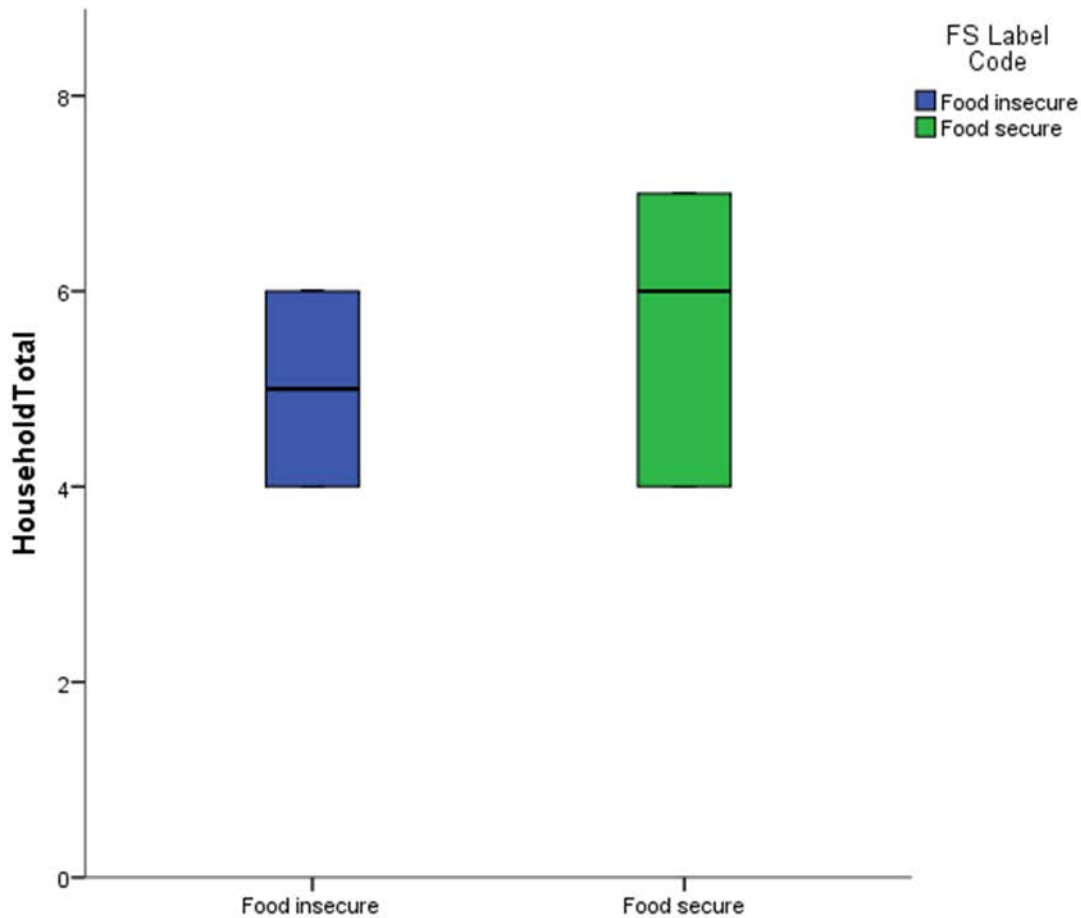


Figure 2: mean household size for food secure and food insecure teens

Household Size and Food Security

The associations between food security and ethnicity may stem from the site locations or household size. A Mann-Whitney U test shows a significant difference in the mean household size between Hispanic teens and non-Hispanic teens ($p = 0.024$). On average, Hispanic teens live in households with seven people and non-Hispanic teens live in households with five people.

While there was not a significant correlation between household size and food security after removing the outlier ($p = 0.08$), you can see in Figure 2 that food secure teens, represented in green, have a higher mean household size when compared to food insecure teens (represented in blue). Thus, a larger household may be advantageous for food security in this sample.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

FACTORS LIMITING TEEN FOOD SECURITY

Coding the focus group discussions provided common themes regarding factors behind food insecurity among teens, common teen food sources and nutritional issues, coping strategies used by teens to deal with food insecurity and issues surrounding access to healthy and safe food, perceived consequences of teen food insecurity, and ideas for teen food insecurity solutions. We will discuss in depth the findings under each of these main themes, beginning with the factors that limit teen food security.

School Issues

Teens in our sample feel that the largest hindrance to teen food security starts at school. School issues, whether food or socially related, was brought up the most among participants (242 mentions). There were seven main issues that teens discussed regarding school.

Food Quality

The biggest concern among teens regarding school issues was the quality of food and the lack of food options at school (113 mentions). Teens' responses were consistently negative when asked questions about school-provided meals. Almost all the teens had negative views toward the quality and taste of foods served. In addition, the most common photo responses to the photovoice questions were photos of school-provided food options. The concerns regarding the quality of food included:

- Leftovers being served; same foods being re-heated and served each day; foods tasting “stale”
- Foods being frozen before cooked/served
- Foods not being cooked all the way (still cold or frozen; not cooked in the middle); or burnt
- Foods being hard, particularly the cheese, bread, and pizza crust

T1: “Yeah, it got reheated. Just like when they have parfaits, and every kid doesn’t get a parfait, so they put it in the refrigerator. I see the parfaits from Monday to Thursday...and I don’t think that’s good...”

T4: “They sit there from breakfast to lunch.”

T1: “And then they just put them back in the refrigerator. And I don’t think it’s good because kids can get sick.”

- Food tasting or looking “disgusting”, “sick”, “yucky”, “nasty”, having no flavor/bland, watered-down, not tasting like it should, or tasting like chemicals (e.g. bleach) or plastic
- Foods being undesirable colors (e.g. yellow sauce on pizza, green honey mustard)
- The importance of the appearance of food. If something “looks disgusting”, students are not going to eat it.
- Schools serving unhealthy food, “fake” food –(particularly cheese, meat, and pizza), “trash/garbage”, or “junk”–
 - Many times referring to highly processed or sugary food items such as Poptarts, frozen pizza, and syrup and bread for breakfast
 - Many times referring to options that teens do not feel are actually healthy, such as diet sodas, sports drinks, and whole-grain pizza.
- Foods being unsafe to eat, including serving expired foods (e.g. milk, produce), produce that hasn’t been washed and still have dirt or pesticide spray on them, condiments and utensils that are left out and never cleaned, and witnessing students getting sick from eating the school provided meals.

These findings emphasize that presentation, freshness, and overall quality of foods served at school are important to teens.

Participants had critical concerns regarding the quality of food

T1: They had scrambled green eggs and ham too. It was disgusting. It looked disgusting. They would like pick up the eggs and water would drip out. Disgusting. There’s water in the pan with the...”

T2: “and then, I think...well, obviously they prepare, they pre-cook it so they can just put it all out when the kids come. And you can’t cook an egg, and then let it sit. And then heat it up again and give it to kids... I don’t think that’s right.”

“Yeah, all our breakfasts are either packaged and there’s only one thing that they make and it looks so weird like the bacon is just strips of meat is dried up...Like the only thing healthy is the Nutrigrain bars.”

– Male Teen

“Our healthy choice for drinking stuff is diet sodas.”

– Female Teen

T1: “It’s a croissant with powdered eggs.”

T2: “Not even really ham.”

T3: “I think its fake cheese”

“Also, we have incidents where I don’t really trust the health side of our food department. So, I feel like if there’s anything in my yogurt, since its white yogurt, I can see that it doesn’t belong in there.”

– Female teen

“So, just make it available but also, as we said, just make sure it’s not stuff that once it is available we don’t want to eat it because it’s still dirty or has pesticides on it or it’s spoiled. And then I know a lot of people in the staff, they wouldn’t even eat it. So, it’s like why do you expect us to eat it?”

– Female teen



Figure 3: "Need More"

including the safeness and nutritional quality. They felt strongly that the poor quality and lack of food options is keeping teens from getting enough food throughout the day. Thus, negative perceptions of school food play a large role within the risk of teen food insecurity.

Food Quantity

The quantity of food served and available at school was another large concern among teens (37 mentions). It was a common theme throughout the photos taken for the photovoice project as well. Teens strongly felt that the school-provided breakfast and lunch do not provide enough food to get “full” or “full meals.” In addition, they felt that the foods provided at school do not fulfill the energetic and nutritional needs of teens. Teens expressed substantial knowledge of the

“There’s barely enough food on the tray for someone to eat and get some energy from it. Pretty much, schools aren’t providing enough food for children to eat. So that’s why people are still hungry afterwards, even though lunch was like, two hours later... And if they want to get another one of these then it costs more money.”

– Male Teen

importance of adequate nutrition for healthy adolescent growth, energy, good school performance, and both physical and mental health.

The photo and quote on page 25 go hand-in-hand. A teen took a picture of his school breakfast, which was one sausage in a basket, three apple slices, and a juice bag. As you can see in the quote, he was unhappy with the quantity and the fact that you had to spend more money to get more.

A large theme under food quantity issues is the cheese sandwich for students who do not have lunch money or are behind on their payments (see figure 4 below). Participants discussed how the sandwich is not enough food and embarrassing (which we will touch on more in the stigma section). They said things like “it’s not even a whole piece of cheese, they cut it,” “It’s like barely a sandwich,” and “some bread with cheese on it and that’s it.” Other comments regarding quantity included things like “only three slices of apple,” “only a burger and a fruit,” “not a full a meal,” and “your main thing, a fruit, a milk, and that’s it.” They expressed how adding one more item or allowing teens to get more if desired could go a long way.



Figure 4: "Come on now"

The concern with the quantity of foods at school went beyond the National School Lunch Program. Teens also felt that there are not enough supplemental/additional foods available at school for teens who do not want to get the school lunch or breakfast or do not have time to eat. The issue extended to *vending machines*, which was another common theme under school-related problems (19 mentions).

Teens felt the machines are always empty, lacking in options, or do not work and often steal their money. Participants see this is a large concern because they rely heavily on vending machines and quick/convenient foods as a food source at school. Whether they do not want to eat the school breakfast or lunch or do not have time to, teens turn to vending machines to get something in their stomach. Thus, when the quantity of foods in the machines or snack areas at school is lacking, teen access to food is reduced further.

Another concern relative to quantity is the expressed need for more water and healthy drink options at school. Students discussed how they only get milk or juice from the school, and the vending machines only provide unhealthy and overpriced items or do not work when they need water. Rules around which water fountains and vending machines students can go to along with regulations on water bottle colors (has to be clear) further hinders access to beverages.

“...depending on what time of morning you get there, you either get there after the warning bell is ringing so you don’t have time to go to the lines because they close it even if your bus was late or whatever, they don’t care, or you get there when everyone is getting there. So, the [breakfast] lines are really long. So, they have options where you can get cereal bars out of the vending machine or if you want to do that for lunch since our lunch is breakfast. **But you can’t really have that option if there’s nothing in the vending machine.** As you can see, there’s only like five cereal bars in here and most of the time our vending machines, you’ll put your money in and nothing will come out and then you go and tell someone and they’re like “Oh there should be a number on the machine and you have to call that number and they’ll mail it out to you.” **But what do I do about my food? They don’t know?”**

– Female Teen

“I think it [relying on junk food] happens because they don’t take into account that not all of us are able to get into the lunch lines in a timely manner and even if we are they don’t really have all of the options that we would like or if you get to school late and the cafeteria isn’t open but you’re still hungry that’s like one of those things where you can just in between classes get something to eat and go back to class.

--Female teen

“The line feels like you’re waiting to get a million dollars.”

– Male Teen

Time and Rules

Issues with time was the second most common concern at school (51 mentions) and connected with rules and regulation regarding eating and drinking and attendance (26 mentions). Students feel that they *do not get enough time to eat at school* (34 mentions). They expressed concerns surrounding long lines, only having 30 minutes for lunch, and having to choose getting food over socializing with friends, working on homework, or going outside. Some schools call tables one at a time, which teens feel is biased and unfair. If their table is called last or close to last, they do not have enough time to get their food and eat it too.

In connection with not having enough time to eat, students feel that *prohibiting eating in the classroom* further limits their ability to obtain food security. Within participants' schools, the regulations around classroom eating vary by teacher and class. Thus, teens who have classes in the morning or after lunch in which they are not allowed to bring food or eat in will simply go without. Teens that had more lenient teachers discussed how they are able to eat their fruits, breakfast, or snacks when they did not have time to get or finish the school-provided meals. Concurrently, not having enough time to eat leads teens to supplement meals with convenient snack foods or "food on the go". Therefore, time issues surrounding food within schools may play a role within teen food insecurity, as teens may not have the time to get healthy or enough food.

This leads us to the other *issue of when food is served* at Pinellas County Schools (12 mentions). Most of the teens must be at school before 7 a.m. The earliness of the start of school makes it difficult for teens to get there in time to take advantage of the free school breakfast, as you can see in the last two quotes. Teens also discussed how they would rather sleep longer than get up in time to eat at home or at school. For the teens who are not allowed to eat in first period, they go without breakfast. Furthermore, *the strict rules around tardiness and attendance* after lunch keeps teens from attempting to get food. Essentially, teens feel that eating is not worth the risk of being late to school or class.



Figure 5: "Breakfast please"

Participants were also *unhappy with when "lunch" is served*. The majority have lunch periods before 10 a.m. Thus, they feel that this is too early to serve and eat "lunch." In addition, participants discussed how lunch food items (e.g. hot foods, sandwiches) are not fitting for such an early time of day. Instead, they'd prefer the choice of breakfast options as well as typical lunch foods. Lastly, it is important to note subsequent disadvantages with serving lunch at 9 a.m. Without the ability to get snacks either from competitive food venues, teachers, or bringing them from home, teens are going without eating from the morning to when they have dinner. Even if they receive a snack from an after-school program, these items likely do not provide the nutrition necessary to

"Okay and then my last picture is a parfait. So, our breakfast is, I'm sorry our lunch, is at 9:30 in the morning so this is like the only thing I feel comfortable eating most of the days because it's the only breakfast-like food where everything else is more lunch food at a breakfast time. So, it's more like chicken sandwiches and burgers and stuff that you would probably eat for dinner; like chicken and mashed potatoes. Yeah, and I'm like "I kinda just woke up a few hours ago."

--Female teen

meet the needs of growing teens. This is an even greater concern for the students who are not eating any food at school.

