



# ***The Kid Angle***

***Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children***

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## **What to talk about when we talk about food insecurity**

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Thursday is Thanksgiving, when families all across America will join together in a feast and, very likely, some uncomfortable conversation, probably about politics.

The fact is, neither side is likely to sway the other. And these conversations often go awry ([see comedian Leslie Jones taking matters into her own hands at the holiday table](#)).

**Since everyone will be digging into the stuffing and gravy, why not talk instead about food? Or, more specifically, food insecurity.**

Food insecurity among the nation's children soared in 2022, leaving 10% of them without enough daily bread. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are the two main programs that aid these children. But they're often mired in misconceptions around poverty and hunger.

**Here are some conversation starters to help win friends and influence people on why these programs need support:**

- **Half of all people on SNAP — better known as “food stamps” — are kids:**

SNAP provides families with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to **purchase food at grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, and a few other locations. This is real food that can help keep kids healthy.** Currently, [nearly half](#) of all SNAP recipients are kids. WIC works in a similar way, but focuses on new and expecting moms, infants, toddlers and children up to age five. The fruit and vegetable benefit offered by WIC has proven to increase children's intake of health-boosting produce. The fruit and vegetable program is the very one that House lawmakers plan to slash in half.

- **No one in the richest country on earth should be malnourished, least of all our children:**

Many people associate food insecurity with hunger. It is true that many children experiencing food insecurity are hungry. And they are even more likely to experience poor nutrition. A cash-strapped, food-insecure household might have food on the table, but it's likely to be inexpensive, processed food, the kind of high-calorie, low-nutrient packaged goods that lead to children being simultaneously malnourished *and* obese. This early experience with poor health leads to poor health in adulthood and chronic conditions that take a toll on individuals and the nation's economy. Children on SNAP are [actually less likely](#) to develop obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes as adults.

- **SNAP has a very low incidence of stolen benefits, especially compared to other government programs:**

Of all government programs, SNAP has one of the most intensive eligibility tests and accuracy systems. In fact, when lawmakers introduced the Improper Payments Act in 2000 to mitigate loss due to errors, SNAP was one of the few programs that [was already meeting the standards set by the act](#). The [vast majority of SNAP mistakes](#) are caused by state government errors. And, even when the government makes the error, recipients are required to pay back all overpayments. On the whole, just 6% of SNAP payments are made in error.

- **Children who receive SNAP grow into adults who have higher income, pay more in taxes, and are less likely to rely on government benefits:**

SNAP is proven to promote children's economic independence – ensuring that they [have higher incomes, pay more in taxes, and are less likely to rely on government assistance as adults](#). In addition, [More than half](#) of all adults on SNAP work while they receive benefits. We call many of these folks “essential workers” — they care for our children, ring up our groceries, and keep the lives of others functioning — but we pay them extremely low wages in jobs that often cut their hours unexpectedly, stranding them without enough cash to feed the children at home.

**Don't be a turkey. Start the conversation.**



Photo by [Glen Carrie](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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