

## Navigating Household Food Insecurity in Primary Care: A Nutrition Guideline

### Pearls for practice

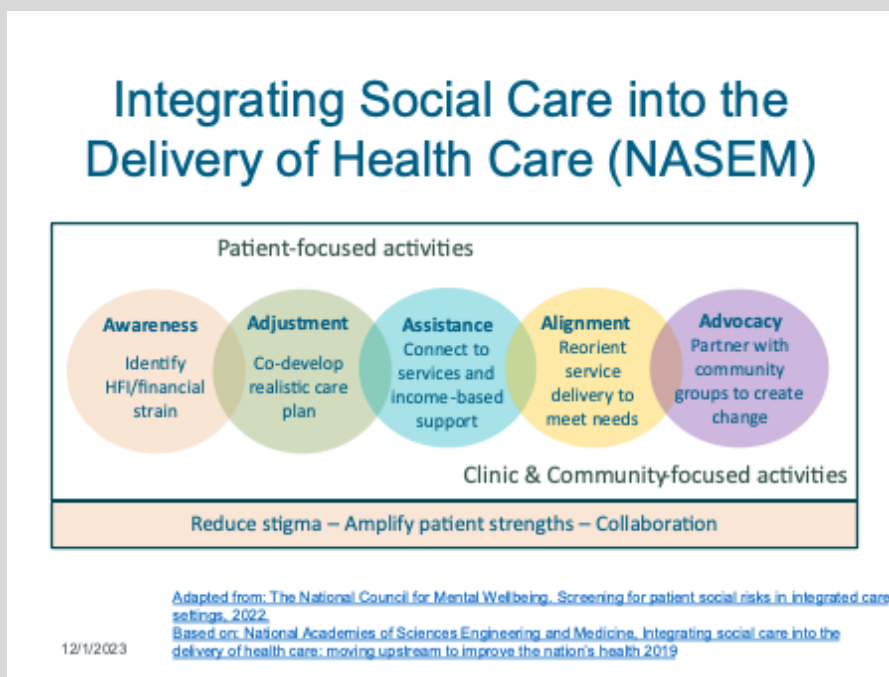
Kally Cheung, Shawna McGhan, Dr. Richard Lewanczuk, Dr. Joseph Ojedokun & Lacey Smoole.



## Key Messages

- According to the 2021 Canadian Income Survey, 1 in 5 Albertans experience Household Food Insecurity (HFI).
- Household Food insecurity (HFI) is caused by financial strain
- It is an indicator for material deprivation, the experience of not being able to cover the cost of basic expenses or fully participate in the community.
- HFI at any level is associated with poor health outcomes and a higher risk of poor mental health
- Help by normalizing and asking about financial strain in a compassionate way.
- Advocate by connecting your patients and their caregivers to services and supports where available

## How you can help



### Awareness (Ask or Screen)

- Normalize and remove the stigma by [talking about financial strain](#).
- Identify when patients are experiencing financial strain. “[Do you ever have difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month?](#)” is the validated question used to detect financial strain.
- No judgement. Understand that a series of complex system factors impact finances and is often not within individual choice and control.

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## How you can help

### Adjustment (Develop Care Plan)

- Determine the impact of financial strain on a client's access to food and basic needs.
- Explore what is important to them around their health
- Collaborate with the client to develop a care plan based on their situation, strength, and priorities

### Assist (Connect )

- Connect clients with income-related programs and benefits where available and desired
  - Social Worker, Community Navigators, Community liaisons,
  - [Alberta 2-1-1](#)
  - [Funding Options for Special Diets and Nutrition Products](#)
- If patients are interested in emergency food programs (food banks, food hampers), be aware of eligibility requirements and assist them with the referral.
- Long term follow up important to review progress and ongoing supports, and encouragement.

### Enablers to integrating social care into your health clinic

- Strengthen patient and family centred primary care team
- Respond as a team to what is important to patients
- Build a team culture rich in empathy
- Expand relationships and learn from community partners.
- Document and track progress.
- Review and enhance patient flow and experience

## Potential Opportunities

### [Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System \( MAPs\)](#)

"MAPS recognizes the importance of social factors such as food insecurity in influencing people's health. MAPS will incorporate the resources needed for social prescribing to help deal with these issues".

Social Prescribing - [Social Prescribing in Alberta - Healthy Aging CORE Alberta](#)

## Additional Resources

AHS Household Food Insecurity Webpage

-Nutrition Guideline: Household Food Insecurity

-Funding Options for Special Diets & Nutrition Products: Point of Care Reference

-Letter templates to support funding requests for special diets and nutrition products

-Pediatric formula coverage by government benefit program

[Reducing Impact of Financial Strain](#)

[Resources for action in primary care](#)

-Video: [Laying the foundation](#)

-Video: [Customer care](#)