



The State of U.S. Military Food Insecurity

The Feeding America network of 200 food banks and their partner agencies serve active duty military families across the United States.



An increasing number of food banks have reported active duty military families coming to food pantries located near military bases. These reports have increased due to COVID-19.

Along with the charitable sector, **lawmakers must intervene with policies that ensure those who protect our nation are protected from the consequences of food insecurity.**

While reliable data about the scope of the problem is lacking,

many active duty service members live at or below the federal poverty level and experience food insecurity.¹

Far too many U.S. service members and their loved ones struggle to access enough to eat. As many as

160,000 active-duty enlisted service members

face hardship putting food on the table for themselves and their loved ones.²

Active duty service members spent more than \$21 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits

at commissaries between September 2014 and August 2015.³

Food insecurity has negative impacts on overall health, contributing to weight gain, stress, and chronic disease.

Ensuring adequate access to nutritious food is imperative to ensuring the long-term health of service members and improving military readiness.⁵

One-third of students at Department of Defense schools were eligible for free and reduced-price meals

during the 2018-2019 school year.⁴

CONTRIBUTORS TO MILITARY HUNGER

PAY AND EMPLOYMENT

Low salaries for enlisted members, **high rates of unemployment** for military spouses due to the transitory nature of the military, **high cost of living** near many military bases across the country, and **high costs of childcare** make affording enough to eat difficult.⁶

The **self-sufficient culture in the military** may serve as a deterrent to service members seeking assistance to which they are entitled.⁷

MILITARY CULTURE

SNAP INELIGIBILITY

SNAP eligibility is treated differently for service members who live off base. **The Basic Allowance for Housing is included when calculating income to determine SNAP eligibility**, making service members ineligible.⁸

POLICY SOLUTIONS

We have an obligation to ensure that the service members who protect our country do not have the added worry of whether they can afford to feed themselves and their families.

Feeding America therefore calls on
CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY FAMILY BASIC NEEDS ALLOWANCE
in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

QUESTIONS

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, EMAIL THE
Feeding America Government Relations Team

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¹National Military Families Association. (2019). Policy Issues. Retrieved from www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/policy-issues/.

²Blue Star Families. (2021). Military Family Lifestyle Survey. Retrieved from www.bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULL.pdf.

³Government Accountability Office. July 2016. MILITARY PERSONNEL DOD Needs More Complete Data on Active-Duty Servicemembers' Use of Food Assistance Programs. www.gao.gov/assets/680/678474.pdf.

⁴Government Accountability Office. July 2016. MILITARY PERSONNEL DOD Needs More Complete Data on Active-Duty Servicemembers' Use of Food Assistance Programs. www.gao.gov/assets/680/678474.pdf.

⁵Center for Disease Control. (July 21, 2020). Unfit to Serve. www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/military-readiness.htm

⁶National Military Families Association. (2019). Policy Issues. Retrieved from www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/policy-issues/.

⁷National Military Families Association. (2019). Policy Issues. Retrieved from www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/policy-issues/.

⁸Military Benefits. (n.d.). SNAP Benefits. Retrieved 30, 2020, from www.militarybenefits.info/snap-benefits/



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Feeding America is a nationwide network of food banks that feeds more than 40 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities across America and leads the nation in the fight against hunger.

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