Preference

Teen *food preferences* (67 mentions) play a large role within eating choices and patterns. Preference was the second most common factor related to food insecurity among teens. Teens felt that schools do not provide food options that students like. This was the consensus for items included in the free and reduced-priced lunch program. As we see in the above themes, teens in this study would rather not eat or snack than eat school foods that they view as undesirable. Preferences involve taste, appearance, cultural food preferences (e.g. rice and chicken among Hispanic teens), nutritional quality, and ideas about what types of foods should be eaten at various times of the day. As you can see in the quote on page 31, the type of foods served are important teens. Furthermore, the issue is not necessarily about the healthiness of the food, but the items served and their quality. For example, one teen explained how getting served “*juice in a bag*” was “*unethical.*” She felt juice in a bag is for children not teenagers. Other teens expressed their love for pizza but will not eat the pizza at school due to the poor quality, flavor, and preparation (burnt or undercooked). Teens also enjoy getting fruit at school and is one thing that was commonly kept rather than thrown away. However, their preference for fruit is counteracted by the poor quality of fruit served at schools. Teens feel the fruits are spoiling, dirty, or have pesticides on them, or discussed how they are served the bad parts of fruits. For example, the bottom part of the cantaloupe was given as an undesirable example.

Preferences and desire surrounded beverages was commonly brought up as well. Some teens discussed how teens don’t like white milk or prefer other options besides milk and juice. They mentioned Gatorade, soda, and tea as preferred options.

Preference also connected with cafeteria rules and lack of autonomy felt by teens. Teens mentioned that they are forced to take all the items included in the school-provided meal whether they want them or not. This came up multiple times in connection to food waste, as teens are forced to take the food items and then simply throw them away because they did not want them or like them (more on food waste later). Thus, when

teens prefer not to have something, they are made to take it.

This leads to feelings of being treated like a child and not having autonomy within their choices (11 mentions).

When teens discussed options that they do like at school, such as chips or fries, they explained that you typically must buy those items separately (10 mentions). They are not part of the school lunch program. These are termed “competitive foods” within the school system. Teens feel that schools know what types of food they want, but they deliberately make students pay extra for desired items to make more money for the school.

When we asked teens about what types of foods they’d prefer to get at school, they most commonly answered with fast food/restaurant options (e.g. McDonalds, Qdoba, Chinese, Subway), pizza venues (e.g. Dominos, Pizza hut), or snack foods such as chips or pretzels. While these answers are not considered to be nutritious options for students, they provide insight into the types of foods teens prefer and interventions that can be made within school lunch programs. The answers show that teens like American as well as Spanish, Italian, and Chinese foods. In addition, we can ponder on what they like about these foods. They are quick, convenient, filling, and flavorful. Restaurants also provide a multitude of options to choose from and are made to order. Lastly, restaurant/fast foods are presented in desirable manners. Perhaps if schools took on more restaurant-style preparation and serving methods, and provided a greater variety of options, teens would have more positive perceptions toward school food.

Stigma, Bullying, and Fear

There is a definite stigma surrounding the need for food assistance in society, and this stigma may have its largest presence within schools. We asked teens about how they think people feel about utilizing food assistance programs at their schools or in their communities. They believe that teens feel nervous and uncomfortable and used phrases like “it’s embarrassing.” Why? Because of stigma, inequality, the harsh realities of adolescent peer-experiences, and the issue of non-confidentiality within schools.

T2: “I mean they give us hot Cheetos at lunch. They sell them.”

T1: “Yeah, and Coke. But I also find this funny. Because they give us all this nasty food, but they can sell us ice cream. On special days.”

T4: “Yeah, ice cream, hot Cheetos.”

T1: “See, they sell all the good stuff.”

SB: “So, all the stuff you really want, you have to pay for it?”

T1: “Yeah.”

Teens talked about how peers at school and after school programs know who uses the food assistance. For example, teens talked about the pack-a-sack program, which provides a backpack of food to students in need on Friday's to prevent hunger over the weekend. They explained how everyone in the class can see who gets a backpack. The same concern exists at after school programs when they provide snacks to take home at the end of the day. You can see in the quote on the right that fear of judgement, embarrassment, and bullying play a large role in whether teens accept food assistance or not, despite their needs.

Another example given involved the share box at lunch. One group talked about how their school has a table with a share box where students can put the food items they want for other teens to take if they need food (e.g. if they don't have lunch money or are still hungry). While this seems like a great initiative, teens expressed how embarrassing it can be for their peers and the fear of judgement by others.

This lack of confidentiality and safe spaces in schools and programs is preventing teens from participating in food assistance initiatives. Social status, peer-relationships, and fear all play a large role within teen food insecurity, particularly for the teens who likely need assistance most. This is especially relevant for teens who do not have lunch money or food to eat at lunch and are forced to take a cheese sandwich. Participants explained how everyone at lunch knows what is going on when you get the sandwich. Other students will laugh and make fun. They may be

T1: "Yeah, like, sometimes at lunch like they'll have people set up a table [share box] and then, they'll, people will come over or whatever and see what it's [the food items] about."

T2: "Yeah, but some teens really have needs that don't really think that it's okay... you know, they're still like..."

T1: "Like everybody's gonna judge them."

T2: "Yeah, like everybody's gonna judge them. So, they're goin' up to the table like..."

T1: "Cuz kids are vicious... nobody's safe"

T4: "They ask, "Do you want another snack before you go home?" And they ask their little brothers or their moms or whoever comes to pick them up "Do you want some?" And they'll say yes, and they'll take them home. But not all of them get taken at the end of the day."

T4: "Yeah, it's kind of embarrassing."

T1: "Yeah, it's embarrassing."

T4: "When all your other friends are around. You don't take as many as you want to. If you don't eat at home or your sisters and brothers don't eat at home...you want to take more than one. But you don't want to take it in front of other people."

Facilitator: "Why do you think kids are so mean to each other about not having enough food to eat?"

T1: "Bullies. They're bullies. A lot of kids like to be bullies. They don't try to be bullies, but they like to flame people."

T4: "They're not grateful. Because they know they have it and the other kids don't. So it's like, "why don't you have it neither?" But they don't know what people are going through."

called “*poor*” or pointed out with “*haha, you don’t have any food.*” Moreover, students hold extremely negative views toward the “cheese sandwich of shame.” They felt it was important for us to know that the quantity is not enough to satisfy a teen’s hunger, stating it’s only a slice of bread with half a slice of cheese. In addition, they expressed how the bread is not cooked— “*it’s not even toasted*”—the cheese is “*fake*,” and the sandwich is cold when “*everyone is getting a hot food.*”

Obviously, the stigma and embarrassment coupled with the quality of the cheese sandwich is enough to keep teens from hungry and food insecure.

Bullying and Roasting

Besides getting bullied over the cheese sandwich or needing food assistance, teens told us that kids will also get made fun of for the types of lunches they get or bring to school. For example, one teen explained how he got made fun of for eating and liking celery. Another shared a photo of someone’s lunch box who was getting made fun of at school for bringing “rotten bananas.” In another group, teens laughed about a student from their school who brought a box of Cheerios to school as her meal. It seems there is no winning at school unless you have money to buy the competitive food items (e.g. Cheetos and ice cream mentioned earlier). There is a consensus that school food is not good and thus it is not cool to eat it. Thus, those who eat or enjoy the school-provided meals may get made fun of. But, you may also get made fun of if you bring certain food items to school.

Students also witness bullying for many other reasons, including socioeconomics, body size (e.g. being “chubby”), body changes, appearance, and wardrobe (e.g. wearing the same shirt more than once; not having nice shoes). Even during one of the focus groups, teens were giving other teens a hard time for not speaking up and participating.

Teens discussed how bullying and “roasting” affects appetite, self-perception, and mental health. The body shaming, as well as other types of bullying, keeps student from eating. One teen said he sees peers “starve

T1 “Like, they don’t have enough money. And they go through the lunch line. And say they’re in the line with their friends...and then they give you this plain cheese sandwich...that’s embarrassing also. And you get really sad and stuff.”

Facilitator: “It’s embarrassing because people know? When they see it?”

T1: “Yeah. People like to laugh at you. And they think it’s funny.”

themselves to lose weight fast” after getting made fun of for weight. In addition, participants explained how these negative experiences at school can lead to emotional and mental ailments such as feeling insecure, being depressed, or suicidal as displayed in the quote on the right.

Stigma by Adults and Fear

Stigma is not just produced by peers. Teens discussed stigmas felt from adults which often involved victim blaming. They believe that adults and community members will blame them [teens] for their circumstance and tell them to get a job if they ask for help. Different groups discussed the stereotypes they feel in

their communities. For example, one group explained that they are not allowed to bring their backpacks into a nearby convenient store because the employer thinks they will steal. Another teen discussed how uncomfortable and unwelcome he feels in stores after an employee following him around when he was simply shopping.

These stereotypes lead teens to be fearful of asking for help or using community services. They also discussed fear of getting put into “the system,” referring to social services and foster care.

Finances/Socioeconomics

Teens felt that financial circumstances are a large part of why teens are food insecure in their communities (54 mentions). Some issues mentioned included low-paying jobs, homelessness, debt, or parents losing their jobs. This theme was often connected with teens not having money for school-provided meals or preferred competitive foods. Some teens felt that the students at school who do not eat anything at all “can’t get free lunch” and don’t have lunch money. Furthermore, the inequality within monetary resources at school was brought up. Teens talked about how having extra money allowed students to order Uber Eats or get money from the vending machines when needed. However, teens without resources don’t have these options.

“Some people—it’s probably because they get insecure, with body changing, or they’re being rude to you, so you don’t feel like you have an appetite. So, you pretty much just go and pick up your food and throw it out and wait there until lunch ends because you don’t feel good about yourself...

But if the bully takes it too far, like the person doesn’t want to eat or just keeps throwing it out over and over again...yet that would still be wasted, but they’re putting someone’s life...because eventually they’re going to become suicidal, and they don’t want to...okay, I’m taking this too far. But they don’t want to live.”

--Male Teen

Financial struggles were also connected to not having enough food *at home*. Teens talked about the parents or grandparents not having enough money for food or spending money on “the wrong things” such as drugs or material items. For example, one teen said, “*some people can’t even pay their bills but they buy shoes.*” A lack of food/income at home, participants felt, was why some teens can’t bring their lunch or bring poor-quality items such as the rotten bananas or jar of peanut butter.

Teens also believe *household makeup* may play role in food insecurity. One male said that his family has struggled with food security “*ever since my baby brother was born.*” His statement infers that an increase in household size, particularly relative to the increased needs placed on his family due to having a toddler in the home, makes it harder for his family to make ends meet. Other participants brought up the challenges to food access when living with grandparents. They discussed how grandparents may be too tired or unable to get to the store. Likewise, the struggles of single parenting and living in large households were discussed as barriers to food and financial security.

“Like I said earlier, maybe some people live with their grandparents or aunts or somebody. Or takes care of themselves. Like, I have a friend, she lives with her grandparents and her little brothers and sisters, and they’re like 5 and under. And her grandma can’t take care of all of them. So, she has to go out and find a way to get food for all of them, too.”

--Female Teen

“Or it good be a single parent. Because the other parent is going through something, something like that. And they may not be able to support their children. And the parents don’t want to lose their kids to a foster home. They want to be with their kids.”

--Male Teen

Food running out was another large concern. Teens discussed how food waste at home may play a role within food not lasting and how this becomes an issue when parents cannot buy more food. One male shared a photo of his almost empty fridge, which you can see on the next page, to show how “*it was kind of bad at the moment,*” as his family had ran out of food in the middle of the week. He explained that “*not all teens can just open up their refrigerator and get something quick. They would have to find stuff to make and make do.*” The group went on to discuss the severity of this situation for teens who do not know how to cook and/or teens who do not eat at school.



Figure 6: "Surviving"

Another important theme within socioeconomic was its *role within food choices*. Teens compared the costs of unhealthy items to healthier meals, providing reason for why teens and their families eat poor-quality foods over nutritious options. For example, they expressed how French fries and a cheeseburger “cost like a dollar where a salad costs like \$7 or \$8.” Additionally, participants compared the low costs of candy to the full lunch meal at school. They talked about eating foods that are lacking in nutrition because it’s all they have access to, either monetarily or physically. One teen gave the example of a friend who only had peanut butter to eat for a meal. Thus, the price of foods is a large factor behind why people are food insecure. For teens, the risk is more severe as they are growing and developing and having increased nutritional needs.

Awareness of Financial Struggling and Reliance on Parents

It was clear from the focus groups that teens are highly aware of not only their own but also their peers’ financial circumstances, including food insecurity (34 mentions). Additionally, there is a consensus that

financial factors behind teen food insecurity fall on the parents. Teens did not place the responsibility on other teens or themselves.

Issues with Current Food Assistance Programs

Similar and often overlapping with previous codes, issues with current food assistance programs is a large factor behind teen food insecurity in Pinellas County. Common concerns among teens included schools not providing food that teens like or providing poor quality food (expired, cold) in the free and reduced lunch program. This issue extends to summer programs too, where teens said their community programs give out food that kids don't like including "nasty lunches" and "hard, cold cheese sandwiches."

Teens also had concerns regarding take-home food initiatives, believing that the amount of food doesn't last long enough. They also felt that food assistance programs in their communities, such as church and community center food pantries, do not provide desired food items for teens.

Another common apprehension within current food assistance is the method of using food as a punishment or reward. As we mentioned, schools are shaming students who are behind on their lunch payments with cold cheese sandwiches. In at least one school, staff makes the detention students get in the lunch line last, leaving less time for them to eat. Similarly, one of the community centers where we held focus groups was currently withholding afterschool snacks from teens because of cursing. Thus, punishing teens with withholding or the type of food provided was a common theme and only further establishes stigma and social judgement upon teens.

Regulation and qualifications within food assistance was also brought up multiple times when discussing the access and utilization of food pantries and services. Most participants felt that you have to be an adult or have an ID to get food at a local food pantry. Others brought up the issue of having to qualify first before being able to get food at a pantry. Moreover, the Boys and Girls Club students talked about how there is a maximum student limit for their after school and summer program. Thus, they felt that many children miss out on the free food provided after school and during the summer because of this limitation. Lastly, many students said they did not know where food pantries were in their community and they are not advertised or talked about at school.

