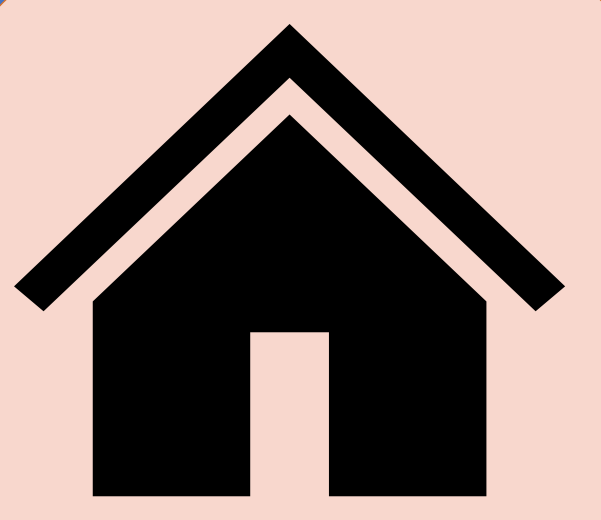


# CalFresh Participation Among Housing-Insecure Families with Children During the Pandemic

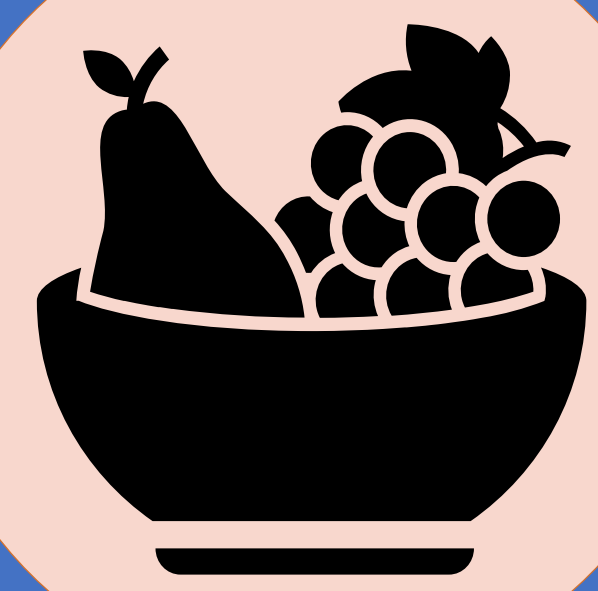
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## Background



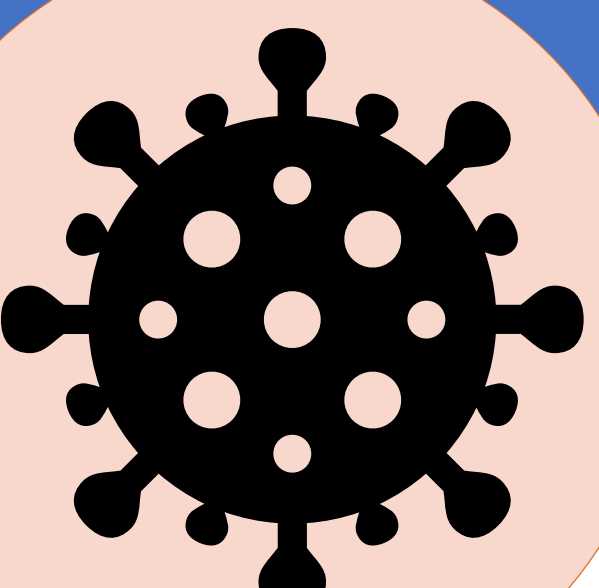
Housing insecurity is the state of not having adequate living arrangements and affects people's mental and physical wellbeing. Housing insecurity can influence the risk of food insecurity, especially among low-income individuals and families.<sup>1</sup>



Food insecurity is the state where there is limited access to nutritional foods or uncertain availability to adequate foods in socially acceptable ways, and has lifelong consequences as it is a risk factor for obesity, poor mental health, malnutrition, and growth.<sup>2</sup>



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as CalFresh, is the largest federal program that aids with monthly food benefits to low-income individuals who suffer from food insecurity in California.<sup>3</sup>



The Families First Act (FFA) is a law passed to respond to the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to issue CalFresh benefits up to the maximum allowable CalFresh benefits for household size.<sup>5</sup> The federal authorities provided monthly emergency allotments to all eligible CalFresh participants starting March 2020.<sup>2</sup>

## Objective

To review the literature on housing insecurity, food insecurity, and CalFresh participation and assess the participation in CalFresh among families with children that are housing insecure.

## Methods

- Search terms for housing insecurity: difficulty paying for housing, cost of rent/mortgage, household size, difficulty finding housing due to the pandemic, residential mobility, homelessness, housing-cost burden.
- Search terms for food insecurity: food insecurity, CalFresh participation, SNAP participation.
- Inclusion criteria for studies: published in English, between 2013-2023, focused on families with children, peer-reviewed literature and grey literature.
- Databases searched: Google, Google Scholar, PubMed.
- 13 articles were found.

## Results

### Literature on Housing and Food Insecurity

- Families with young children who are housing-cost burdened and housing insecure are more likely to also be food insecure.<sup>8</sup>
- A bi-directional relationship exists between food insecurity and housing insecurity.<sup>8</sup>
- Homeownership and affordable housing have been examined in conjunction with food insecurity, but the contribution of other housing insecurity measures like crowding and instability has not been studied.<sup>8</sup>
- Racial/ethnic disparities exist for both housing insecurity and food insecurity, with Hispanic and Black families experience higher rates than non-Hispanic white and Asian families.<sup>5</sup>
- Low-income households with more family members are more likely to be food insecure.
- Families are prioritizing the cost of housing which leads to less money spent on food.<sup>13</sup>
- Certain places such as Southern California experience very high rates of housing insecurity.<sup>13</sup>
- Food assistance programs and housing assistance programs should not operate in silos but in conjunction.<sup>8</sup>

### Literature on Housing and CalFresh Participation

- CalFresh participation was significantly associated with age, income, employment status, family type, and house tenure.<sup>4</sup>
- There is a dearth of information on CalFresh participation among housing insecure families, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

## Lessons Learned

- There are a lot of various dimensions to housing insecurity and this social determinant can have an important impact on people's health.
- The different food assistance programs in the United States (CalFresh, Pandemic EBT, emergency allotments).
- Food assistance and housing assistance programs work separate and not in conjunction.
- CalFresh assistance aided eligible families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conducting literature reviews and understanding all the issues involved takes time.

## Next Steps



### Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- WIC provides nutrition education, supplemental foods, breastfeeding education to low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- In Los Angeles County, WIC serves 40% children < 5 years old (~211,170/month) in 2020.<sup>14</sup>
- Very high rates of housing insecurity (65%) and food insecurity (33%) exist among WIC families in LA County.<sup>14</sup>

### Upcoming Planned Analysis

- Analysis of 2020 LA County WIC Survey data (n ~ 5,500) to examine CalFresh participation and Pandemic-EBT participation among housing-insecure families.
- I will examine the association between CalFresh participation and housing insecurity.

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## References

