

Access Food for Your Family

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Hello, everyone and welcome to access food for your family. My name is Kaitlin Hennessy. I'm the program coordinator here at the Global Campus, Global Connections.

This evening, we have Lauren Butler from the Office of the Dean of Students here with us to talk about food insecurity and where you can get resources if you are food insecure. And tonight, please feel free to use the chat box. If you ask questions or if you have any technical difficulties, please let us know, and we'll do the best to help you.

We also have Olivia in the chat box. And she's also here to help and help guide your questions. All right. I am going to turn it over to Lauren. And we'll see you soon.

LAUREN BUTLER: OK. Hi. Thanks for joining me this evening. My name is Lauren. And as Kaitlin mentioned, I'm here to talk about food insecurities and share some statistics, some information, and gain awareness on the topic.

So let's dive in. What is food insecurity? There's no line that states whether you are or not. Government obviously has criteria. But it really means being without reliable access to sufficient food, those nutrients that your body needs to function during the day.

Not having that nutrients affects your sleep. It affects your mind, all kinds of things. So it's very important.

And it's very prevalent. As you can see, 42 million Americans currently live in food insecure situations, with 13 million of those being children and about five million are elderly. Food insecurity exists in every country and congressional district in the country. Not everyone struggling with hunger qualifies for federal assistance. So I'm going to share a couple of options that might benefit you or someone you know.

Since this is a WSU production, I'm going to talk about college statistics as well, since most of you are probably a college student at some point in your educational . career. This is a study done by three individuals who are all on nonprofit organization boards that deal with food insecurities.

So their study was over a three month span with thousands of students, 32 different institutions in 12 states. And they found that 48% of those students interviewed reported insecurities at some point in that three months, which is a lot of students. Being a student is

hard. It's expensive.

You have to pay tuition and fees and books, as well as mortgages or rent or other bills and utilities. And that doesn't leave a whole lot leftover. So being able to afford food as a student can be incredibly difficult. 22% of those students who they spoke with also reported very high insecurities, which meant that they didn't have food for more than a day or so at a time.

This was both two-year and four-year students. And they noted that the information was relatively similar between the two. So no matter if you are at a community college or at a university level, food insecurity occurs at both.

They also noted that students of color and first generation students reported higher prevalence. So there is kind of people who are more prone to having these types of situations. And hopefully, I have some people who are going to be watching this that will benefit from the information provided.

So now I'm going to show you some websites that I found to be really, really helpful and hopefully will help you as well. So bear with me a moment while I switch over to sharing my screen. OK. So this is the Feeding America website.

And this is a huge organization nationwide. There are Feeding America locations all across the country, in every state. So I'm going to quickly do a search, a zip code, and show you how to find resources in your area.

So Finding a Food Bank, so here is where you type in a zip code or a state. And all of these green little pinpoints are locations that Feeding America has a large distribution center. As you can see, there's quite a few.

So I'm going to type in a somewhat local zip code. OK. So it says the closest Feeding America bank is in Oregon, so over in Portland. And this is a Vancouver, Washington zip code.

But it also shows all the distribution organizations. So these are all different locations throughout the state that provide food and necessities to individuals in those regions. So that's a good way to find things that are throughout your state that are associated with Feeding America, which is a really great organization.

But that doesn't necessarily show you all of them. That's only what Feeding America is associated with. There are tons of other opportunities out there.

So let's take a look at foodpantries.org. Again, this is another search engine that you can use to find resources in your area. And I know that we have students all across the states. So you could go in and find out what's local in your area.

I'm going to select Washington. And then it brings up different cities in Washington that have food banks registered with this foodpantry.org. So let's see if we can get Mount Vernon. Let's pick that one.

And you scroll down. And then it will show you there are two in that area. And it gives you the contact information for those locations. And you can go to their individual websites. And then you can go and visit those locations and hopefully be able get some resources.

So that's a second way that will show you two different options. They're not going to use same resources on each of those sites. So Feeding America and foodpantries.org.

The third I wanted to talk about is the Salvation Army. Now, they do a lot more than just food and food banks and resources and that. But it's also a really good resource to have.

So I'm actually going to type in Pullman for WSU Pullman and see what we can come up with. And so it says that we have two Salvation Army locations in Moscow and then two more that offer services down in Lewiston, which is about 45 minutes away. So this can give you a couple more options to get resources. And maybe you need more than just a food bank or if you have resources that the Salvation Army can help you with. I found that to be a really good source for individuals.

Now, not each generalized search is going to bring up all of the resources that are available. There are faith-based organizations. There are community-based organizations. There are organizations through school districts that can be beneficial to you.

