

The Importance of Essential Needs Services

Defined

"Basic needs" refers to those fundamental requirements that serve as the foundation for survival. Access to the basic needs of life, including shelter, food, and clothing is necessary to the development of a strong community and a necessary precursor to individual self-sufficiency.¹

Maslow's theory (Maslow's hierarchy of needs) suggests that the most basic level of needs must be met before the individual will strongly desire (or focus motivation upon) the secondary or higher level needs. Maslow also coined the term "metamotivation" to describe the motivation of people who go beyond the scope of the basic needs and strive for constant betterment.

The human mind and brain are complex and have parallel processes running at the same time, thus many different motivations from various levels of Maslow's hierarchy can occur at the same time. Maslow stated that a certain need "dominates" the human organism. Thus Maslow acknowledged the likelihood that the different levels of motivation could occur at any time in the human mind, but he focused on identifying the basic types of motivation and the order in which they should be met.²

Changes to the original five-stage model include an eight-stage model, both developed during the 1960's and 1970s.

1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.
3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others.
5. Cognitive needs - knowledge, meaning, etc
6. Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.
7. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.
8. Transcendence needs - helping others to achieve self actualization.

¹ <http://canatx.org/basicneeds/backup/documents/1999Assessment/basicneeds99whatarebasicneeds.html>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

Importance

When a certain need dominates an individual's thoughts, they seek to fulfill that need above others. The following are excerpts from reports documenting what individuals do to fulfill their needs.

Housing

Housing plays a critical role in people's lives. It is a major consumption item, a source of safety and stability, and a nationally encouraged means for accumulating wealth. It also shapes where people access education and pursue employment.³ The American Psychological Association [2009 Presidential Task Force on Psychology's Contribution to End Homelessness](#) defined homelessness to exist when people lack safe, stable and appropriate places to live, including sheltered and unsheltered people, and those in overcrowded and doubled-up situations.

The cost of being homeless includes:

- Homelessness has particularly adverse effects on children and youth including hunger, poor physical and mental health, and missed educational opportunities.
- Homeless children lack stability in their lives with 97% having moved at least once on an annual basis, which leads to disruptions in schooling and negatively impacts academic achievement.
- Schooling for homeless children is often interrupted and delayed, with homeless children twice as likely to have a learning disability, repeat a grade or to be suspended from school.
- Homelessness and hunger are closely intertwined. Homeless children are twice as likely to experience hunger as their non-homeless peers. Hunger has negative effects on the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children.
- A quarter of homeless children have witnessed violence and 22% have been separated from their families. Exposure to violence can cause a number of psychosocial difficulties for children both emotionally (depression, anxiety, withdrawal) and behaviorally (aggression, acting out).
- Half of school age homeless children experience problems with depression and anxiety and one in five homeless preschoolers have emotional problems that require professional care.
- Homelessness is linked to poor physical health for children including low birth weight, malnutrition, ear infections, exposure to environmental toxins and chronic illness (e.g., asthma). Homeless children also are less likely to have adequate access to medical and dental care.
- Unaccompanied youth are often more likely to grapple with mental health (depression, anxiety and PTSD) and substance abuse problems.
- Many runaway youth engage in sexually risky behaviors (sometimes for their own survival), which places them at risk of HIV, other STDs and unintended pregnancies. Also, emerging research has shown that GLBT homeless youth are 7 times more likely to be victims of violent crime.⁴

Food

³ Blumenthal, Pamela M. & McGinty, John R.; Research Report: Housing Policy Levers to Promote Economic Mobility Urban Institute (October 2015) (p.1)

⁴ <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx>

Client households report making spending tradeoffs between paying for food and paying for other necessities, such as medical care, housing, and utilities. Sixty-six percent of households report choosing between paying for food and medicine or medical care each year, and 31 percent do so every month. Fifty-seven percent of households choose between paying for food and housing annually, with 27 percent doing so on a monthly basis.⁵

Households making these tradeoffs most often report doing so every month. Households make choices between food and educational expenses least frequently, perhaps because not all households contain students, although 30.5 percent of households have still found themselves choosing between food and education in the past 12 months.⁶

From Paycheck to Pantry: Hunger in Working America reveals that while many client households seeking charitable food assistance have some form of employment, they still struggle to meet their basic needs. Many working clients face challenges in affording adequate food to feed themselves and their families, including low incomes, underemployment, and competing household expenses, such as housing, medical care, and educational expenses.⁷

Although employed client households turn to the Feeding America network because they need food assistance, most struggle to meet other needs, such as housing, utilities, medical care, education, and transportation. Many client households report making difficult decisions about buying food versus paying for other necessities. Additionally, many report exercising a variety of coping strategies to ensure that they can acquire sufficient food for themselves and their family.

