

Family Resiliency Center helps study how food-bank clients afford basic non-food items

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Many families struggle to afford basic non-food household goods, such as personal care, household, and baby-care products, according to a new nationwide Feed America study that benefited from assistance from the University of Illinois Family Resiliency Center (FRC).

"The study found that these families often make trade-offs with other living expenses and employ coping strategies in an effort to secure such essential [household items](#) as [toilet paper](#), toothpaste, soap, or disposable diapers," said Barbara H. Fiese, FRC director and Pampered Chef Endowed Chair.

The study revealed that one in three low-income families had a hard time affording basic household necessities in the past year. Of these families, 82 percent live in households with low or very low food security, meaning they cannot afford enough food to feed their family, she added.

"What's more, nearly three in four low-income families have cut back on food in the past year in order to afford essential non-food items," she said.

The Family Resiliency Center contributed to the study by conducting in-depth interviews with food-bank clients about which [household products](#) are essential, strategies to obtain the products, and the consequences of going without the product.

The results of the FRC interviews were then used to design a larger,

nationally representative [phone survey](#) as well as to help [food banks](#) assess their clients' concerns regarding household product needs.

"Many of the projects conducted at FRC start with considering the real-[life experiences](#) of families who face daily challenges such as going without sufficient amounts of food," Fiese said.

"These interviews shed light on the often complicated decisions that families have to make in balancing the need to feed their children, purchase household supplies for healthy living, and pay for medical expenses. Clearly these are not easy decisions, and the choices can have serious consequences for multiple members of the household," she added.

Provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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