As part of Hunger Action Month®, Feeding America is proud to collaborate with Alliance for Healthier Generation to raise awareness about the intersection of child hunger, health and nutrition. Together, we can support families facing hunger get the extra help they need to foster positive social, emotional, and physical health for children.

Diet and food security status are essential components of overall child health and well-being. In 2020, 1 out of 6 children in the United States were living in food-insecure households—uncertain where their next meal would come from.1 Children who are food insecure are more likely to experience poor diet quality and unhealthy weight gain. Additionally, they are at higher risk for chronic disease, poor mental health, poor academic performance, impaired growth and development, and unfavorable health behaviors in adulthood.2

Inadequate access to healthy food, clean drinking water, and quality health care have contributed to higher rates of food insecurity and increased prevalence of chronic health conditions among Black, Latino, and Native American individuals, and a subset of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) children. Structural racism and systemic inequities are often the driving forces behind these health disparities, which have only worsened since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.3

To overcome these inequities, new opportunities must emerge to ensure that every child has access to:

- culturally appropriate healthy food
- living environments that foster the development of positive social-emotional health
- essential resources that improve overall health and well-being
- unbiased health care

Feeding America’s A Closer Look series provides ways you can take action in your community and includes “real-life” stories of progress.

**Diet and nutrition**

Healthy dietary patterns at early ages shape lifelong food preferences and health outcomes.10 A healthy, well-balanced dietary pattern supports healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and development for children, and has the potential to prevent the onset of chronic diet-related health conditions.

Community stakeholders, including food banks, food pantries, non-profits, public health and health care organizations, schools, and out-of-school-time programs can support children to develop a healthy, well-balanced diet and a healthy relationship with food from a young age.
Stories from the Field

Alliance for a Healthier Generation works to ensure that all young people live healthier lives. Its work has reached more than 30 million children and meaningfully improved the environments that support their physical, social, and emotional health. As part of its approach, Healthier Generation works collaboratively with organizations to co-create solutions that center the unique health needs of a community. Currently, Healthier Generation staff serve on the Kitsap County (WA) Healthy Eating Active Living Coalition that seeks to increase equitable access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living. Over the past year, the coalition learned that many community members experiencing food insecurity for the first time due to the COVID-19 pandemic were unsure of where and how to access food resources. The coalition created a digital food access map as well as a promotion kit for community members to spread the word about the resources available. Jess Sappington, Kitsap Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Coalition Coordinator, noted that since the map went live in April 2021, over 2,000 community members have utilized the resource with many expressing excitement about having a comprehensive list that supports navigating the challenging landscape during the pandemic.

Take Action! Address child health and hunger.

8 Digest of Education Statistics, 2018; Accessed September 1, 2021. [www.nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_204.10.asp]