Food Waste

Teens overwhelmingly understand the connection between food waste and food insecurity within our U.S. food systems. Food waste was one of the most discussed reasons why teens and their families don't have enough to nutritious food to eat (23 mentions). It was also a large theme within the photovoice project. Teens feel that there is too much food waste at their schools, and some also discussed food waste at home. At school, they explain that food waste stems from the cafeteria rules. Students are made to take the full lunch, meaning they have to take the milk, juice, fruit or vegetable, and the main item, whether they want to or not. Students from one school in particular explained their school makes them take the school lunch even when they bring lunch from home unless they have a signed form withdrawing them from the National School Lunch Program. Thus, students are throwing away all the items they didn't want or need. Only one school talked about having a share box where you can put food you don't want. However, there were rules around what foods could go there (only packaged items that are unopened or fruit). In addition, the short time period for breakfast and lunch leaves teens unable to eat all their food and they end up having to throw it away so they can make it to class on time. Teen participants believe that if they had more autonomy in food choice, better food options, and more time to eat, there would be less waste and more resources for the schools and students that need assistance.

Being ungrateful and/or non-empathetic was another reason why participants feel teens waste food at school and at home. One teen explained: *"I just feel like we take advantage of how much we get and we don't actually think about other people that don't have what we have. And just the fact that we don't, you know, really care, and they just throw it in the trash."* Participants believe that it makes it easier on the school staff. They felt that the schools don't want the food to be leftover, as it places more work on them. In opposition, food waste at home was connected to increasing difficulties placed on the parents as food runs out.

Coming back to bullying and mental health, some participants felt that teens throw their food away because they don't feel like eating due to insecurities, loss of appetite from emotions, or embarrassment.

COPING STRATEGIES USED BY TEENS

We asked participants what teens do when they don't have enough food. Below we will discuss the five most common strategies discussed by the participants.

Reliance on Community


In this case, community includes community centers, organizations such as churches and pantries, and neighbors. Schools will be discussed separately in a later section. Teens mentioned using community resources 36 times, making it the most common strategy to deal with food insecurity. The most mentioned resource within community was *neighbors*, showing a sense of neighborhood community and comfortability. Secondly, teens discussed the utilization of their own sites, particularly for summer assistance but also for after school snacks. Summer BreakSpots, while not mentioned by the technical name, were brought up consistently. Teens talked about the posters put up around their community and how kids would come to their sites during the summer for lunch. They also explained that the sites are a place where teens feel welcome and comfortable. Thus, the Summer BreakSpot program is a successful strategy among teens.

Churches were the third most mentioned resource within communities. Food pantry was only mentioned once. Thus, this points to the issue of either food pantry knowledge or accessibility among teens.

Illegal Strategies

Teens commonly felt that other teens would rely on illegal mechanisms (32 mentions) such as *stealing* (16 mentions) or *selling drugs or "themselves"* (11 mentions) when faced with hunger.

Stealing was by far the first and most common reaction to the coping question. Teens explained many circumstances when they have witnessed other teens stealing or knew when teens stole. They discussed students stealing food in the lunch line at school, as well as stealing from convenient and grocery stores. Some



"This girl, she couldn't get food so people would, like, pick on her. And then one day, she came to school and she had her backpack. At the end of the day the teacher couldn't find the iPad so they were going through and checking everyone's backpack, and then the teacher dumped out her backpack and she had, like, canned foods and everything fall onto the floor and stuff because she had to steal it from the store.

--Female Teen

participants admitted to stealing food themselves. For example, one teen said he stole a bag of chips from another student at school because he didn't have breakfast and was hungry. Another said his brother had stolen candy from the local convenient store. Food is not the only thing that teens steal, however. Pens, pencils, and games were other items mentioned.

A secondary theme within stealing is its justification by teens. Participants did not judge other teens for stealing. They did not say it was wrong or discuss it in a negative light. For example, one participant said, "*kids that steal, they're hungry.*" Others justified themselves; "*I had to.*"

Selling drugs and prostitution also came up. Teens explained this strategy as a way to make money to get food and basic needs. They talked about their own family who sell drugs and many teens who have got caught selling drugs in certain areas of the community. "Selling themselves" was the term used in place of prostitution. When asked what they meant by selling themselves, teens answered with "*prostitution,*" "*selling themselves for food,*" and "*selling their body.*" They gave an example of someone they knew who became a "dancer" at the age of 16 to be able to feed himself.

Lastly, some participants also believe that some teens purposely get in trouble with the law or they're not worried about getting caught stealing, because jail is a better alternative to sleeping on the streets. As the quote on the right shows, jail will provide a bed to sleep in and food to eat.

T1: "If you're sleeping on a couch in front of someone's yard and you don't know how you're gonna get food that night, then you're not gonna be worried about that when you know you're going to go to jail and have a bed to sleep on and get food every day."

T2: "And brush your teeth."

T1: "A toilet to use the bathroom in."

Eating Cheap and Convenient Foods

Teens explained a common strategy to deal with financial barriers to food security is purchasing fast food or foods with low nutritional value because they are cheap (23 mentions). Teens gave examples of buying snacks or candy at school rather than the lunch because it was cheaper and "*that's all they can afford is just, like, a snack.*" Others talked about getting fast food (e.g., dollar menu; McDonalds) when they don't have food at home because it's cheap and filling. Relying on processed foods at home deemed unhealthy was also a

common topic. For example, one teen talked about relying on donuts for breakfast every day because his mom gets them for free.

Buying and eating convenient foods, such as snacks from the vending machine, also related to the time issues at school.

Teens turn to low-quality options because they can be grabbed and eaten quickly. It is also connected to cooking and

convenience. Grabbing a snack takes less time to cook a meal and can temporarily stop hunger quickly. Thus, teens use this method for stopping hunger, but it is not successful in mitigating food insecurity as their diets are lacking in adequate nutrition.


Getting a Job

Another common coping mechanisms among teens is getting a job (20 mentions). Participants discussed teens they know who have jobs for various reasons. Some have jobs to support themselves, using the money to buy their food, supplies, clothing, and/or cell phone bill. Other teens in participant's communities and schools have jobs to support their families. Teens talked about peers who have jobs to help with household income or paying for things like rent and/or food for the household. There were mixed feelings about the motivations for getting a job. Sometimes parents ask or force teens to. Other times teens feel a responsibility to help out or take care of themselves. Lastly, teens may do it because they would have no other means of providing for themselves.

Common examples of teen jobs included mowing lawns, working at grocery stores, Walmart, or Tropicana Field, and selling things at school. One teen gave an example of a friend who is only 14 but got a job at Winn Dixie after her mom told Winn Dixie of their food struggles.

Reliance on School and Teachers

Teens were aware of *school food assistance programs* and discussed these as methods for teens to get food if need. The programs discussed included after school programs at school that provided snacks or meals, free lunch and breakfast, and weekend food bags.



It's a picture of junk food because some teens don't have enough money to get real food. So, they get what they can get with their money. Like, go to the corner store, the convenience store, and get a bag of skittles. That's 75 cents or whatever. It's cheap. Affordable. That's what you get. But the real food is much of a higher price. They don't got enough money for that.

--Male teen

The biggest reliance in the school environment, though, is on the *teachers*. Multiple examples of how teachers help teens in need were discussed. These included teachers giving students more autonomy by letting them go to the teachers' lounge to use the vending machine or get extra food items, letting students cook in class or bring leftover food (usually snacks) from lunch to the classroom, and allowing students use the snack box that is only supposed to be used on Fridays. Students also rely on teachers themselves for food. It was a common theme that teachers bring food for students to eat if needed. These food items include snacks (e.g. pretzels, rice crispy treats, apples) as well as more meal-type items such as ramen noodles for lunch and Poptarts for breakfast. Other times, teachers will go and get an item, such as an apple, from the cafeteria for a student in need.

"I have this teacher at Country Side, and what she does, she has food in her classroom for kids who, like, forgot their lunch or something or can't afford it. She'll have boxes of noodles and sodas and all this stuff. And they'll go to her and be like "'hey I don't have lunch today", and, like, she'll give em like..."[interrupted]

--Female teen

PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF TEEN FOOD INSECURITY

Participants were knowledgeable on the importance of adequate nutrition for teen health, including mental and physical health. The most discussed consequence of teen food insecurity was *low energy* (14 mentions, see quote on page 44). Low energy was connected with the low quantity of foods served at school and programs and food waste. Teens discussed not having energy to get through the day or make it to the next day, not having enough energy for gym class., feeling tired, having bags under their eyes, not talking, and not having energy to think clearly.

Feeling unwell was another common consequence of food insecurity (13 mentions). It was connected with having medical issues such as diabetes from eating poorly, being dehydrated, not feeling like talking, getting ill from spoiled or poor-quality food, having hunger pains, and looking pale. Teens understood that coping mechanisms and the severity of food insecurity can lead to malnutrition and even starvation (11

mentions). They discussed seeing teens that are underweight and skinny, getting sick “*because there’s barely any food to eat,*” and the impact that unhealthy diets has on nutrition, health, and longevity.

Poor school performance and focus (9 mentions) as well as *behavioral and emotional issues* (8 mentions) are also realities of teen food insecurity that participants witness in their communities. Doing bad or struggling in school, being confused and not making sense, not participating in class, and learning difficulties, and not being able to focus were all situations discussed by teens. Behavioral and mental health implications included mood swings, feeling “cranky,” crying when forgetting to bring food to school, becoming unsociable, behavioral changes, depression, and emotional problems stemming from bullying.

Lastly, participants mentioned getting into *illegal or unwanted situations* was viewed as a consequence of food insecurity among teens (8 mentions). This shows that teens realize that food insecurity has social implications as much as physical. They said food insecure teens “end up being somewhere they don’t want to be,” getting addicted to drugs, sell themselves, or end up homeless.

“Well, mood. They have mood swings. Feel cranky. They might not do so good at school. They might get picked on. Someone be mean or cruel. “Ah, you don’t have food at your house.” Say stuff like that.

--Male teen

TEENS’ IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS

Teens feel that *increasing the quantity of food* (24 mentions) and *improving the quality and choices of foods* served at school and within community food assistance initiatives (e.g. at their centers) (23 mentions) is important for teen food security and health. Their preferences and ideas to improve school meals include: providing more fresh and less frozen and/or reheated foods, serving foods that are cooked and prepared well (thoroughly but not burnt), providing safe foods that have been washed, properly stored, and are not going bad, adding more flavor such as seasonings or sauces, and giving more options (16 mentions) so that they don’t feel they are being served the same items each day and feel more autonomy in their food choices. In addition, teens feel that having more sovereignty will lower food waste and subsequently monetary waste at schools. Less

food waste could lead to increased quantity of foods served for each meal so that teens feel they are getting enough food necessary to mitigate hunger, feel full, and have enough energy. In relation to quantity, teens feel that lowering food prices, especially prices of full meals and healthy items, will help students get adequate food amounts. Their ideas included having sales at school such as “buy-one-get-one-free” deals. The lowering of food prices was not only a concern for school menu items. It was discussed as societal solutions in which teens feel that healthy menu items at restaurants and in stores should not cost less than unhealthy items.

A concern for the access to healthy food and nutrition reign through other ideas for food security solutions. Teens discussed innovative and clever ways to *provide healthy alternatives to favorable foods* (16 mentions). Serving food that tastes like the items teens enjoy but includes healthier ingredients was a common idea, such as serving organic ingredients, baking instead of frying foods, and an emphasis on having more fresh items available. Similarly, teens expressed the need to have healthier snack items at community centers, after school programs, and in the vending machines at school. All of these ideas are interrelated with teens’ perspective that schools prioritize money over student’s preferences and health (19 mentions). When asked why they think poor quality or unhealthy food items are provided, teens believed it’s based on the fact that these items are of lower cost. Furthermore, some teens felt that schools aren’t providing enough food based on a lack of resources.

There was also an emphasis on taste-testing and trying foods for fun. Teens talked about serving samples of healthy foods for students to try, as well as letting students cook healthier items so that they are more willing to try them and serve them to their peers (peer-to-peer education). In addition, teens believe that if

T1: So, this one relates to other teens because with this, people won’t be having enough food at school so that they won’t feel energized. And they won’t really have anything to get energy off. Besides sleeping and stuff. This won’t be enough for students that are hungry and stuff. At school, for teens. And they should change ...they should at least have like an apple, a main food that you’re going to eat, a vegetable, and then like a milk and a juice afterwards. At least adding like one more thing...the smallest things can count. The small things can be really big.

Facilitator: Why do you think schools aren’t giving you guys enough food for lunch?

T1: Because the food that they’re giving is like, limited. They need to at least provide something. But there’s not enough to provide. They should at least add a small thing. Something small, like maybe a side dish, maybe like some corn. Mashed potatoes. Something small. Because those are probably like \$10 for like, a big bag.

healthy items, particularly the vegetables, served at school had more seasoning (e.g. “*add some salt*”) they would taste better and students would eat them.

Complementing these initiatives is the need for education and awareness (15 mentions). It was clear from the conversations with the teens that more awareness among both students and staff is necessary if changes are to be made. Schools and program staff need to become more aware of the stigma and bullying occurring and how using food as punishment is impacting teen food security. In addition, student’s preferences and time concerns should be brought to staff and considered. Teens had the great idea to do a schoolwide survey highlighting what options students would like to have within school meals as well as when meals should be served and for how long according to teen’s needs.

Peer-driven education initiatives were also a large theme within solutions. Teens feel that peer-to-peer education, awareness, and programs will be most effective. Their ideas focused on working to eliminate stigma, implementing mentorships and more social support groups (11 mentions), teaching about healthy diets and nutrition, and peer advertising and awareness-building of food assistance programs and availability. They felt strongly that current advertising of teen food assistance is lacking and explained how peers would know the best ways to target different groups within their schools.

Participants also felt that *better and more assistance should be provided to struggling families* (11 mentions) and schools. They understand that many realms of food insecurity start in the household. They discussed giving parents food with recipes to guide them, donating money to families and schools, offering more jobs “*eligible for everybody, even people who have disabilities,*” giving coupons for those who need them, and donating instead of throwing away unwanted food. Teens feel that schools should let parents know when students’ meal accounts are empty or running low with reminders to better prevent the cheese sandwich shaming. Or, use donations to the school for students don’t have lunch money in place of the cheese sandwich.

“I think we should just get, you know how they give, like, money to get the food? Kind of thing? I don’t think we should be wasting it on things that teenagers won’t eat. And actually, like, spend it on things... like last time when we talked about how we can recommend, um, them what to get? I think we should just get, like, fruits, and vegetables, but vegetables that we actually know that we need. And something nice, but not expensive.”

