

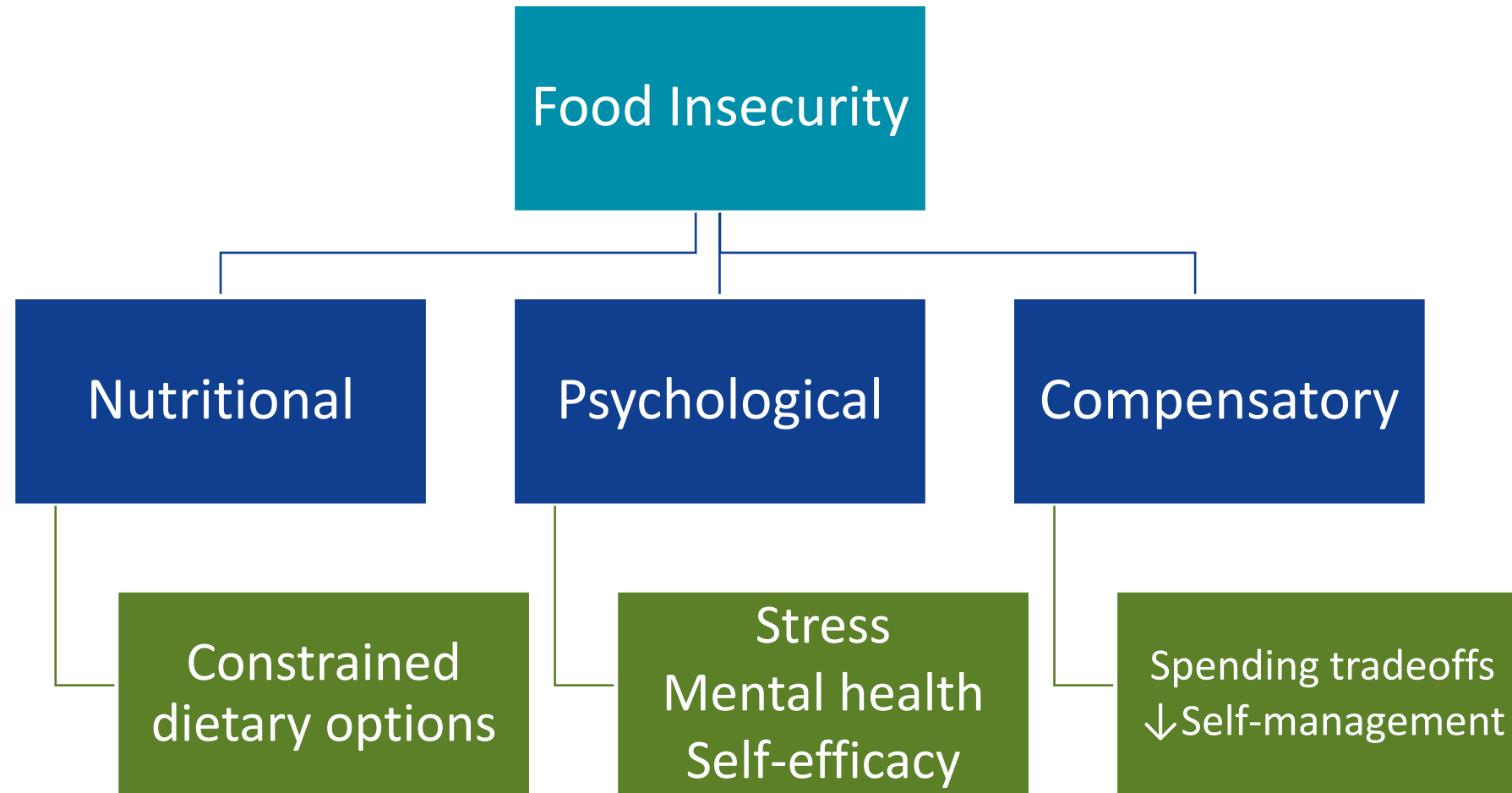
**CORE**

Center for Outcomes  
Research and Education

## Evidence on food insecurity, health, and nutrition assistance interventions

Prepared for Oregon Interim Committee on Healthcare  
September 30, 2025

# Mechanisms connecting food insecurity and health



# Food Insecurity & Health

Food insecurity has negative impacts on health and well-being beyond the effects of poverty (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003)

## Child health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Cognitive issues
- Asthma
- Anemia
- Worse oral health

## Adult health

- Poor self-rated health
- Depression
- Poor sleep
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Hyperlipidemia

## Older adults

- Cognitive function
- Frailty
- Osteoporosis
- Daily living limitations
- Medication underuse

# Food insecurity and health

- Food insecure adults had higher odds of depression that increased on a gradient – those with very low food security had 3.50 greater odds of depression compared to food secure adults (Reeder et al., 2022)
- Tracking outcomes over ten years, the probability of mortality among food insecure individuals was 46% higher compared to food-secure individuals (Banerjee et al., 2025)
- Children in food-insecure households were more likely to experience a current diagnosis of asthma (19.1%) and depressive symptoms (27.9%) (Thomas et al., 2019)
- People with food insecurity have a 1.55 increased probability of multimorbidity (i.e, having a diagnosis of more than one chronic condition) (Kantilafti et al., 2023)