Client households with employment report better health status than do their counterparts. Nonetheless, one in three (37%) respondents in working households, compared to 60 percent of respondents in households without an employed member, report fair or poor health. In addition, client households with employment report relatively high rates of diet-related health conditions. Specifically, one in four (28%) working client households has at least one member with diabetes and half (50%) have at least one member with high blood pressure. Although household and individual rates are not directly comparable, nine percent of all Americans have diabetes and 31 percent have high blood pressure, suggesting that working client households have a higher incidence of these health problems. Client households with employment experience a high level of health burdens which may affect their workforce participation and limit their finances available for food and other expenses.

Food insecurity is harmful to all people, but it is particularly devastating to children. Proper nutrition is critical to a child's development. Not having enough of the right kinds of food can have serious implications for a child's physical and mental health, academic achievement and future economic prosperity. In the United States today, one in five kids are facing greater obstacles to reaching their fullest potential. The future of America lies in our children. When hunger threatens the future of a child, it threatens the future of our nation as well.

⁵ Feeding America: Hunger in America 2014, National Report (p.131)

⁶ Feeding America: Hunger in America 2014, National Report (p.134)

⁷ OXFAM America & Feeding America; *From Paycheck to Paycheck: Hunger in Working America* (p.3)

- 84 percent of client households with children report purchasing the cheapest food available, even if they knew it wasn't the healthiest option, in an effort to provide enough food for their household.
- Among Feeding America client households with children, nearly 9 in 10 households (89 percent) are food insecure.⁸

Long-term solutions are essential because the damage from hunger and food insecurity to individuals and families, to schools and the health care system, and to our economy as a whole is so great. Here is how harms play out.

- Maternal undernutrition can impair body, organ and cellular growth in the fetus; increases the risk of certain birth defects; and contributes to low infant birthweight, which is strongly correlated with perinatal and infant mortality.
- Food insecurity among very young children can cause stunted growth, iron deficiency anemia and delayed cognitive development. Cognitive delays then can last well beyond the period of nutritional deficiency – the resulting impaired IQ, motor skills and coordination can last into the elementary school years and beyond.
- Food insecurity harms children's physical growth and immune systems, and causes weakened resistance to infection. Food insecure children are far more likely to be reported in poor health, to catch colds, and to have stomach aches, headaches, ear infections and asthma.
- Food insecurity in both early childhood and the school years means that children lag their peers and learn less, and these learning deficits cumulate. School-age children who are food insecure are more likely to be absent from school, be hyperactive; behave poorly; be held back; do worse on tests; and be placed in special education.* These and other statements can be found at www.realstimulus.org

For adults as well, there is a broad range of adverse outcomes of food insecurity. Some of them carry over from childhood. But food insecurity during the adult years independently means lower productivity and, as is true with children, means more doctor visits, higher rates of hospitalization and longer hospital stays, and poorer health. Adult hunger and food insecurity also harm the children in the household. Two examples show how not only does hunger harm adults and children, but also how children will suffer even when adults bear the brunt and the children have enough to eat. One example involves depression, anxiety and stress; the other, overweight and obesity.

Often both of the parents or the single custodial parent in a household do everything they can to protect the children from the direct consequences of food insecurity or hunger: the children eat first, and get “enough” to eat (it may be filling but not be an adequate, healthy diet because of the resource constraints). But the parents are often hungry or skipping meals to protect the children. The resulting stress and depression with which food insecurity is associated harm not only the parents but the children's health and mental proficiency. Food insecurity adversely affects parent-child relationships.

⁸ http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/child-hunger/?_ga=1.13100087.1882757083.1456171702

As to obesity, research has shown that obesity too can be a consequence of food insecurity. Obesity among both adults and children means more cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension. Among adult food insecure women who have children, the reasons for obesity may include the ways in which low-income mothers must cope with limited resources for food—sacrificing at times their own nutrition in order to protect their children from hunger and lower nutritional quality. Food insecurity and poverty may also act as physiological stressors leading to hormonal changes that predispose adult women to obesity. But there are connections between food insecurity and obesity for children as well. Children in food insecure households are more likely to be at risk of overweight or to be obese. When children are both born at low birthweight and live in a family suffering from food insufficiency, they have a 27.8 times higher chance of being overweight or obese at age 4 ½ .

We must not forget that food insecurity harms seniors. Food insecure elderly persons have been found to be 2.33 times more likely to report fair or poor health status. And food insecurity among elders increases disability, decreases resistance to infection, and extends hospital stays. Moreover, many medications need to be taken with food to assure their effectiveness. Too many seniors have to skip meals in order to purchase medication, only to see a “Take with food” label on the prescription bottle because without food the drug will be less effective. Medically this is self-defeating, and, ultimately, costly. And from the patients’ perspective it is a cruel “Catch-22.”