--Male teen

DISCUSSION

Food Security and Household Demographics

Demographic analysis of participants revealed a number of trends that should be considered for future food assistance programming targeted to teens in Pinellas County. For example, literature has shown that, both nationally and within subpopulations, food security disproportionately affects children of minority groups (Alaimo et al. 2001, Stuff et al. 2009, Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012). In this population sample, this was not the case. In fact, white, non-Hispanic participants had the highest rate of food insecurity, followed by biracial teens and black teens. Since quantitative analysis showed that there was a significant association between location and level of food security, it is likely that in this research sample, community and geography are more significant for determining level of food security than race. For example, among Hispanic teens who participated, those who were food secure were recruited from the Pinellas Park Teen Center (PPTC), in the city of Pinellas Park. However, the Hispanic teens who were food *insecure* were recruited from the Hispanic Outreach Center (HOC), located in Clearwater. If race were the most significant predictor for food insecurity for participants in this sample, the rates between these populations, which are otherwise very similar, should be consistent.

There is abundant evidence across disciplines that the nature of a neighborhood can significantly influence rates of food insecurity in that area (see LeDoux and Vojnovic 2013). For example, food desert literature has shown that the availability of food resources in an area will influence the eating habits of nearby households (Bodor et al. 2008, Moore et al. 2008). Food swamps must also be considered, or areas that are both food deserts and have a high concentration of cheap, high calorie, fast food options (Hager et al. 2017). Neither of the PPTC or HOC are located within food deserts, although they are both within one mile of a food desert. Additionally, focus group responses showed that food pantries were not a common method of food access for teens in this study. For this reason, the simple availability of food may not be the factor that is causing different outcomes for household food security.

The primary distinction between these two locations is that the HOC is located in a higher income area than the PPTC. Families that utilize the HOC may be experiencing what is called a “food mirage,” which occurs when food resources are physically available in a region (so the area is not a food desert), but the food in grocery stores is economically inaccessible to some residents (Short et al. 2007, Breyer and Voss-Andreae 2013). Food mirages tend to occur in middle- and high-income areas surround by census tracts with much lower incomes, similar to the neighborhoods around HOC. While confirmation of this theory is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that neighborhood context must be taken into consideration in food insecurity interventions.

Community support is another resource that can vary among neighborhoods, defined by informal social support networks among neighbors, and the presence of community spaces. While there have not been many studies examining the relationship between social support and food security, there is evidence that social and community support can act as a buffer mitigating the risk of food insecurity among certain populations (Frongillo, Valois, and Wolfe 2003; Newsom and Schulz 1996). Sources of social support have also been strongly correlated with food security in international settings (Hadley, Mulder, and Fitzherbert 2007). For that reason, the level of community support in the neighborhoods from which teens were recruited may explain why some locations were associated with food insecurity, and others were associated with food security. This may also be supported by the fact that among this sample, a larger household size was associated with food security. Rather than imposing a financial burden, a larger family network may ensure greater community support overall among this population sample.

School Food

Evidence from the surveys, focus groups, and photovoice portions of this study all emphasize that schools are a significant food access site for children and teens. In the focus groups, schools were the second most-often listed source of food for teens (19 mentions), behind only fast food, snacks, and convenience foods (23 mentions). Since most Pinellas County middle and high schools have hours between 7:00am and 2:00pm (or similar), teens are often in the school environment for two of their daily meals on weekdays (Pinellas County Schools 2018). School is an especially important food resource for food insecure teens. Because there

are not many food assistance programs that are targeted to teens, free food at schools may be some of the only free food immediately accessible to them (Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014).

Despite the importance of school food to the teen diet, many of the participants in this project were seeking alternative foods beyond what is offered by the school lunch. This is also consistent with other studies, which have shown that a large percentage of children do not eat the lunch that is provided to them at school (Janavi et al. 2016, Contento et al. 2006, Hamersa and Kim 2016, Poppendieck 2010, Savige et al. 2007). Children above age 14 (which includes at least half of the teen participants in this study) are the least likely to eat the food provided to them through the school lunch program (Ralson et al. 2008). Teen preference was the primary reason that the participants in this study were less than enthusiastic about the school options. This includes preference about food types, food quality, food timing, and the method by which the food is accessed.

The teens in this study were very knowledgeable about which foods and nutrients are healthy and beneficial to a growing body. This has been shown in other studies, that confirm that teenagers are a reliable source of information about their own food and nutrition (Fram et al. 2011, Fram et al. 2015, Popkin et al. 2016, Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014). Teens in these focus groups did sometimes feel as if the foods chosen to be in school programs were healthy for teens, and were especially fond of fresh foods like salads, and whole foods, like beans. While parents and administrators may assume that teenagers are not eating school food based on the perspective that it is too healthy, the issue is more complex. Junk food options were listed as “foods that teens like to eat” (including fast food, pizza, and restaurant food), but there were an equal number of complaints that many of the school options are not sufficiently healthy, and that healthy options in the community were much more expensive than cheap, high calorie foods. Several teens mentioned that they believed healthy food should be cheaper than junk food, but recognized that junk food is more desirable because of its taste and accessible calories. All in all, teens know what they should eat, but they also know what they want to eat, and it is a challenge to balance these two perspectives.

Lack of satisfaction with the quality of the food available to the teens was a common theme among all focus groups and photovoice discussions. Dislike for the taste or appearance of the foods served has also been a consistent issue in other research studies on school food (Neumark-Sztainer et al. 1999, Janavi et al. 2016,

Contento et al. 2006, Poppendieck 2010). There is also stigma directed towards teens who do eat and enjoy school foods (Janavi et al. 2016). For this reason, administrators are already working against an established culture of disdain for school food. In the focus groups, teens acknowledged that many of the food options would be desirable to them if the quality was consistent. However, foods were described as not fresh (tasting “stale” or “old”), not appetizing (including “sick,” “sad,” “nasty”), and prepared inappropriately (foods were “watery”, “cold”, or “overcooked”). The most common negative descriptor for the school food was “fake,” meaning that the teens did not feel as if they were eating fresh, “real”, or whole foods. Teens were sensitive not only to the taste of the food, but also the appearance. The negative perception of the texture and visual impact of the food, and the perception of it as frozen and reheated instead of fresh, may be influencing overall opinion (Contento et al. 2006).

Teens in this study found different strategies for meeting their food needs in the school setting, but often felt as if they were being impeded by school policies. For example, teens consistently stated that they did not have enough time to eat during the lunch hour. The lack of time encouraged the teens to eat quickly or consume high calorie snacks throughout the day instead of full meals. Vending machines were a popular choice for snacks throughout the day, but the vending machine options were often seen as unhealthy and unsatisfying. For teens who were able to procure food outside of the lunch hour, or had brought snacks from home, they were frustrated by the fact that they could not eat in the classrooms. Teens are known to save food as a coping strategy for food insecurity (Popkin et al. 2016). If they cannot eat in class, they can't use saved foods to augment the food they may not have had time to eat at lunch.

Teens did feel as if some school programs were helping them to meet their food needs. Being able to eat in the classroom setting was one of the most popular responses, because teens were not beholden to the time restrictions of the lunch room. Some teens explained that their teachers would even bring in snacks for students, or have a “snack box” that could be accessed by anyone in the classroom. Food insecure teens appreciated programs that supplied students with extra foods to take home over weekends or over school breaks. Teens also expressed appreciation for “share boxes” which allowed them to trade in snacks that they did not want to eat, and take an extra snack if they needed it.

Competitive Foods

The presence of competitive foods in schools (foods that can be purchased beyond the regular school lunch) are a controversial topic in studies of school food, and the schools included in this research project were no exception (Templeton et al. 2005). In Pinellas County, 75% of middle and high schools offer competitive foods for purchase (Burris 2018). That means that the majority of Pinellas County teens theoretically have the option to purchase foods in addition to (or instead of) the basic school lunch program. However, access to competitive foods is only available to those teens that have the economic resources at their disposal. What this means, in the hierarchical landscape of high schools and middle schools, is that access to competitive foods becomes an economic dividing line between categories of students (Bhatia et al. 2011, Mirtcheva and Powell 2009, Poppendieck 2011, Stein 2008).

It has been argued that the stigma related to food access in high schools will never completely disappear until competitive foods are eliminated or made free for the whole student body (Poppendieck 2011). However, the economic benefit of competitive foods for the school system makes their elimination unlikely. Most schools cannot afford to only offer school lunch (Poppendieck 2011). However, the administrators of these schools must take into consideration that this may be perceived as if they are balancing the health and wellbeing of students against the finances that allow the school to exist. It is an extremely difficult choice for administrators, and is an issue that will be difficult to solve without additional school funding.

Prioritization of Teen Needs

Teens have been shown in previous studies to be a highly sensitive and reliable source for understanding the nature of their food environment and the complex structures that affect their ability to access food (Fram et al. 2011, Fram et al. 2015, Popkin et al. 2016, Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014). Participants in this research had an acute perception of where they stood in the hierarchy of decision making related to their own food needs. Namely, many participants perceived that schools are prioritizing financial needs of the school, school policies, and the desires of parents over the needs and desires of the students themselves. Students cited the quality and types of food as evidence of this, and the fact that they frequently saw foods reheated over

consecutive days instead of being supplied with fresh food. However, they also cited the practices like those of the infamous cheese sandwich, wherein students were denied access to food because their parents had not paid.

The perception held among teens that their needs are being compromised for the sake of the school budget led to a lot of frustration among participants. This was particularly true when teens had concerns about the potential health consequences of reusing the same food resources across multiple days. Whether or not there is truly a health risk to reusing yogurt parfaits is not as significant for students as the idea that their health is worth less than the cost of fresh food. This perception could potentially be mitigated by rotating the food options so that the same types of foods are not offered every day.

Undeniably, there are few populations as sensitive to social stigma as teenagers. In previous studies, stigma has been shown to prevent teens from seeking food assistance (Popkin et al. 2016, Shtasel-Gottlieb et al. 2014) and it certainly influences what teens see as acceptable and appropriate behavior (Neumark-Sztainer 1999). The results of this study have shown that even lack of access to food can make teens a target for bullying. For that reason, schools must consider how policies and programs that are designed to help students may in fact be inadvertently reinforcing this stigma, or creating an environment for marginalization. Even food assistance programs like the pack-a-sack program or the share boxes in cafeterias are not likely to be utilized if they make a student's need visible to their peers. Teens will choose hunger over the risk of being embarrassed in front of or by their peers.

The most popular food support services in schools were those that were not visible to other students. This included using a swipe card and pin to purchase food, because all students accessed food the same way without a clear indication of who was getting free or reduced lunch. Vending machines were also a popular option for avoiding stigma, because extra foods could be purchased quickly and then saved in a backpack to be eaten later. However, the most popular support options were teacher-led and occurred in the classroom. Many students brought up examples of teachers who had supplied food to the whole classroom, or had a snack box available for any students who needed a snack. The classroom environment was less exposed, and therefore put a student at less risk for stigma.

School policies may also inadvertently contribute to food waste, which was often cited as an important issue for participants. For example, teens discussed policies that force students to take food that they may not want to eat, which is sometimes done in order to qualify the meal for state reimbursement (Poppendieck 2011). If meal requirements are to remain, then more opportunities for returning uneaten food could be instituted. Teens that had “share boxes” in their cafeterias thought that the concept was good, but that they were often under-utilized, or were discouraged because only certain types of foods could be returned.

Autonomy and Choice

Teenagers may be the experts on their own lives, but they do not always have much control over their own food resources (Basset et al. 2008). In the school environment, the choices of availability, quality, and quantity are made for them by school administrators. In their homes, parents are often in charge of deciding what teens can and should eat, because their parents control the money in the household (O’Dougherty et al. 2006, Patrick 2005). In some households, the desire for economic autonomy may be one reason why teens feel pressured to get jobs as soon as they are old enough (Aviv 2016). However, teens will also turn to dangerous coping methods to meet their food needs if the economic resources for a sufficient diet are not available. This includes criminal activity like stealing or selling drugs (Popkin et al. 2016, Whitbeck et al. 2006), or finding older partners who can offer economic support (Stevens 2009). Economic freedom, even gained by dangerous means, increases individual autonomy for the teens. Ensuring a feeling of autonomy about food choices could possibly be accomplished through involving interested teens in the menu planning process. As previously expressed, teens know what they are supposed to eat, but they also know what they want to eat. Finding a balance between these things is likely to require expert knowledge from the teens themselves.

Food preference has been left out of a lot of food research and food intervention planning, but it must be taken into consideration when designing programs for teens. The perception teens have of their food options is likely to define the way they relate to school food, free food, and food options for purchase (Neumark-Sztainer et al. 1999, Janavi et al. 2016, Contento et al. 2006, Poppendieck 2010). While most of the food system expands beyond the scope of this research project, at least in school settings, we have the opportunity to take teen preference and perception into consideration to encourage more healthful eating habits. In this

project, teens have expressed a desire for more freshness in their food options, with less re-heated food and frozen food options. Skepticism about reused food items could be mitigated by offering different options for each day.

Ensuring autonomy over eating habits may be difficult to accomplish within the structure of a high school or middle school, but there are steps that can be taken to give teens a greater sense of control in the school environment. Extending the amount of time that students have to eat lunch would ensure that they didn't have to choose between talking, eating, or going outside. It would also alleviate the feeling of inequality associated with the process of "calling" lunch tables, which means that some tables have longer to eat lunch than others. If it is impossible to extend the lunch period, then allowing students to eat in the classroom would give them the opportunity to meet their food needs even if they have insufficient time to eat during the lunch period during a carefully timed lunch day.

Stigma among food insecure teens is likely to continue to be an issue in both the school and community settings, but this reality can be taken into consideration when assistance programs are being designed. For example, community centers could provide an alternative location for food assistance programs, as they are outside the school setting. Classrooms are also an important site for food interventions (Poppendieck 2011). In the focus groups, teens that discussed receiving foods from their teachers universally viewed it positively. The classroom setting is more intimate and less exposed than the school lunchroom. If food was distributed by teachers instead of in a lunchroom or pantry setting, it is possible that more teens would take advantage of the assistance.

It is important to keep in mind that mental health and food security are closely tied to one another and can manifest in a syndemic relationship if food needs are not being met. A syndemic relationship happens when two or more poor health circumstances coexist that prevail and exacerbate one another's consequences (Singer et al. 2017; Himmelgreen et al. 2012). If teens feel bad, physically or emotionally, do not eat sufficient amounts of food or nutrients as a result, their poor nutrition can intensify and reinforce poor mental or physical health. When poor mental health and malnutrition coexist, the risk of experiencing health consequences as well as negative school outcomes and low energy are doubled. This research shows that in order to avoid this cycle,

teens need to be supplied with the food that they perceive as good, nutritionally appropriate food. Teens want to feel as if their needs are being prioritized, that they have some control over the decisions that are being made for their health, and that they can access food in non-stigmatized ways.

