



The Hunger in Children

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Food insecurity, defined as lacking reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, is a prominent problem in the United States. This can be explained for many reasons, such as food deserts and a decline in availability of affordable, healthy food. Food insecurity is bad enough as it is, but the outcome of food insecurity is malnutrition. This malnutrition specifically effects children in harsher ways than it does older people because of their current state of development.

Children who live in malnutrition are among households that have food insecurity. Many people argue that these children living in such an unhealthy environment is at the fault of their parents or legal guardians, others argue that many factors add up to children being in this situation, and the blame should not be put solely on the parents. Nevertheless, children themselves have no control over how they eat and seek nutrition.

Over 6 million children live in food-insecure households. These millions of human lives are nearly helpless to their own malnutrition. Just because a household is food insecure does not mean that they are qualified for government issued help or could seek supplies at shelters, such as those for the homeless. In order to stay housed, many families choose to pay rent and therefore not purchase food, while those that choose the other way around end up homeless. This

cycle is not one that can be easily broken or fixed. Although it is believed that there are not enough resources to support the homeless, there are far fewer to support the hungry.

Children in this position face problems that are severe and sometimes chronic. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, malnourished children are generally shorter and thinner for their age and have weak immune systems. Immunity is something everyone needs and if not fueled from childhood, many people suffer greatly with illness that would have not had nearly as harsh of an effect on someone with a normal or heightened immune system. Besides these physical outcomes of children in malnutrition, many kids also develop anxiety and mood disorders due to their early malnourishment. This subject has not been widely studied, but with psychiatric symptoms such as these, children who grow into adults that become food secure are still facing the negative consequences of the situation of their early development.

The United States' SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -formerly the Food Stamp Program-, helps roughly 40 million Americans annually to pay for food supplies that they need to survive. Over 16% of households with children in the U.S. had SNAP benefits in 2017. These benefits are certainly helpful, but to qualify people must have marginally low-income or no income whatsoever. Many children that are suffering from malnutrition do not come from households that qualify for the SNAP, but those who do qualify certainly need it.

Besides the reformed Food Stamp Program, it is hard to find further government supported programs that aim to end malnutrition in children, but there is still hope. There are many non-profits and other organizations that have this goal in mind. No Kid Hungry, Feeding America, and Action Against Hunger are just a few of these organizations. It may be difficult for these programs to find children that are in-need the most, but they are certainly doing their part. One day at a time more children that are hidden in low-income households are being fed, but aid and further initiatives to end their situation is always needed.

Works Cited:

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics/#:~:text=6.1%20million%20children%20lived%20in,experienced%20very%20low%20food%20security.>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/malnutrition#:~:text=Malnourished%20children%20may%20be%20short,mood%20and%20other%20psychiatric%20symptoms.>