What all this comes down to is that hunger and food insecurity not only are unnecessary and immoral in our wealthy nation, but they are vastly counter-productive in every important realm. They are a hindrance to our accomplishment of a range of essential national goals:

- At a time when the nation is looking for strategies to broaden health insurance coverage and improve quality of health care while controlling costs, eliminating food insecurity is a necessary part of an effective and cost-effective national health strategy.
- As the nation struggles to address its obesity epidemic, establishing food security and assuring that families have resources adequate to purchase a healthy diet are essential components of a successful anti-obesity strategy.
- At a time when our scientific knowledge of the critical importance of early childhood development has been growing by leaps and bounds – although our policy development is having trouble keeping pace – eliminating food insecurity is a prerequisite to the strongest possible early childhood policy.
- As the nation struggles with education policy and the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, eliminating food insecurity is a compelling and cost effective strategy to improve schools and student performance.
- And as we struggle to restore economic growth, boost productivity, improve our competitiveness, and keep deficits under control, eliminating food insecurity is one important key to improving the nation’s economic and fiscal futures.⁹

⁹ Weill, James D.; The Effects of Hunger and Food Insecurity in America; July 23, 2008 (p.3-5)

Legal

Summary eviction proceedings have long been a primary area of emphasis for proponents of a civil *Gideon* right.³³ Because shelter (a basic human need) is at stake, because eviction proceedings are adversarial,³⁴ because such proceedings ordinarily occur in a adjudicatory body labeled a “court” (sometimes a specialized court) as opposed to within an administrative body using informal procedures, and because housing law in most states is thought to have some degree of complexity,³⁵ these adjudications are at the core of the set of cases in which it is thought that the self-represented occupant is at her most vulnerable, especially when facing a represented evictor.¹⁰

The consequences of a court-ordered eviction can be serious, and can extend beyond the obvious consequence of the need to find (or an inability to find) a new place to live. For example, a court-ordered eviction renders a tenant on Section 8 ineligible for further assistance from any federally funded housing subsidy program.¹¹ A court-ordered eviction, particularly one for non-payment of rent, can affect a tenant’s credit rating and thereby the tenant’s access to the credit and rental markets after the eviction.¹² Finally, a court-ordered eviction for nonpayment of rent can make a family ineligible for certain kinds of emergency shelter assistance.¹³

Domestic violence is a serious problem in our society with significant social costs.

Despite the tremendous toll on both the victims and society, domestic violence was not recognized as a public health issue in the US until relatively recently.

The BJS finding that poor, young, minority women with young children are most likely to be victims of intimate partner abuse is also consistent with the theory given that these women have the fewest alternatives to their relationships.

While a woman’s own education and employment status are likely to have the strongest impact on her economic status outside the relationship, the economic status of women in the community in which she lives may also improve her options. Women who live in areas where women are well represented in the labor force and relatively educated are likely to have more credible threats of leaving abusive relationships.

Women living in counties with shelters, hotlines, safe homes, emergency transportation, programs for batterers, children’s programs, and counseling are not significantly less likely to be victims of intimate partner abuse than women who live in counties without these 11 services⁸. However, women who live in counties with legal assistance programs to help battered women are significantly less likely to report abuse. Because legal services help women with practical matters such as protective orders, custody, and child support they appear to actually present women with real, long-term alternatives to their relationships.

¹⁰ Greiner, D.James, Pattanayak, Cassandra Wolos, Hennessy, Jonathan, The Limits of Unbundled Legal Assistance: A Randomized Study in a Massachusetts District Court and Prospects for the Future (Draft of March 11, 2012)

¹¹ GBLS Citation.

¹² This consequence is one about which legal services entities attempt to warn clients in readily available venues. See, e.g., http://www.ehow.com/info_8012467_consequences-eviction.html (“[Y]ou[r] credit history will be affected if you do not pay rent and are eventually evicted. An eviction on your credit history will affect you longer than you may think. Future landlords may not rent to you, and if they do they may ask you to pay higher rent and/or ask for more money as a deposit.”); see also <http://www.experian.com/ask-experian/20090527-judgment-for-eviction-could-appear-on-your-credit-report.html> (similar).

¹³ See 105 CMR 309.040(B).

The goal of this paper is to ascertain the source of the decline in intimate partner abuse from 1993 to 1998 cited in a recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. We find three significant factors in explaining the decline: (1) the increased provision of legal services for victims of intimate partner abuse, (2) improved educational and economic status for women, and (3) demographic trends including the aging of the population and an increase in racial diversity. Specifically, US women have become older, more educated, richer, and more likely to belong to a minority race. In addition, the provision of legal services has exploded in the past decade. All of these factors are significant determinants of abuse and are trending in the right direction to explain the reduced incidence of domestic violence in the US.

The continued expansion of the availability of civil legal services will likely continue to lower the incidence of intimate partner abuse in the future. While other services –hotline s, shelters, job training, outreach, and counseling – are not significantly related to women’s reports of domestic violence in the NCVS, given their use, these services are clearly valuable to battered women. However, expansion of these services should focus on providing what clients need to become self-sufficient. While short-term housing and counseling provide women with important temporary safety and support (and, therefore, may significantly reduce the incidence of serious injuries resulting from domestic violence), they are more likely to lower the overall incidence of domestic violence if they provide women with long-term, realistic alternatives to their relationships.¹⁴

¹⁴ Farmer, Amy, Explaining the Recent Decline in Domestic Violence (Article in Contemporary Economic Policy-February 2003)