LIMITATIONS

Some of the students did not complete the entire food security survey as we encountered printing issues in which the last questions of the survey did not show up on the back of the page. Thus, our sample size for food security is small ($n = 25$). Other limitations include the use of disposable cameras which could have limited their utilization and participation in photovoice, talking to teens in groups may have limited the openness of responses as teens may fear judgement by their peers, and our sample is not representative of the Pinellas County population. In addition, the sample was not chosen at random.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this research project are consistent with findings in other studies about teen food security which suggest that teenagers are a unique demographic that requires targeted food security interventions. It was important for the teenagers in this study to feel as if their preferences were being considered as a way of maintaining an element of autonomy over their food choices. Including teen preference in program development would show teens that their wants and needs are being respected, while also encouraging them to take advantage of healthy food options. The social threat of stigma was a powerful barrier for food access, because it may prevent teens from accessing the free food that is available to them. Schools are an important site for food security interventions because of the amount of time that teens spend at school. However, if support programs at school inadvertently reinforce stigma, they will not be effective. These findings can be used in the development of future food security interventions to ensure that teenagers are not being left out of conversations about food access and malnutrition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescents and their families have unique and complex needs that can create additional barriers to food security. By not designing programs that account for the complexities of adolescents, including both physical and social dynamics, we are furthering the risks of food insecurity and the associated adverse health effects for both adolescents and their caretakers. It is evident from the research findings that there are many issues hindering students' access to quality foods and utilization of food assistance programs in Pinellas County. Below we provide recommendations based on the teens' solution ideas, advisement from the local Teen Advisory Board, and our professional takes as researchers.

School Improvements

The research shows that students are heavily relying on schools to provide them with their food throughout the day and expect more quality foods to be served. This in itself is an issue because it shows that teens are most likely depending on schools for their foods for many reasons including not getting enough food at home, not having the resources to bring food from home to school, not having enough time school breakfast or lunch, and rules prohibiting consumption in the classroom.

To start, there is a mismatch between school-provided foods and teen preferences. The first step in improving the National School Lunch Program participation is to close this knowledge gap. Schools need to be connected with student input in order to provide choices that would not only satisfy teen appetites but also give them autonomy and access to foods they prefer and feel are safe to eat. The research showed that preference was the second largest factor hindering food security for teens. Based on this information, it would be beneficial for schools to survey students to find ways to provide better and more options for students that remain cost effective. Incorporating student input on what foods are offered and how they are prepared (i.e. washed produced, not frozen) into school meals could increase the number of teens who eat at school, decrease the amount of food waste, and ultimately improve teen food security.

For students that do have money for snacks, ensuring that vending machines have healthy options and are consistently working and stocked is recommended. Additionally, removing diet products and sugary drinks and offering flavored and sparkling water as well as low sugar drinks could serve as a healthier alternative.

Some schools have student organizations that sell coffee to students. These organizations could also be used to offer low-cost healthy snack options to teens during school hours, thus providing them with the opportunity to eat more throughout the day. However, this is dependent on teachers being on board with allowing students to eat these snacks in the classroom.

Teens in the study expressed that thirty minutes for lunch is not enough time to get to the cafeteria, stand in the line, and eat. The teen advisory committee explained that lunch time is also a time when teachers offer tutoring. Thus, many feel they have to choose between tutoring and having lunch. We recommend that the school lunch hour be extended by 15 to 30 minutes to give students enough time to eat lunch. The teens in this study said they would prefer 45 to an hour lunch period over getting out of school earlier. Tutoring should also be required to take place during the second half of lunch or after school, as to not interfere with student's ability to get food.

Another complaint is the start time of school in Pinellas County and how this hinders teens' ability to either eat before school or get to school with enough time to eat breakfast. High school students are typically going to school at 7 am and are released around 1:30. The early start time makes it difficult for them to eat breakfast and are therefore already very hungry by time the lunch hour approaches. Furthermore, skipping breakfast has been shown to be detrimental to student's school performance, focus, and mood (Taras 2005). We recommend Pinellas County high schools start 30 minutes later to give teens time to eat breakfast in the morning. Considering that many parents in the community have been already requesting that high schools start later (JWB 2018), making this time change could address more than one issue.

Not being able to eat in the classroom is limiting teens' ability to consume adequate amounts of food throughout the day, particularly for those who don't have time to eat breakfast or lunch or have to choose tutoring over lunch. While some teachers do allow students to eat in class, many teachers still do not. It is recommended that teachers allow students to eat healthy snack options in class. Schools should work with local food banks and the community to receive donations (either monetary or food) to provide snacks in every classroom. This would eliminate stigma surrounding going to the share box or school pantry and get rid of the current inequality between students with money for snacks and those without.

Allowing eating in class can significantly help improve teen food security as well as health. Teens in this research noted that having an empty stomach affected their moods and behaviors. Thus, allowing classroom eating could improve students' school performance, focus, mood, behaviors, and ultimately mental and physical health. We recommend that classroom food consumption be permitted in all classes. Teens are on their way to becoming adults. Thus, allowing them to eat when they want is one privilege that will show they are respected and have autonomy in their eating behaviors.

Another idea that has worked to improve the perception of school food and students' diet within schools is community gardening. Teaching students how to grow their own food at school has numerous advantages. To start, it provides skills that may result in home gardening and therefore improved access to healthy and more foods. Secondly, research shows that school gardens increase consumption of fruits and vegetables among children (Evans et al. 2016; Ratcliffe et al. 2011). Community organizations or schools could work with other organizations, such as local farm(s) or community gardening initiatives, food banks, and social services, to provide knowledge as well as materials such as soil, seeds, and planters to teens who want to garden at home. Programs like youth farms, currently being established through a partnership with local organizations and the city of St. Petersburg, are great ways for teens to not only gain mentors, but also entrepreneurial skills, youth leadership development, and agricultural experience. While not immediate solutions, these initiatives provide teens and families with skills that may help alleviate some of the financial and food-access pressures.

Additionally, gardening can expose teens to the realities of produce appearances. The teens feel that some of the foods are unsafe to eat at school based on their appearance. A nutrition education program that teaches students which foods are and are not safe to eat may be beneficial. Teens can learn that blemishes on foods are not necessarily bad or dangerous and that "ugly" foods can be good/safe to eat. Marketing campaigns in Europe and Oregon have worked well in bringing awareness to the public on myths surrounding foods that look perfect and those that do not and have lowered food waste. Something similar designed to target students could be a fun and innovative way to (try to) alter perceptions relative to which foods are safe and unsafe to eat.

Eliminating Stigma in Schools and Community

While teens focused many of their issues on the quality and quantity of food provided in schools, they also offered insight into what their experiences are like on a community level. One of the barriers preventing students from seeking out food through assistance programs like “Pack –A- Snack” are the stigmas associated with receiving free food. As mentioned, many of these programs offering these snacks to teens do so in front of their peers, which can result in teasing or bullying. A recommendation would be to offer these food options to teens privately, both during school and in after-school programs. It also may be worth soliciting more churches and organizations to participate in the distribution of food through these assistance programs in community settings to help to remove some of the shame experienced by teens. Teens expressed that bullying not only affects their peers mentally and emotionally, but also physically. It is recommended that schools partner with programs like the Sandy Hook Promise, “Say Hello” program to promote social inclusion and acceptance of individuals regardless if they share commonalities or not to reduce instance of students who are bullied for having to utilize food assistance programs.

Teens shared that their peers are not the only ones that subject them to stigmas, but so do adults. They are reluctant to ask for help, as they fear adults will blame them for their circumstances and place the responsibility of getting food on the teen. Thus, again it seems that there is a lack of community awareness regarding the face of food insecurity in Pinellas County. A public marketing campaign to bring awareness of teen and household food insecurity could be beneficial in fighting stigma.

Community Initiatives

Students cited that financial struggles affected their ability to have enough food at home. Some of these struggles come from the mismanagement of funds (i.e. spending income on clothes, shoes, or drugs). Providing communities with money management workshops and resources could serve as a way to help to encourage wiser spending habits. It is recommended that local financial institutions and community organizations partner to provide these resources to families receiving SNAP benefits, assistance through food banks and pantries, as well as families that participate in free and reduced lunch programs. This study showed that teens placed the responsibility to obtain food on their parents unless they are left with having to provide for themselves. While

it is primarily the parent's responsibility to provide food to teens, older teens are at an advantage that they can work in order to earn extra money, even if only to pay for their own food at home and school. Increasing healthy teen jobs in their communities could help alleviate financial pressures for teens and their families. Youth employment opportunities that are surrounded by positively impactful people, located in safe areas, and do not interfere with school activities or studies are recommended.

Food Assistance Programs

While teen access to quality foods at school is important, they must also be able obtain quality foods at home, as well as during after school and summer programs. Teens shared that financial burdens, food waste, and the nutritional demands (e.g. large appetites) of teens leads to food running out at home. Moreover, teens are often left with foods that are not easily prepared and may not know how to cook meals that require more preparation. Thus, cooking education may be one way to promote food security among teens. Community organizations and schools can develop partnerships with culinary arts students to facilitate free cooking classes that teach students how to prepare simple meals for high school students. Furthermore, this can provide an opportunity for teens to try new things, particularly healthy alternatives to foods they know and enjoy. It would also be beneficial to provide free cooking courses for families to learn ways to make healthy meals that are also affordable and quick/convenient.

Another recommendation is to provide education and resources to teens on food assistance in their communities. Peer-driven awareness and education on where teens can go for food, what sites allow teens and/or children to get food, and how to utilize these resources is critical. Many of the participants didn't know where food pantries were. Teens also discussed the difficulties of attending food pantries because they require adults or an ID. Thus, there needs to be more awareness of current teen/child food assistance programs. Within peer-driven awareness initiatives, nutrition education (e.g. ugly food education) could be included to change perceptions about food appearances, as well.

However, this brings us to another issue. There continues to be a mismatch between food insecurity knowledge and practice. Currently, food assistance programming is two dimensions. It either focuses on children or adults. Teens are completely left out in most cases. The face of food insecurity among teens is

complex. It is about more than access. It is about social stigma, fear, and education. Thus, food assistance programs need to be innovated to meet the needs of adolescents and their households. In addition, new food pantries should be designed to target teens specifically.

Some ideas for this include creating student organizations that focus on food security. They could be in charge of awareness, education, eliminating stigma, and creating new programs for teens within their schools or communities. Peer groups know best how to market and educate their peers. They could come up with campaigns to spread the word in the schools and fun fundraisers to raise money or food for classrooms.

Another recommendation includes making sure all teen centers in Pinellas County have a food pantry and provide food to their students. Whether it's an afterschool snack or full meal, more funding and effort needs to go toward improving the sites teens are currently at. Teens are comfortable at these community sites and in their classrooms. Thus, these venues are the perfect places to tackle food insecurity.

Lastly, child-targeted food assistance could go beyond the snack or the meal. Summer BreakSpots is a successful child food security campaign that is viewed positively by teens. It provides lunch for students during the summer at various community sites. We could take this a step further to assist with not just the students' needs but their families' as well by turning some of these spots into food pantries, too. Students could take home food as needed throughout the week. This could be particularly helpful during times of the week or month when food is running out. In addition, children and teens already utilize this program and there seems to be less stigma surrounding its use.

Incorporate Household Needs

Changes to SNAP and local food pantry distribution may also benefit teens. Families with older children have greater needs due to the increased nutritional demands of adolescence. Thus, SNAP should consider the age of household members within its monetary allocations. Families with teens should receive higher food allowance than families with young children. The same improvement could be made to food pantries themselves. Rather than providing the same amount of food to each household, pantries should account for the age of household members as well as household size. Furthermore, knowledge about types of

foods teens prefer can help within food pantry decisions. Boxes designated to families with older children could incorporate those preferences as much as possible.

APPLICATION

The findings from this research will be applied through various community and academic efforts. The research was implemented under the Hunger Action Alliance (HAA) and funded by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB). Thus, both JWB and HAA have ownership of the results and report. Partners associated with JWB and HAA will have access to the findings and can use/disseminate the report as desired (with necessary accreditations). The Childhood Hunger Work Group, which consists of 50+ members and is facilitated by JWB, will receive the report and present the findings to its members. Members include various stakeholders throughout the community including members of school boards, the school nutrition program, Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger (TBNEH), Feeding Tampa Bay, and various pantries and local organizations. The Childhood Hunger Initiative group will come together with ideas on ways to create change, improve programs, and/or create new interventions for teens based on the findings and resources.

The findings from this study will help to complete the Childhood Hunger Initiative's 2-year work plan. The work plan has a section and a work group designated to teen food security. The teen food security work group will incorporate the findings into the work plan. Furthermore, the Childhood Hunger Initiative will identify partners and implement one to three teen-focused pilot projects using the information from the study.

JWB and the Childhood Hunger Initiative will also use the findings when considering marketing strategies related to food assistance and youth services (e.g. Summer BreakSpots marketing toward teens, developing teen-friendly summer sites).

The photos from the photovoice project will be formatted into mobile posters highlighting the themes from the project. The photovoice posters, along with a presentation of the full research, will be displayed through an open community exhibit. Stakeholders, teens, and community members are invited to attend the exhibit to learn about the findings and begin the conversation on ways to tackle teen food insecurity in our

communities. The photovoice posters will then move around to various community locations including the sites that participated in the research, TBNEH, and USF. They will also be shared at conferences.

The Hunger Action Alliance will present the findings to its members and partners and use the findings to design further research and recommendations for food assistance programs and initiatives. We will request that TBNEH share the findings to their tri-county area members and incorporate the results within their program planning and advocacy efforts. TBNEH has an advocacy team and we hope that this research will help them advocate for better food assistance and child nutrition policies.

Lastly, this research will be presented at upcoming conferences, including the 2018 Summit to End Hunger as well as academic conferences such as the Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings. Moreover, the researchers plan to publish the research findings in a scholarly article to help fill the gap in current food security literature. Since research on teen food insecurity is lacking, we hope that the evidence provided can be shared far and wide to help programs and services better respond to the needs of teens.