This is one, in particular, and that is here, local in Pullman, Washington. It's called the Community Action Center. They do, as you can see, housing help. They do food and nutrition, support services. So that's something local here that you might not find on one of those generalized search engines.

OK. And now I'll go back to my file. And then at the bottom, I just listed all the food bank photos that came up, just to show you that there are opportunities for food assistance all across the nation.

So the next thing I want to talk about is government assistance. And that is something that's really common. People apply for government assistance on a very regular basis. And two of the programs I want to speak to you about tonight are SNAP, which is a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and WIC, which is for women and children. And I'm going to go back to my internet, and share my application with you.

OK. So this is the SNAP website. Very basic. It's government assistance. So it's the general US government site.

Each state kind of administers fees, programs on their own. So the application process is going to look different for each state, which can be tricky, especially if you're moving or if you're been in another state and you don't know the new processes. So I'm going to show you where to go.

So Learn How to Apply for Benefits will be really good. It brings up every state, so whatever state that you are in currently. I'm just going to pick a random state-- Montana. It will bring up Montana's website.

So this is the website that you're going to create an account and make the application process through. You don't do it through the US site. You do it through individual states.

And those states have phone numbers that you can call for assistance if you need help finishing the application or if you have a question on what information is needed to be provided. Typically it's things-- any income, or if you're in school or if you have dependents or kind of what your financial situation might be are going to be the questions that they will ask you. Again, it's going to be different for each state.

Similarly to SNAP program, WIC also state-based. So am I eligible for WIC benefits? I don't know. Let's find out.

There is a specific tool that you can use. If you click that, it will go through a set of questions that it asks. And then based on what you answer, it will notify you if they think that this assistance program would be beneficial to you or not, which is nice to kind of go through that first before we go through the full application process through the state and then find out you're not actually eligible.

So who gets WIC and how to apply? Just like SNAP, you go through this, find your state, apply

through there. An important piece to note is if you move, one of the things that I've read on both of these sites is that moving to a different state has become kind of a challenge for people. So make sure that when you move, you inform the program that you're associated with.

And they do have offices in each state. So whether you're close to that specific office or not, depends on your specific location in your state and how they run it. But they should have an office assistant as well.

Now we're going to talk about feeding our children. They're the most important part of our lives, right? Kids are our future. And we want the best for them and the most nutritional benefit that is possible.

Obviously WIC and SNAP are both going to benefit you and your family and your children. But there are other programs out there that can also assist them. I'm sure you're well aware that school districts have free and reduced lunch programs in almost every single district. And that's great for the school year. But it gets even harder when summer starts.

So it's a little tricky finding information on summer meals. When I was doing my searches and research on this topic, there wasn't a defined answer. It all pretty much based on what school district you're a part of and whether or not that school district has a partnership with an organization that provides that food. A lot of them do. So I do suggest talking to your school district if that's something that is interested in your family dynamics.

The two links listed-- Parenthelp 123 is to get some knowledge on what's available. K12 Child Nutrition is also a great place to get some information on those topics. But there isn't any registration process through them. So what you would need to do is find an organization that participates in it. A lot of them are school districts, faith-based organizations, summer camps, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, those types of organizations.

And if you're in an area and you don't know where to reach out to, I can definitely help you in that process. So don't feel afraid to reach out to me. At the end is my contact information. So we definitely want to be able to help feed our children as well.

Alternate nutrition sources. Some communities and farming organizations offer work-trade for food. That means you go to the farm a designated amount of hours a month and work on the farm and harvest and assist them in that process. And in turn, you are given fresh local

produce, which is a great trade. It gives you an opportunity to have some truly nutritious meals and work with some different ingredients that you may not get to otherwise.

There are different share options in different regions. Obviously if you are in a rural area, there's more farming. That's an opportunity for you. But another benefit to that is available for getting fresh local ingredients. So you can get fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, meat, eggs, and other items.

I got this off of the Moscow, Idaho farmer's market website. A lot of farmer's markets are now accepting SNAP or EBT as payment, which is really, really cool. A lot of times I have heard people with those kinds of benefits have a hard time finding the right things to purchase at the markets or at the grocery stores. So this gives you an opportunity to purchase those foods that you really desire.

I know the Seattle farmer's market participates and so does Portland farmer's market, which is Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon. They are slightly different in their processes. But essentially, you take your card that you're issued to a kiosk or to a table that's designated. And they will, in turn, give your farmer's dollars. Or I think the Portland farmer's market gives wooden coins. So you can use that as payment.