# Food insecurity and health care use

- A nationally representative study of children found that food insecurity predicted more ED visits (25.9%) and more delayed medical care because of cost (146.5%) relative to children living in food secure households (Thomas et al., 2019)
- A nationally representative study of adults found that the rate of ED use and hospitalization was 1.47 times higher for food insecure adults compared to food secure adults (Berkowitz et al., 2019)



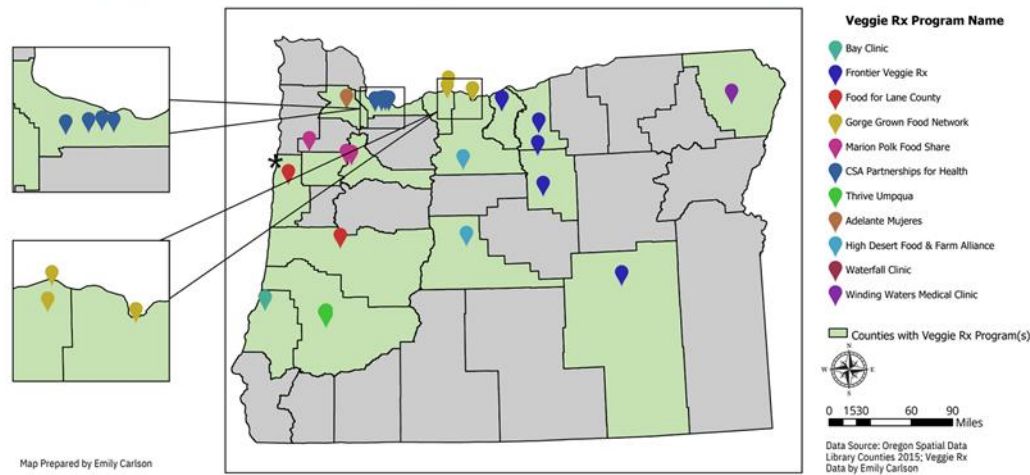
# Addressing food insecurity & health

- SNAP, WIC, and School meals play an *essential* role in addressing food insecurity in our communities
  - SNAP participation reduces food insecurity by an estimated 30% (Ratcliffe et al., 2014)
  - WIC reduces the prevalence of household food insecurity in recipient households with children under 5 years old by at least 20% (Kreider et al., 2016)
  - Free-and-reduced school lunch participation is associated with a 14 percent reduction in the risk of household food insufficiency (Huang and Barnidge, 2016)
- Healthcare partners have increasingly partnered to implement programs designed to provide additional temporary food assistance and increase access to healthy foods

# Produce prescription programs

Programs that provide coupons or cash incentives to increase access to fruits and vegetables. Patients are eligible due to a diet-related health risk or condition, food insecurity, or other documented challenges accessing nutritious foods.

**Veggie Rx Prescribing Sites Across Oregon (N=30)**



\*Siletz-FFLC Veggie Rx will not be continuing in 2023

Image source: (Carlson, 2024)

**Emerging evidence.** A multi-year evaluation of produce prescription programs across the country found that participating households reported

- Increased food security
- Small increases in fruit and vegetable consumption
- Improved self-reported health
- High levels of program satisfaction

(GUSNIP NTAE, 2024)

# The Next Door Veggie Rx

- A produce prescription program in the Gorge
- Using focus groups, a CORE evaluation found improved sense of nutrition, less stress and better physical health, increased household income, and increased spending in the regional economy



*Participants' diets improved with access to more nutritious food*



*Participants saw physical & mental health improvements*



*Economic benefits at the family level AND at the regional level*



# Food distribution programs

Programs that distribute food and groceries to be consumed off-site, usually for at-home preparation foods.

A systematic review of food pantry interventions found a wide range of positive outcomes such as improved food security, nutrition, healthy food choices and intake, and access to community resources (An et al., 2019)

**Table 1.** A list of healthcare-related Food distribution programs in Multnomah county

Organization	Program
Familias en Acción	Nutritional Health Program
Friends of Zenger Farm	CSA Partnerships for Health
Legacy Health	Shelf Stable Food Bag, Fresh Food Bag, Free Food Market
OHSU	Nourish and Groceries To Go, Food For Health Network, Nourish - NICH Food is Medicine
Providence Health & Services	Providence Gateway Food Pantry, Community Teaching Kitchen
Wallace Medical Concern	Farm to table, Mudbone CSA, Healthy Meals

# Providence Community Teaching Kitchen

- Combines nutrition education, cooking skills, and food distribution in Milwaukie, OR
- Using focus groups, the CORE evaluation found high levels of enjoyment, community connection and increased sense of health & wellbeing
- A separate study of the CTK found improved clinical outcomes: reduced HbA1c and blood pressure

*“What I’m most grateful for is my emotional health because I feel like this was part of my healing. [...] I always tell my son that the environment is so healthy, so respectful, so welcoming, that you feel like you’re with family. It feels like we already know each other, and we care about each other. There’s a lot of respect and I really like that.” – CTK participant*



# Closing Thoughts

- Robust research connects diet-related chronic disease, food insecurity, and health care use
- Federal food assistance programs have been a key means of addressing food insecurity
- Healthcare partners have joined efforts to increase access to health foods for people experiencing food insecurity and poor health
  - These efforts rely on strong collaboration between health care, community-based organizations, food producers and retailers, and public sector partners (e.g., policymakers, schools, park districts, etc.)
- Anticipated funding losses across sectors will challenge the sustainability of these efforts going forward, exacerbating hunger, health, and healthcare costs

# Connect with CORE

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