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RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

November 21, 2017

David
Himmelgreen,
Ph.D.
Anthropology
4202 E. Fowler Ave,
SOC 107
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB Pro00032420
#:

Title Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County,
: Florida

Study Approval Period: 11/21/2017 to 11/21/2018

Dear Dr. Himmelgreen:

On 11/21/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[IRB Study Protocol Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County.docx](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[AssentForm_Version1.docx.pdf](#)

[ParentalPermission_Version1.docx.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Study involves children and falls under 45 CFR 46.404: Research not involving more than minimal risk.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', followed by a horizontal line.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

HUNGER ACTION ALLIANCE

RESEARCH. EDUCATION. TRANSFORMATION.

APPENDIX B: STUDY INSTRUMENTS

USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

TEEN FOCUS GROUP ABOUT TEENS

JANUARY 18 @ 4:30 P.M.
CLEARWATER NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY CENTER

Free PIZZA

Let's talk!

Are you a teen between the ages of
11 and 17?

If yes, we want to hear from you!

We want to learn about food insecurity among teens in Pinellas County. Participate in a *90 minute focus group* and take photos* (optional) of what teen food insecurity looks like in your community

Time commitment: 90 minutes to 3 hours

For participating: you will get free pizza and refreshments, free food to take home, and a \$25 gift card*

Interested? Fill out the attached form and have your parent sign the parental permission form, then place the forms in the designated box

This study is conducted by the Hunger Action Alliance and Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County
*Cameras will be provided to teens; \$25 gift card provided after teen completes the photo project
IRB Study#00032420

Figure 7: Recruitment flyer for teens

Teen Focus Group Interest

Contact Information	
Gender (Male or Female)	
Age	
ZIP Code	
Phone	

For confidentiality, you do not need to provide your name. This form is to let us know you are interested in participating in the research study “Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County”. We will call you to let you know if you have been chosen to participate based on your age and gender. Make sure you attach the signed parental permission form to this. You will not be able to participate without your parent’s signed permission. For questions, call Mecca Burris at (502) 751-0200.

Para la confidencialidad, no necesita proporcionar su nombre. Este formulario es para informarnos que está interesado en participar en el estudio de investigación "Inseguridad alimentaria adolescente en el condado de Pinellas". Le llamaremos para informarle si ha sido elegido para participar en función de su edad y sexo. Asegúrese de adjuntar el formulario de permiso de los padres firmado a esto. No podrás participar sin el permiso firmado de tus padres. Para preguntas, llame a Mecca Burris al (502) 751-0200.



Parental Permission for Children to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Information for parents to consider before allowing your child to take part in this research study

Pro # 00032420

The following information is being presented to help you and your child decide whether or not he/she wishes to be a part of a research study. Please read this information carefully. If you have any questions or if you do not understand the information, we encourage you to ask the researcher.

We are asking you to allow your child to take part in a research study called:
Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County, Florida

The person who is in charge of this research study is David Himmelgreen. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

The research will be conducted at four sites: James B. Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center, Clearwater Neighborhood Family Center, Pinellas Sherriff's Police Athletic League, and Hispanic Outreach Center.

This research is being sponsored for by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County.

Purpose of study:



The purpose of this research study is to find out if teens in Pinellas County have enough food to eat, what they do if they don't have enough food, and how food banks and pantries can help teens get food.

Why is your child being asked to take part?

We are asking your child to take part in this research study because he or she is a teen between the ages of 11 and 17 years, and is a resident of Pinellas County. We want to talk to teens about teen experiences with food insecurity in their communities.

Study Procedures:

If your child takes part in this study, s/he will be asked to be a part of a focus group held at one of these sites: James B. Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center, Clearwater Neighborhood Family Center, Pinellas Sheriff's Police Athletic League, or the Hispanic Outreach Center. The focus group will ask teens questions about food insecurity amongst teens in their community. The focus groups will be confidential.

Your child will also be asked to participate in a photovoice project where he/she will take photographs relative to teen food insecurity for two weeks with a provided disposable camera and agree to return to a final focus group at the original site to share, discuss, and analyze their photographs. The photovoice project will consist of four stages. Stage 1 will explain and teach your teen about the photovoice method at the end of the first focus group. Stage 2 will be the photography by your teen for two weeks, where your teen will be provided a disposable camera and will take photos that answer the questions *what does being food insecure or not having enough food feel or like* and *how can food insecurity or not having enough food be fixed*. Stage 3 is the second focus group where your teen will share his or her photographs, discuss them with the group, and analyze photographs with the group. Stage 4 will be the display of the photographs in an exhibit at the end of the research for community members to see. The display will showcase photos participants choose that explain what food insecurity looks or feels like in their community and ways that food insecurity among teens can be fixed. Photographs will keep the confidentiality of the teens, unless they choose to be present at the exhibit and unless they choose to take photographs of themselves in the photos. They will not be allowed to take photos of other people or identifiable information such as street names or house numbers. Teens do not have to participate in the photovoice project, share their photos, or let us use their photos for display if they do not want to or if they changed their minds.

Other teens from the community will also be in the focus groups. There will be no less than eight teens in each focus group. There are other focus groups that will happen in different parts of Pinellas County. In the focus group, the Hunger Action Alliance will provide pizza for the group and ask questions about whether teens have enough food to eat in their communities and schools, what ways teens get food for themselves and/or their families, and how to make sure teens have enough food to eat. We will ask the teens what they think and take notes. Your teen will be asked to give their opinion about what they think. This is not based just on their personal experiences, but on what they might have seen or heard from other teens. We will also ask them to give



information like their age, gender, ethnicity and race, household, and their own food security. We will NOT ask their name.

- Each focus group will last no longer than 90 minutes. Both focus groups combined will require up to three hours of your child’s time and two visits to the site.
- Taking photos will take approximately one more hour of your child’s time.
- The discussions will be audio recorded but not video recorded. The teens will be asked not to use their names or the names of anyone else during the recording to make sure their opinions stay private. If someone’s name is used by mistake, we won’t connect what was said to that person. Only the USF investigators will have access to the recordings. After the focus groups are done, the recordings will be uploaded and transcribed onto the study staffs’ secure University of South Florida computers behind a firewall. Your teen will not be identified with any words transcribed or in any notes taken from the focus groups. Recordings, along with all data obtained from the research study, will be stored in confidence for a minimum of five years after the final USF IRB report has been submitted. After this five year storage period, all data and audio recordings will be destroyed by the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator. An expected date of destruction will be on, or shortly following, April 30, 2023

Total Number of Participants

A total of 32 individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

Age Range of Participants

Participants will be between 11 and 17 years old.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

If you decide not to let your child take part in this study, that is okay. Instead of being in this research study your child can choose not to participate. You should only let your child take part in this study if both of you want to. You or child should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study to please the study investigator or the research staff.

If you decide not to let your child take part:

- Your child will not be in trouble or lose any rights he/she would normally have.
- Your child will still get the same community services he/she would normally have.

You can decide after signing this informed consent form that you no longer want your child to take part in this study. We will keep you informed of any new developments which might affect your willingness to allow your child to continue to participate in the study. However, you can decide you want your child to stop taking part in the study for any reason at any time. If you decide you want your child to stop taking part in the study, tell the study staff as soon as you can.

Benefits

The potential benefits to your child include:

- Helping teens get food that they need and feeling that their thoughts are important

Risks or Discomfort

The following risks may occur:

- Participation could take time away from other things that teens might rather do.
- Talking about not having enough food might make your child upset
- It is possible that other teens in the focus group might tell others what people say and may disclose the identity of your teen.
- Participation in the photovoice exhibit will not ensure confidentiality or anonymity, but participants must express their desire and agreement to participate.

Compensation

Free food and refreshments will be provided to your child at each focus group. Your child will also be given a bag of food to take home at the end of each focus group if they choose to do so.

Your child will also be compensated with a \$25 gift card if he/she completes all the scheduled study visits *and* the photovoice project. If you withdraw your child for any reason from the study before completion, your child will be given food and refreshments at each of the focus groups they attend.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to let your child take part in the study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The researchers do not claim any conflict of interest for this research.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your child's study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your child's study records. Anyone who looks at your child's records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.

- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.
- The sponsors of this study and contract research organization.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your child's name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who your child is.

A federal law called Title IX protects your right to be free from sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. USF's Title IX policy requires certain USF employees to report sexual harassment or sexual violence against any USF employee, student or group, but does not require researchers to report sexual harassment or sexual violence when they learn about it as part of conducting an IRB-approved study. If, as part of this study, your child tells us about any sexual harassment or sexual violence that has happened to her/him, including rape or sexual assault, we are not required to report it to the University. If you have questions about Title IX or USF's Title IX policy, please call USF's Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity at (813) 974-4373.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call David Himmelgreen at (813) 974-2138.

If you have questions about your child's rights, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Consent for My Child to Participate in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to let my child take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to let my child take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study

Date



Printed Name of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study

Consent for Photographs Taken by My Child to be Displayed Publicly

I freely give my consent to let my child take photographs with a provided disposable camera and for my child's photos to be displayed publicly at a community exhibit. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to let my child take part in photovoice research and a photographic display. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their child's participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent



Assent of Children to Participate in Research

Pro # 00032420

Title of study: Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County, Florida

Why am I being asked to take part in this research?

You are being asked to take part in a research study about teens and whether they have enough food to eat, what they do if they don't have enough food, and how food banks and pantries can help teenagers get food. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a teen between the ages of 11 and 17 and live in Pinellas County, Florida. If you take part in this study, you will be one of about 8 people at this site, and one of 32 people in the study.

Who is doing this study?

The person in charge of this study is David Himmelgreen. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

What is the purpose of this study?

By doing this study, we hope to learn if teenagers in Pinellas County have enough food to eat, what they do if they don't have enough food, and how food banks and pantries can help teenagers get food.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?

The study will be take place at four facilities: James B. Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center, Clearwater Neighborhood Family Center, Pinellas Sherriff's Police Athletic League, and Hispanic Outreach Center. You will be asked to participate in two visits to one of these facilities which will take about 90 minutes per visit. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 4 hours over the next two weeks.

What will you be asked to do?

- A research study is a way to learn more about people. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate along with other teens in a focus group (discussion) that will last 90 minutes and a photovoice project which will have you take photographs with a disposable camera and then join a second focus group (also 90 minutes) to share and discuss the photos. The photos you choose will be displayed in an exhibit at the end of the research study for the community to see. During the focus groups, one researcher will ask questions, and one will take notes. You will answer the questions and give your thoughts and opinions based on what you have seen or heard. The focus groups will be audio recorded. What you share will be anonymous - we will not connect what is said to any one person in particular.
- The questions will ask you about yourself first, including your age, gender, household makeup, race and ethnicity, and food security. You will never be asked your name. The focus group questions will ask you about whether teens in your community and school have enough food, what they do to get food, and your opinions on how organizations can help teens get food.
- There will be two visits and four stages of the research. The first stage is the first focus group, where we talk about food security among teens. The second stage is the photovoice project, where you will take photos with a provided camera of what teen food insecurity looks like in your community and ways teen food insecurity and hunger can be fixed. You will not be allowed to take photos of other people or identifiable information. The third stage is a second focus group, where we will get together and talk about the photos you took and come up with themes. The last stage will be a community exhibit where the photos you choose will be put on display for the public to see, with your permission.
- You do not have to participate in the photovoice project if you don't want to. You also do not have to share your photos if you don't want to. You don't have to allow us to use your photos for display, either. It is also okay if you change your mind during your participation.

What things might happen if you participate?

Although we have made every effort to try and make sure this doesn't happen, you may find some questions we ask may upset you. If so, we will tell you and your parents or guardian about other people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

In addition to the things that we have already talked about, listed above, you may experience something unpleasant that we do not know about at this time.

Is there benefit to me for participating?

We cannot promise that you will receive benefit from taking part in this research study. However, some people have experienced happiness from providing information that may help other teens get food that they need. You may also feel glad that your thoughts are important and that your photos



will be used in an exhibit after the research is done to show other people the needs of your community.

What other choices do I have if I do not participate?

You do not have to participate in this research study.

Do I have to take part in this study?

You should talk with your parents or guardian and others about taking part in this research study. If you do not want to take part in the study, that is your decision. You should take part in this study because you want to volunteer.

Will I receive any compensation for taking part in this study?

You will receive free food and refreshments at each focus group for taking part in the focus group. You will also receive a bag of food to take home after each focus group, if you would like. You will be given a \$25 gift card, too, if you complete the photovoice project and the second focus group. If you stop participating before the study is over, the payment you receive will be based on the amount of time you were in the study.

Who will see the information about me?

Your information will be added to the information from other people taking part in the study so no one will know who you are.

Can I change my mind and quit?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to change your mind later. No one will think badly of you if you decide to stop participating. Also, the people who are running this study may need for you to stop. If this happens, they will tell you when to stop and why.

What if I have questions?

You can ask questions about this study at any time. You can talk with your parents, guardian or other adults about this study. You can talk with the person who is asking you to volunteer by calling David Himmelgreen at (813) 974-2138. If you think of other questions later, you can ask them. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant you can also call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Assent to Participate



I understand what the person conducting this study is asking me to do. I have thought about this and agree to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of person agreeing to take part in the study Date _____

Signature of child agreeing to take part in the study: _____

Assent to Use Photographs for Public Display

I understand what the person conducting this study is asking me to do. I have thought about this and agree to let the researchers use the photographs I take for a community display. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of person agreeing to take part in the study Date _____

Signature of child agreeing to take part in the study: _____

Printed name & Signature of person providing Date _____
Information (assent) to subject



Demographic and Food Security Survey Form

Version 1

Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County

September 6, 2017

The information will only be used to summarize participant information at this meeting.

**Please do not put your name on this form.
Your answers will stay secret.**

1. I am _____ years old

2. I am: ___ Male ___ Female ___ Other

3. I am:

___ White

___ Black or African American

___ Asian

___ American Indian and Alaska Native

___ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

___ Some Other Race

4. I am:

___ Hispanic or Latino

___ Not Hispanic or Latino

5. Total number of people living with me: _____

6. Total children under the age of 18 years living with me: _____

7. Grade I am in school: _____

8. Do you or your family participate in food assistance programs (e.g.: SNAP, food stamps)

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please list which ones _____

Please turn the page over. Just a few more questions!

