

Poverty is a systemic issue affecting people's health and well-being. Nutrition is crucial to an individual's health. Nutritional incentives such as Link Match and SNAP assist in supplying adequate food to United States citizens experiencing poverty. The nutritional incentives can only help families and individuals if they can access the areas where individuals can use Link Match. Singleton et al. (2022) examine the areas of access to Link Match retailers within Chicago to inspect community factors affecting access to food retailers.

The study first found all Link Match-accepting retailers in the city. Next, the study used census data to determine crime rates, socioeconomic values, percentages of black and Hispanic residents, walkability, and grocery store access (Singleton et al., 2022). Link Match facilities are most often located in the community's under-resourced areas (Singleton et al., 2022). Areas with low-income and high crime rates are likelier to have a Link Match facility within less distance (Singleton et al., 2022). However, violent crime may affect the accessibility to Link Match facilities in primarily the South and West sides of Chicago (Singleton et al., 2022). Nutritional incentive facilities are often in areas with low-income and high crime, presumably due to increased demand for the facilities in these areas. Safety is deemed one of the most significant factors hindering nutritional incentive access.

Further research may be needed to determine how best to facilitate the accessibility of nutritious foods through nutritional incentives. Communities should be aware of the community factors that will affect the accessibility of nutritional incentive programs.

In these unprecedented times, financial hardship, food insecurity, and poor mental health are at a higher prevalence in the population of the United States. Yenerall and Jensen (2021) investigate the link between food insecurity, financial hardship, and poor mental health. Yenerall

and Jensen (2021) conducted a study that utilized data from a 2020 study. Covid-19 led to job loss, decreased revenue, and decreased resources (Yenerall & Jensen., 2021). A significant portion of the population reported job loss due to covid-19; the loss of employment created food insecurity due to diminished financial resources. Loss of employment is reportedly related to decreased mental health (Yenerall & Jensen., 2021). The population suffering from financial hardship will likely suffer from poor mental health and food insecurity. Programs in place for food security would better impact the community by also seeking to alleviate financial hardship and poor mental health. The ability to work relates to improved mental health (Yenerall & Jensen., 2021). Community programs that include work, financial relief, and food security impact a community more than nutritional programs that donate pantry staples.

Community programs seeking to alleviate food insecurity should analyze contributing factors to food insecurity. It is possible to create programs for food insecurity that include more than a band-aid fix by including solutions to factors related to food insecurity.

References

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- Yenerall, J., & Jensen, K. (2021). Food Security, Financial Resources, and Mental Health: Evidence during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Nutrients, 14*(1), 161. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14010161>