

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## New Study Finds Hunger in Baltimore

*City and State Public and Private Agencies Launch New Effort  
to Connect Families to Food Resources*

**Baltimore, MD** (July 15, 2008) – University of Maryland researchers are reporting that nearly one in 8 low-income families in Baltimore with young children suffer from food insecurity. The findings have led to a new interagency effort to connect needy families to food resources.

University of Maryland Professor of Pediatrics Dr. Maureen Black conducted the research through the Children’s Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program. The Program’s report, *Food Security: Ensuring the Health of Baltimore’s Babies*, is based on interviews in the Emergency Department with the families of 2,216 infants and toddlers over 4 years. Food insecurity was assessed using a standardized survey developed for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The study found:

- 13.5% of low-income Baltimore families with young children suffer from food insecurity.
- Fewer than half of food-insecure families receive two key nutrition-related assistance programs: WIC and Food Stamps.
- Among food insecure families, receiving WIC and Food Stamps are associated with better child health.
- Just two questions reliably predict whether families are food insecure: The questions ask if families respond “often true” or “sometimes true” to the following two statements:
  - “Over the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.”
  - “Over the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more.”

“The evidence is clear. Hunger exists in Baltimore, and young children benefit from WIC and Food Stamps,” said Dr. Black.

In response to the findings, the Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, 311, and the Maryland Food Bank are announcing a major new effort. A new website, [www.hungryinbaltimore.org](http://www.hungryinbaltimore.org), will be launched as a tool to connect potentially food insecure families with available resources, including WIC, Food Stamps and local food

pantries. In addition, the Health Department will reach out to pediatric clinicians on how to screen for food insecurity and how to connect families to nutrition assistance programs.

“The research compels an immediate response. Everyone caring for families in Baltimore should be asking questions about food security and connecting families to resources” said Dr. Sharfstein.

Food donations will be collected at the Health Department, located at 210 Guilford Avenue and the WIC Center at 621 N. Eden Street starting today, July 15<sup>th</sup> thru July 29<sup>th</sup>. Items needed include canned tuna and peanut butter, which are high in protein as well as whole grain pastas, canned fruits and vegetables.

“One of the main points that we should take away from this study is that children in families who participate in the WIC Program, Food Stamps and other federally funded programs are in better health than their counterparts,” said Deborah Flateman, CEO of the Maryland Food Bank. “This means it is critical to encourage all people who qualify to be part of programs like WIC and the Food Stamps and free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. The Maryland Food Bank and food banks across the country are developing creative ways to partner with government agencies to sign up more eligible people for food stamps and other federally funded programs.”

Baltimore City residents who want more information on available food resources should call 311 or visit [www.hungryinbaltimore.org](http://www.hungryinbaltimore.org).

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