1. Did you worry that food at home would run out before your family got money to buy more?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

2. Did the food that your family bought run out, and you didn't have money to get more?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

3. Did your meals only include a few kinds of cheap foods because your family was running out of money to buy food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

4. How often were you not able to eat a balanced meal because your family didn't have enough money?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

5. Did you have to eat less because your family didn't have enough money to buy food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

6. Has the size of your meals been cut because your family didn't have enough money for food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

7. Did you have to skip a meal because your family didn't have enough money for food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

8. Were you hungry but didn't eat because your family didn't have enough food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER

9. Did you not eat for a whole day because your family didn't have enough money for food?

A LOT SOMETIMES NEVER



Focus Group Script
Version 2
Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County
November 21, 2017
Mecca Burris

Focus Group Script

Script adapted from the Urban Institute

TASK: Verify consent forms are signed for each participant

Introduction

- Hello. My name is _ _____ and this is _ _____. We're with the Hunger Action Alliance. We are here to figure out the challenges around food that teens are facing in our community and to get your ideas on how we can get food to teens who need it.

Interview Objectives

- We hear from people that not having enough food is an issue for many teens.
- We've talked to many people about this issue, but we want to hear what teens in your neighborhood think, too.
- We aren't asking about your personal situations, but about what you think happens in your neighborhood or what you've seen happen.
- Teens are the experts on teens so we are here to hear your thoughts and opinions.
- Here are a few guidelines to help us have a good discussion:
- This is an informal conversation about what you think—there are no right or wrong answers.
- Let's all respect what everyone in the room has to say.
- You don't have to answer any question you don't want to. At any time, you can choose not to participate.
- When we write about what we hear today, we will not connect your name with anything you say.
- Don't use any names when telling a story.
- Please keep what we discuss today in this room. Please keep in mind that we can't control what participants in today's group say or do with the information you share. Guard what you say if you are concerned someone might repeat it.
- As a final note, if we hear anything that leads us to suspect you or someone else is in danger of being mentally or physically abused or neglected, we are required by law to report it. (If teens ask to whom we report- "We will tell a program staff member, who can help directly and our own research staff and the group of people who are responsible for making sure our participants are safe.")

Consent/Assent Form

- We have a consent form from each of your parents but before we begin, I want to give you the chance to agree to be part of this project.
- We would like to record the discussion today to make sure we have your thoughts recorded accurately. Nobody outside the research team will be allowed to listen to the tapes and they will be kept confidential on secured computers until they are deleted.
-
- Remember that you do not have to participate and that you can choose to stop participating at any time without any consequences.
- Let's review this assent form.

TASK: Facilitate review, signing, and collecting of assent forms

TASK: Distribute pizza and survey. Collect and secure survey.

- Do you have any questions or comments before we continue?
- If you don't know how to answer a question, or you don't really have anything to say, that's fine. Whatever you do have to say is valuable.
- I am going to begin recording our conversation now. Let's get started.

TASK: Start the recording.

Where are teens getting food?

- What comes to mind when you think about hunger? We're not talking about starving children in other countries. That IS hunger. But let's focus on teens in your neighborhood who don't have enough to eat sometimes. What comes to mind?
 - PROBE: why do you think some teens in your community have trouble getting enough food or are hungry?
 - Can you tell me about teens that may not get a healthy or balanced diet because they don't get enough food sometimes or have a hard time getting balanced/healthy meals? Why do you think this happens?
- Can you tell me about teens you know who are involved in getting food for themselves or their families? They may be buying, getting, or making food, maybe for the whole family or for their younger siblings.
 - PROBE: Where do they go to get food and why?
- Are teens more likely to buy or get food that's already ready to eat, or do they tend to cook food?

What makes getting food difficult?

- Let's talk about some of the challenges that teens run into when they try to get food.

- Do you think teens in your neighborhood worry about not having enough food? Tell me about that.
 - PROBE: Do you think this happens a lot or not so much around here?
- Is there a specific time when food runs low? This might be a certain time of the week, the month, or the year.
- When money is tight, where can families in your neighborhood go for food?
 - PROBE: What about places like churches or food pantries?
- Do teens go to these places or just adults? Why?
 - PROBE: Is it hard to get to these places (transportation)?
 - PROBE: Are there places you know of that only let adults get food? Is this a problem for teens you know of?
 - PROBE: Do teens feel welcome at these places?
- Do teens rely on food from school? Tell me about that.
 - PROBE: Ask separately about breakfast, lunch, school pantries, after school snacks, etc.
- Do you feel like you have enough time to eat when you're at school?
- How do teens feel about getting free or reduced-price food from school?
- Are there programs at school that provide snacks or dinner to take home that teens use? Or food for the weekend? Tell me about that.
 - PROBE: How do these programs work?
- What happens when there is no school in regards to teens and food access (weekends, school vacations, summer vacation)?
- Where would teens feel comfortable getting food or eating when they are not in school?
- Think about places where adults or young kids normally go to get food. Places like food pantries. What could these places do so that teens would feel more comfortable getting food there?
 - PROBE: What kinds of new programs could there be that teens might be comfortable using?
- What about preference? Tell me about what teens like to eat?
 - Do you feel that food assistance or school programs provide the kinds of foods that teenagers like and prefer?
 - Do you feel they provide the type of foods growing teens need?

Consequences

- What do you think are the consequences of these challenges to teens getting enough food to eat?
 - PROMPT: what do you think happens when teens go hungry?
 - PROMPT: have you observed any teens that have experienced consequences like poor health or emotional problems because they don't get enough food?
- Do you think teen hunger is a serious issue in your neighborhood?

Pressures and how teens are coping?

- We've been talking about teen hunger and where teens in your neighborhood **GO** to get food for themselves and their families. Now let's talk about what you've seen teens **DO** in order to get their needs met. We're not asking about your personal situations or things you've done, but about what you think happens in your neighborhood. This is a good time to remind everyone not to mention anyone by name when answering these questions. Remember this is about things you know other teens are doing, and you don't have to answer about what **you** do if you don't want to.
- Do you know any teens who have to help their parents pay for food and bills for their family? Tell me about that.
 - PROBE: How do the teens in your neighborhood help their families get what they need?
- Do teens help without being asked or do parents ask them to do specific things?
 - Do you think teens feel responsible for helping their families or taking care of themselves?
- Do you know any teens who do things so they can buy *themselves* food or other things like school supplies or schools?
- If there isn't enough food, what do you think teens do to get food or money to buy food?
 - PROBE: Do they get jobs, trade favors, steal, borrow from friends, sell things, etc.
 - What do you think teens *prefer* to do the most to help get food or money for food?
 - How common are these strategies in your neighborhood?
- Do you think teens around here sometimes date older teens or adults to get money or the things they need? Tell me about that.
- Sometimes friends might share food or give someone a ride to the store or a place to eat. They might also help run programs at school or other places to help other teens. Do you know about times when teens have helped other teens get the food they need?
 - PROBE: What are some good ways that teens can help each other get enough food?

Wrap-Up

- Thanks a lot for taking the time to talk and sit down with us. We appreciate it! What you guys have shared is really important. We're actually going to take what you said and **DO** something with it to make a difference in the lives of teens in our community.
 - Is there anything else you think we need to know about?
 - Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas.
 - I'm going to turn off the audio recording now.

TASK: Turn off recording

- We plan to use your ideas to improve programs or start new programs to help teens get the food they need. If you might like to be involved in helping to get teens the food they need - for example, by volunteering to put together packs of food or help to distribute food – then please provide your contact information on this form. Your information will not be connected to anything you have said here today.
- Sometimes experiences can be upsetting. It happens to everyone. If you feel upset after this focus group, even if it's a few days after the meeting, the important thing is to talk to someone about it. Please take this list of resources for yourself or someone you know who may need some more support.
- We also have a list of locations for people to get emergency food. Please take one. You can use it for yourself or give it to someone you know that might need some food.
- Please take some food with you on your way out. You can choose to use this for yourself and your family or you can give the food to someone you know who needs it.
- **TASK:** Distribute emergency food list, mental health resource sheet, and food to take home.

Photovoice Stage 1

Task: Explain photovoice method and re-ensure willingness to participate. Let teens know they can leave now if they do not want to participate in the photovoice exercise.

Task: Pass out disposable cameras

Task: Explain the photovoice method, the objectives, rules, and prompt questions:

- Objectives: Sometimes photos can tell a story better the words. The photovoice project gives helps us better understand how you see food insecurity in your community. It also lets you become the researchers!
- How this project works is we give you a disposable camera for you to take photographs that answer these two questions:
 - *What does being food insecure or not having enough food feel or look like?*

- *How can food insecurity or not having enough food be fixed?*
- There are some rules for taking photographs. Please do not take any photographs with other people in them. This protects the privacy of others. You can take photos of yourself only if you want to. But, some of these photos will be displayed at a community exhibit so keep in mind that taking photos of yourself will mean people will know you participated in the project. Also, if you take photographs of illegal activity or private settings, please make sure there are no people in the photo and no identifiable information in the photo, such as a house number, street sign, etc.
- You can take as many photos as you want. You have two weeks to take your photos.
- When you are finished taking photos, you will drop the camera off in a box at [insert organization site]. The cameras must be turned in by two weeks from today, which is [insert date].
- You do not have to participate in the photovoice project if you don't want to. You also do not have to let us use your photos at the display if you do not want us to.
- After we get your cameras and develop the film, we will have another focus group to discuss the photographs. This will be on [date]. If you don't want to participate in the last focus group, then please let us know so we do not give you a camera.
- Do you guys have any questions about the photovoice project?

Task: Thank you again for your participation today.

- Dismiss the group



Focus Group #2 Script
Version 1
Teen Food Insecurity in Pinellas County
November 15, 2017
Mecca Burris
Pro #00032420

Focus Group Script
TASK: Photovoice

Introduction

- Hello everyone. Welcome back! We hope you enjoyed taking photos and are excited to discuss them with the group. As a reminder, my name is Mecca and we're with the Hunger Action Alliance. We are here to figure out the challenges around food that teens are facing in our community and get your ideas on how we can get food to teens who need it.

Interview Objectives

- We hear from people that not having enough food is an issue for many teens.
- Looking at photographs of the issue can be a powerful way of telling the story that sometimes you can't get from just talking to people.
- Teens are the experts on teens so we are here to hear your thoughts and opinions.
- Here are a few guidelines to help us have a good discussion:
- This is an informal conversation about what you think the photos you took show—there are no right or wrong answers.
- Let's all respect what everyone in the room has to say.
- You don't have to answer any question you don't want to. At any time, you can choose not to participate.
- When we write about what we hear today, we will not connect your name with anything you say.
- Don't use any names when telling a story.
- Please keep what we discuss today in this room. Please keep in mind that we can't control what participants in today's group say or do with the information you share. Guard what you say if you are concerned someone might repeat it.
- As a final note, if we hear or see anything that leads us to suspect you or someone else is in danger of being mentally or physically abused or neglected, we are required by law to report it. (If teens ask to whom we report- "We will tell a program staff member, who can help directly and our own research staff and the group of people who are responsible for making sure our participants are safe.")

Consent/Assent Form

- We already have your parental permission forms and assent forms, but if you would like to see another one please let me know.
- Would you like me to go through the assent form again? (if yes – read the assent form). If no, continue.
- We would like to record the discussion today to make sure we have your thoughts recorded accurately. Nobody outside the research team will be allowed to listen to the tapes and they will be kept confidential on secured computers until they are deleted.
- Remember that you do not have to participate and that you can choose to stop participating at any time without any consequences.

TASK: Distribute pizza and photos

- Do you have any questions or comments before we continue?
- We are giving you all the photos that you personally took. Look through these photos and choose five or six photos that you want to discuss. They can be any photo. There are no right or wrong photos to choose.
- After you choose your photos, we will ask you to answer questions about the picture.
- If you don't know how to answer a question, or you don't really have anything to say, that's fine. Whatever you do have to say is valuable.
- If you don't want to share your photos, that's okay too. You don't have to participate.
- I am going to begin recording our conversation now. Let's get started.

TASK: Start the recording.

TASK: Explain the questions:

- So, today's group is going to be a little different. We are going to ask each of you five questions individually. So one person will show the group their chosen photos and answer the five questions one at a time. The questions we will ask you about each photo are: 1. What do you see here? 2. What is really happening here? 3. How does this relate to our lives? 4. Why does this condition exist? 5. What can we do about it?
- The group can ask questions about the photos, too.
- After each person has discussed their photos and answered the questions, we will discuss the photos as a group and think about themes that we see throughout all the pictures.
- After we have identified and talked about themes, then we will talk about steps that can be taken to tackle the issues identified in the photos.
- At the end of the focus group, you guys will get a \$25 gift card to thank you for participating.

TASK: Individual Interviews

- Who would like to share your photos first?
- [for each person and photo shared]:
 - What do you see here?
 - What is really happening here?
 - How does this relate to our lives?
 - Why does this condition exist?
 - What can we do about it?
 - What caption would you give the photo?

TASK: Group Discussion

- Let's talk about some of the themes we see across all photographs. I will write them on the board.
- Why do you think these themes exist?
- How could these themes impact the wellbeing of teens?
- What do you think we can do to help solve these issues?

Wrap-Up

- Thanks a lot for taking the time to talk and sit down with us. We appreciate it! What you guys have shared is really important. We're actually going to take what you said and **DO** something with it to make a difference in the lives of teens in our community.
 - Is there anything else you think we need to know about?
 - Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas.
 - I'm going to turn off the audio recording now.

TASK: Turn off recording

- We plan to use your ideas to improve programs or start new programs to help teens get the food they need.
- We plan to use your photographs and captions that you shared today for a community exhibit. If you would like to volunteer to be at the exhibit to present your photos and explain them to community members, please provide your contact information on this form. Your information will not be connected to anything you have said here today.

HUNGER ACTION ALLIANCE

RESEARCH. EDUCATION. TRANSFORMATION.

- You do not have to participate at the exhibit. If you do not want to, your photos will remain anonymous. Nobody will know that you took those photos and wrote the caption.
- Sometimes experiences can be upsetting. It happens to everyone. If you feel upset after this focus group, even if it's a few days after the meeting, the important thing is to talk to someone about it. Please take this list of resources for yourself or someone you know who may need some more support.
- We also have a list of locations for people to get emergency food. Please take one. You can use it for yourself or give it to someone you know that might need some food.
- Please take some food with you on your way out. You can choose to use this for yourself and your family or you can give the food to someone you know who needs it.
- TASK: Distribute emergency food list, mental health resource sheet, and food to take home.

Thank you again for your participation today.

- Dismiss the group



APPENDIX C: RESOURCES

Food Pantries and Kitchens of Pinellas County, Florida November 6, 2017

Dunedin

DUNEDIN CARES INC.

