

Resolution # (18) –2018 Annual Leadership Forum

TITLE: Prioritizing Food Insecurity in All Children: Expansion of Eligibility of Immigrant Children for Federally Funded Nutrition Programs

SPONSORED BY: AAP Section of Pediatric Trainees

DATE: August 4, 2017

DISPOSITION:

Whereas, food insecurity is an established public health concern that affects 1 in 6 U.S. children and leads to poor health status, developmental delay, mental health problems, and poor education outcomes. Children between 0 and 3 years of age are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, as they are in the most sensitive period of cognitive development; and

Whereas, undocumented children and children of immigrant parents are not only at higher risk for poor health outcomes and food insecurity but also have less resources available, given established federal restrictions for programs such as SNAP; and

Whereas, immigrant children represent the fastest growing U.S child population; hence, by limiting their access to food programs, these children are restricted from reaching their full potential and contributing to society in the future. In comparison to 16% of U.S. born mothers, 35% of immigrant mothers reported significantly higher rates of food insecurity; and

Whereas, although undocumented parent(s) may apply for SNAP benefits on behalf of their U.S. citizen children, there are significant limitations in obtaining benefits, particularly in families with undocumented children; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Academy will advocate for expanding eligibility of all infants and children regardless of immigration status in federally funded nutrition programs, as all children, regardless of country of origin, are entitled to adequate food resources.

RESOLVED, The AAP will prioritize making the Immigrant Toolkit a widely known and used resource for pediatricians working with immigrant children so that mothers may be made aware of their rights and eligibilities.

FISCAL NOTE: None

REFER TO: 2018 Annual Leadership Forum

LEAD AUTHORS: Mark Hincapie, M.D. and Montserrat Corbera-Hincapie, M.D.

Email: mark.hincapie@jax.ufl.edu; mcorbera@ufl.edu

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Food insecurity, which is defined as the limited or uncertain access to enough food, is an important health issue that has the potential to impact children and families in a dramatic way (1). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), one in six children suffers from food insecurity and hunger. A policy statement was issued by the AAP in 2015 recommending that pediatricians screen for food insecurity and intervene accordingly. The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) has partnered with the AAP to provide recommendations on ways pediatricians can screen and connect families with food and nutrition resources available in the community (1). One might ask which families are at highest risk for screening positive for food insecurity. The subset we have focused on is children of immigrant families. In a study published in the American Journal of Public Health from 2009, immigrant households were found to be at higher risk of food insecurity than were households with US-born mothers. This increased disparity has led to an increased risk of poor health outcomes in this population. In order to help minimize this disparity in immigrant households, the AAP should make policy intervention that addresses food insecurity in this subset a priority (3). As stated in the AAP 'Council on Community Pediatrics' under the Immigration Toolkit Section 2, unauthorized immigrant children are not eligible for federally funded programs, such as SNAP and TANF (4). All children, particularly those under the age of 5, regardless of their country of origin, should be eligible for federally funded programs that target food insecurity. All children, documented and undocumented, should have the same rights to food assistance programs that will aid in their overall health development.

(1): Ashbrook A JD, Hartline-Grafton H DrPH, Dolins J MPH et al. Addressing Food Insecurity: A Toolkit for Pediatricians. *American Academy of Pediatrics and Food Research & Action Center*. 2017.

(2): Schwarzenberg S MD, Kuo A MD, Linton J MD et al. Promoting Food Security for all Children. *American Academy of Pediatrics*. 2015; 136(5): 1431-1438.

(3): Chilton M, Black M, Berkowitz C, et al. Food Insecurity and Risk of Poor Health Among US-Born Children of Immigrants. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2009; 99(3): 556-562.

(4): Council on Community Pediatrics. Access to Health Care and Public Benefits: Immigrant Toolkit Section 2. 2015.