
Reducing Food Insecurity in Infants and Toddlers

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “Reducing Food Insecurity in Infants and Toddlers,” from PR Newswire. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Discuss the meaning of food insecurity and its impact on infants and toddlers.
- ◆ Identify ways to partner with families and the community to minimize food insecurity and promote healthy habits in infants and toddlers.
- ◆ Develop a plan to support healthy habits for infants and toddlers in your care.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to partner with families in supporting infants and toddlers’ healthy habits.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s healthy habits.

“When kids are exposed to a wide range of healthy options early in life, those food choices become the norm as they grow older.”

PR Newswire

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ Consider the families in your care. How do you think food security impacts their ability to promote healthy habits with their children?
 - Some families may not openly share their access to healthy foods. Since it may be difficult to identify children and families experiencing food insecurity, how can you ensure *all* families are supported, while being careful not to make assumptions or single any out?
 - For those who *are* transparent about their experiences, what are families sharing with you about their access to healthy habits practices?
 - What can you do to help all families view you as a resource to support children's healthy habits?

- ◆ Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to nutrient deficiencies because their nutrient needs are high, especially in relation to the size of their stomachs and appetites.
 - How can inadequate nutrition negatively affect infants and toddlers in your care?
 - What are some available resources in your learning environment that would encourage healthy habits?
 - How can you model nutrition and encourage healthy habits for every child?
 - How can you individualize your supports for children with specific dietary needs (e.g., children with allergies, food insensitivities, cultural norms or religious reasons)?

- ◆ The article states a few ways to promote better nutrition, from aid programs to volunteering at a food bank.
 - What can you do to implement some of the article's suggestions? If you're already doing this, share the ways in which you are supporting children's healthy habits in your community.

- ◆ Develop a plan to partner with families and the community to support infants and toddlers' healthy habits at home and in your learning environment.
 - Consider having discussions with families to learn about their healthy habits. As this can be a sensitive topic, listen carefully to what they choose to share and offer support as needed. It may be helpful to share the healthy habits that are encouraged in their child's learning environment and offer ideas for how to do the same at home. Be open to the approaches that are suggested and try to include these practices as part of your teaching.
 - Communities can also come together to reduce food-insecurity. How can you partner with families to access resources available within the community? Invite families to attend events or functions that encourage healthy habits.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about cultural competence and approaches to self-care routines for toddlers.

- ◆ **Source:** Zero to Three
- ◆ **Article:** Nutrition Assistance: A Critical Support for Infants, Toddlers, and Families
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/nutrition-assistance-a-critical-support-for-infants-toddlers-and-families/>
- ◆ **Description:** Zero to Three emphasizes the importance of access to nutrition support programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women to receive nutritious food.

- ◆ **Source:** Feeding America
- ◆ **Article:** Child Food Insecurity
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/map-the-meal-gap/2016/2016-map-the-meal-gap-child-food-insecurity.pdf>
- ◆ **Description:** This article provides data surrounding food insecurity and its impact on children. Key findings indicate the implications of children's health, behavior, and education.

- ◆ **Source:** U.S. Department of Agriculture
- ◆ **Article:** Food Insecurity for Households with Children Rose in 2020, Disrupting Decade-long Decline
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/february/food-insecurity-for-households-with-children-rose-in-2020-disrupting-decade-long-decline/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article explores the increase in food insecurity from 2019 through 2022, while also measuring this data across households.