1620 Pinehurst Road
Dunedin FL 34698
813-215-777.
Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

CLEARWATER COMMUNITY CHURCH HARRIET'S PANTRY

2897 Belcher Rd.
Dunedin FL 34698
727-799-4444
Tuesday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Thursday 12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

SOUTH MIND CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1812 Main St.
Dunedin FL
727-323-6463
Monday-Thursday, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. ?

Clearwater

BAY AREA PREGNANCY CENTER

2380 Drew St. #6
Clearwater FL 33765
727-449-1988
*Call for appointment

BAYVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

201 Meadow Lark Lane
Clearwater FL 33759
727-466-9982
Thursday, 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

BETHLEHEM SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

1015 N. Missouri Ave
Clearwater FL 33755
727-461-4981
Call for pantry details

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1200 Keene Road South



Clearwater FL 33756
727-446-0988
Small cart in the office, open Monday-Friday until 4 p.m.

CLEARWATER SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

1445 Lakeview Rd
Clearwater FL 33756
727-446-6427
Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Wednesdays, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

CLEARWATER FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

1875 Nursery Rd.
Clearwater FL
727-536-1498
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

CLEARWATER FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH

1739 S. MLK Jr. Ave
Clearwater FL 33756
727-585-5468
Monday's and Tuesday's at 10:00 am

COUNTRYSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

2525 N. McMullen Booth Rd.
Clearwater FL 33761
727-726-2550
Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

FLOWING RIVER CHURCH

1148 E Turner ST.
Clearwater FL 33756
727- 461-1148
Fridays (except first of the month), 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

HELPING HANDS (Countryside Cares)

2565 Blackburn St.
Clearwater FL 33763
727-724-1290
Monday-Thursday and Saturday, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

HEP (Homeless Empowerment Program)

1120 N. Betty Lane
Clearwater Florida
727-442-9041
Call for information.



HIGH POINT NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY CENTER

5812 150th Ave. N
Clearwater FL 33760
727-533-0730
Mondays 10:00-12:00 pm

KIMBERLY HOME PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTER

1189 NE Cleveland Street
Clearwater Florida
727-443-0471
Call for appointment for pickup of baby food, cereal & formula

NEW DESTINY WORSHIP CENTER

2110 N. Hercules Ave.,
Clearwater FL 33763
727-738-1656
Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 3 p.m.

NORTHWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2875 State Road 580
Clearwater FL 33761
727-796-8090
Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY SERVICES RCS

700 Druid Rd.
Clearwater FL 33756
727-443-4031
Monday-Friday, 12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Thursday, 12:30 – 6:45 p.m.

SALVATION ARMY- Druid Road

1521 E. Druid Rd.
Clearwater FL 33756
727-446-4177
Monday, Tuesday, and Friday 9:45.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Thursday 9:00 a.m. -11:45 a.m.
Friday 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

SOMEBODY CARES TAMPA BAY

21903 US Hwy. 19 N. (behind Toyota)
Clearwater, FL 33765
727-536-2273
Monday-Friday 8:30 am - 5:00 pm



ST. MARY COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

2930 County Rd. 193
Clearwater FL 33759
727-644-5190
Friday, 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL COMMUNITY KITCHEN

1345 Park St.
Clearwater FL 33759
727-441-3790
Hot meals seven days a week, 365 days a year

SYLVAN ABBEY UNITED METHODIST

2817 Sunset Point Rd
Clearwater FL 33759
727-796-3057
Monday, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

UNITED FAMILY OUTREACH

833 Wyatt St.
Clearwater FL 33756
727-588-4579
Monday and Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Indian Rocks Beach

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1615 First St.
Indian Rocks Beach FL 33785
727-595-2374
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Largo

ABUNDANT LIFE MINISTRIES

1550 S. Belcher Rd.
Largo, FL 33771
727-210-5433
Thursdays from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

BEACON STREET MINISTRIES

3470 Adrian Ave.
Largo FL 33774
727-278-2285
Thursday 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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CHRISTIAN OUTREACH CENTER

11220 Oakhurst Rd.
Largo, Florida
727-595-2117
Monday-Thursday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
*only nonperishable food items

HELP MINISTRIES APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF JESUS

1381 Church St.
Largo FL 33778
727-584-0772
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

INDIAN ROCKS BAPTIST CHURCH

12685 Ulmerton Rd.
Largo, Florida
727-595-3421
Thursdays 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

MINISTRY OF HELPING HANDS (ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH)

1507 Trotter Rd.
Largo, Florida
727-584-2318
Call for information. Must call ahead and must live within the parish boundaries.

MISSION CITY (PATHWAYS) CHURCH

801 Seminole Blvd
Largo FL 33770
727-397-4707x133
Friday, 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Wednesday 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1199 Highland Ave.
Largo FL 33770
727-584-8165
Call for assistance
Pack-a-snack program for children in need
Hot meals served on Sunday at Peace Cafe

RESTORATION MINISTRY LARGO

160 6th St. SW
Largo FL 33778
727-953-4577
Tuesday 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



Lealman

LEALMAN UNITED METHODIST

4090 58th Ave. N

St. Petersburg FL 33714

727-526-6240

First and Third Monday of each month, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

LEALMAN AND ASIAN NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY CENTER

4255 56th Ave N

St. Petersburg, FL 33714

727-520-9820

Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Oldsmar

OLDSMAR CARES

163 State Rd 580 W

Oldsmar FL 34677

813-415-7373

Monday and Wednesday 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

ROCK CHURCH OF TAMPA BAY

3970 Tampa Rd.

Oldsmar FL 34677

727-657-4876

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Palm Harbor

FEAST FOOD PANTRY

2255 Nebraska Ave.

Palm Harbor FL 34683

727-789-5275

Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

OZONA COMMUNITY CHURCH

610 Pennsylvania Ave.

Palm Harbor FL 34683

727-784-3711

Monday-Friday



WORLD WIDE WORD OF FAITH

1588 E Klosterman Rd
Palm Harbor FL 34683
Third Wednesday of the Month
Monday-Friday during office hours

Pinellas Park

Christ Cornerstone Church Homeless Ministry

5545 - 62nd Ave. N.
Pinellas Park Florida
727- 547-6280
Meals served every first Sunday from 3:45 pm - 5:40 pm

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

9025 49th St.
Pinellas Park FL 33782
727-546-5741
Monday and Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GOOD SAMARITAN CHURCH

6085 Park Blvd.
Pinellas Park 33781
727-544-8558
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.

NEW JOURNEY MINISTRIES

5001 Park Blvd
Pinellas Park FL 33781
727-344-1063

OPERATION PAR (PARENTAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY)

6655 66th St. N.
Pinellas Park, FL
727-545-7564
Call for assistance.

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH

4661 82nd Avenue North
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ST. GILES FOOD PANTRY

8271 52nd St. N.
Pinellas Park FL 33781



727-544-6856
Monday-Thursday, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

ST PETE DREAM CENTER

3567 Cypress Terrace
Pinellas Park FL 33781
727-520-1909
Thursday-Friday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

SUNCOAST HAVEN OF REST RESCUE MISSION

1763 9th Ave North
Pinellas Park, FL
727-545-8282
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday - 10am - 5pm

Safety Harbor

Mattie Williams Neighborhood Family Center

1003 Dr MLK Jr. St. N.
Safety Harbor FL 34695
727-791-8255
Mondays and Thursdays, call for hours

St. Petersburg

ALPHA HOUSE OF PINELLAS COUNTY INC.

701 Fifth Avenue N.
St. Petersburg FL 33701
727-822-8190

ASAP HOMELESS SERVICE

3050 1st Ave S.
St. Petersburg FL 33712
727-328-3260

BAY AREA PREGNANCY CENTER (St. Pete Center)

4090 58th Ave N.
St. Petersburg FL 33714
727-200-9166

BETHEL AME CHURCH

912 3rd Ave N.
St. Petersburg FL 33705
727-822-2089
Tuesdays 10:00-10:30 am



BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

3455 26th Ave S.
St. Petersburg FL 33711
727-327-0554
Wednesdays and Saturdays 10 am-1 pm

BIBLE WAY CHURCH OF GOD

3774 19th Ave. S
St. Petersburg FL 33711
727-327-8344
Pantry is open once a month. Call for exact dates.

CLEARVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4515 38th Ave N.,
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
727-522-4673
Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., and last Thursday of the month 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

DAYSTAR LIFE CENTER

226 6th St S.
St. Petersburg FL 33701
727-825-0442
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

ELIM SDA CHURCH

4824 2nd Ave S.
St. Petersburg FL 33711
727-327-2374
Wednesdays 9:00 am-12:00 pm

ENOCH DAVIS RECREATION CENTER

1111 18th Ave. S
St. Petersburg FL 33705
727-893-7134
*Call to check for food availability

GATEWAY CHRISTIAN CENTER

4355 Central Ave
St. Petersburg FL 33713
727-327-0771
2nd and 4th Wednesday 11 am-1 pm

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

555 61st Street S
St. Pete, FL 33707
727-498-6860



Call for pantry times

HANNA'S HOMELESS CENTER

2244 1st Ave. N
St. Petersburg FL 33713
727-498-8821
M-F 8:30-12:30 pm
*Only gives out snacks

HOLY GHOST CHURCH OF GOD

2901 5th Ave. S
St. Petersburg FL 33712
727-321-7321
Call for pantry times

THE KIND MOUSE, JANE'S PANTRY

1801 16th St. N
St. Petersburg FL 33704
727-518-5575
Call to make an apt.

LAKEVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1310 22nd Ave. S
St. Petersburg FL 33705
727-822-0784
First three Tuesdays of each month from 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

MERCY KEEPERS

2021 9th Ave S
St. Petersburg FL 33712
727-823-8795
Every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 am-1:45 pm

NEW HOPE M.B. CHURCH

2120 19th St. S
St. Petersburg FL 33712
727-896-5228
1st Saturday of each month 8 am-11 am

NORTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

6000 38th Ave. North
St. Petersburg FL 33710
727-329-9166
Wednesday and Friday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

NORTHWEST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HUNGER ACTION ALLIANCE

RESEARCH. EDUCATION. TRANSFORMATION.

6330 54th Avenue North
St. Petersburg FL 33709
727-544-4551
Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

PEOPLE THAT LOVE CHURCH AND MISSION

817 5th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg FL 33701
727-820-0775
Mondays – Friday 10:45 a.m. – 2:20 p.m. [brown bag lunches]

PINELLAS COMMUNITY CHURCH

5501 31st Street South
Saint Petersburg, FL 33712
(727) 866-1184
Tuesdays from 5:00 pm-6:45 pm

PASADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH

227-70th St. S
St. Petersburg FL 33707
727-381-2499
2nd Thursday of the month from 9:00 am - 11:00 am

PASADENA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

100 Pasadena Ave. North
St. Petersburg FL 33710
727-479-6150
2nd Saturday of each month 9:30 am-1:30 pm

POSITIVE IMPACT CHURCH

2750 34th St. S
St. Petersburg FL 33711
727-865-8292
Every Sunday at 10:30 am

PRAYER TOWER CHURCH OF GOD

1137 37th St. S
St. Petersburg FL 33711
727-321-0670
Call for pantry hours

QUEEN STREET CHURCH OF GOD

1732 9th Ave. S
St. Petersburg FL 33712
727-896-4356
Call for pantry details



RESURRECTION HOUSE

800 - 11th St. N.
St. Petersburg Florida
727-823-4742
Call to schedule an appointment

SALVATION ARMY – ST. PETERSBURG

1400 4th St. S.
St. Petersburg FL
727-822-4954
Pantry: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Lunch and dinner served 7 days a week from 11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

3747 34th St. S
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
727-867-7015
1st and 3rd Sunday of each month

ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

845 87th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
727-576-3919
Fourth Saturday of each month, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ST. LUKE’S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4444 5th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg FL 33713
727-321-1335
Mondays from 5 pm-6:30 pm

ST PETERSBURG EBENEZER NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

3931 Central Ave
St. Petersburg FL 33713
727-321-8989
Weekly pantry- call for times

ST PETERSBURG FREE CLINIC

863 3Rd. Ave. North
St. Petersburg FL 33701
727-821-1200
Pantry: Monday – Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; Friday 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Meals: six nights per week



ST PETE VINEYARD

5000 10th St. North
St. Petersburg FL 33703
727-502-6783

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL FOOD SERVICE CENTER

401 15th St. North
St Petersburg FL 33705
727-823-2516

Meals Served: Monday-Friday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Sunday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CLARA’S CLOSET (HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC PARISH)

200 – 78th Avenue NE
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
727-526-5783
Monday- Friday 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

SUNCOAST HAVEN OF REST

1763 9th Ave. N
St. Petersburg FL 33713
727-545-8282
Mon-Fri 10 am-5 pm and Sat 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

5595 66th St. N
St. Petersburg, FL 33709
727-954-4104
2nd Saturday of each month from 8:30 am - 10:00 am

THE STOREHOUSE OF AMERICA

1111 18th Ave. South
St. Petersburg FL 33705
727-408-4580
Open Mon-Wed-Fri, call for hours

THE SUNSHINE CENTER

330 5th St. N
St. Petersburg FL 33701
727-893-7101
Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

301 37th Ave North
St. Petersburg, FL 33704
727-896-4797
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Tarpon Springs

THE SHEPHERD CENTER

304 S. Pinellas Ave.
Tarpon Springs FL 34689
727-939-1400
Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

SALVATION ARMY

209 S. Tarpon Ave.
Tarpon Springs FL 34689
727-934-4476
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

ST IGNATIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

715 E Orange St.,
Tarpon Springs FL 34689
727-937-4050
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

THE STORE HOUSE FOOD PANTRY

3333 Keystone Road
Tarpon Springs FL
727-937-7333
Tuesday-Saturday, must call

WORLD OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL

3333 Keystone Road
Tarpon Springs FL 34688
727-937-7333
Tuesday and Saturday, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.



Pinellas County Counseling Resources

If you're feeling upset or distressed, here are centers where you can go and talk with a professional.

BayCare Life Management

1106 Druid Road S. Suite 201
Clearwater, FL 33756
866-762-1743

www.baycare.org/behavioralhealth

Boley Centers

Paula J. Hays Building
445 31st Street N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
727-821-4819

www.boleycenters.org

Directions for Living

1437 S. Belcher Rd.
Clearwater, FL 33764
727-524-4464
www.directionsforliving.org

SequelCare of Florida

3491 Gandy Blvd.
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
727-547-0607

www.sequelyouthservices.com

Suncoast Center, Inc.

4024 Central Ave
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
727-388-1220

www.suncoastcenter.org

Your School Counselor