And they also-- I know Portland does this, I don't know about the others-- they will double it. So if you give \$10 of your SNAP money, they will give you \$20 worth of coins. So that's an opportunity to get even more fresh produce than you probably thought you were eligible for, which is really, really neat. So those are some things to look into that your markets might be involved in and just an alternative to nutritious food.

Holiday programs. We are coming up on the holidays, which is a very joyous time. You get to spend time with family and friends and enjoy food. But that can be a really, really hard time for families who are dealing with these kinds of food insecurities.

Food banks and organizations participate in holiday meal baskets. Most of the ones that are listed are going to be participating in these types of things. And some of the programs you need registration for. But most of them are as-needed basis.

I was reading on a specific food pantry in Vancouver, Washington. I use that example a lot. That's my hometown. And there's no registration needed.

Most of the food banks will have some kind of flyers posted or information posted on their

websites. And you can access that through either Feeding America or the other websites that I have suggested. Some other programs, are again, through faith-based or school districts that also participate in those. So with those, it's more on your behalf to have to reach out and find. But there are tons and tons of opportunities to get meals for your holidays. So do not feel like that's something that's not available to you.

We are coming close to the end of my presentation. And I want to open this up to any viewers out there who have questions for me. That is a good question. Opening up the conversation is really difficult. I deal with that with the students here quite often. And usually, they come to me with a different issue. So they don't usually come saying I can't afford food. They usually come saying, I'm strapped financially. Or my academics are struggling. Or I'm really stressed. And I always kind of make it a point if we're having a conversation that I ask them, I know that this is really hard. But how is this doing? So I ask them kind of after our conversation has already started. It's much easier to go in and talk about that. We have various food banks on campus here. And I always try and give them the room numbers and figure out which one that they'd be most comfortable visiting. So each kind of have different cultures and different dynamics. And maybe then if you know somebody who is struggling, it would be beneficial for you to go with them. That way, you don't actually have to bring up a hard topic. But you know that they need that assistance. So that might be helpful.

Yes. They've had food banks on campus for quite some time. I personally only knew of one when I was a student and probably we should have utilized it as a poor college student. But I didn't. But I believe there are five now. And they're all in different departments.

They're open to anybody though. But yes, please, please pass this around to anyone you know on campus. The Dean of Students office is welcome to show them where these opportunities are and help them find the right resource for them. There is one in Wilson [INAUDIBLE], yes and TRIO. TRIO is an absolutely great, great resource.

OK. So the question is how do you approach a student who doesn't think they're struggling because they have money to pay for school and textbooks? That was me. That was definitely me.

I worked really, really hard to be able to pay for everything myself. And I paid tuition, books, rent, all of that, which left little to nothing. And it was hard. And I didn't think I needed help. I didn't think that it was necessary for me to use those resources because I knew other people

needed them more than I did.

But that's not the mentality that needs to be going around. The mentality needs to be that these places are open to everybody, regardless of your availability to financial income. It's a hard conversation to have. And it is kind of [INAUDIBLE] because you know that you have money. But you know that that's for something else.

Yes, and reminding them that they do deserve to have food. And they do deserve to have full bellies. And that's the only way that they're going to get great sleep, great mental capacity, be able to learn and thrive in this environment.

Any last questions?

KAITLIN

HENNESSY:

All right. As we're waiting for those last questions to come in, I'm going to jump in and let everyone know that our next Global Connections event will be on December 1. And it will be on launch your career professionally, regarding professionalism in the workplace as you do enter into your careers after college. And that information will be available at connections.wsu.edu.

Additionally, we're going to put in a link to a program survey. So if you can share your thoughts on tonight's program, we would really appreciate it as we look to bring more informative webinars and live streams to global students. So if you're a global student, let us know what you would like to see.

Other than that, everyone, have a good night tonight. And we have one other question that just popped up. So I will turn it back over to Lauren.

LAUREN BUTLER: OK. The last question is, is there a place we can find a list of all the food pantries on campus?

There currently is not. That is something that I should probably bring up in the Dean of Students office. That would be a good resource for us to have on our website.

Since they're each run by different organizations, they each of them posted on their websites. But I think it would be very beneficial if I compiled them and had them all in one place. So that was a great question. And I will definitely bring that up to the Dean of Students office.

And here on the screen is the contact information if you need to reach me or if you have other questions that we can help answer for you. We'd love to do that. And as Kaitlin mentioned, there is a quick survey for you to please take and let me know how I did. And hopefully I will be

able to do another presentation for you in the future.

I hope you all have a great night. Thank you for joining.