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## Occupational Approaches for Reducing Food Insecurity in College Students

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# Occupational Approaches for Reducing Food Insecurity in College Students

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## BACKGROUND

- Food insecurity is defined as “uncertain or limited access to adequate food resources” (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2020, para. 14).
- College students are at an increased risk of food insecurity because they typically work part-time, are less likely to receive federal nutrition assistance, and may have low food literacy (El Zein, et al., 2019; Owens, et al, 2020). Food insecurity in college is associated with a lower grade point average, lower self efficacy, and less time for buying or preparing food (McArthur et al., 2018).
- Occupational therapy (OT) practitioners can serve an important role in promoting engagement in food related occupations, food literacy, and food security (Juckett & Robinson 2019; Schmeltzer & Leto, 2018).
- OT practitioners reduce barriers and support participation in food related occupations (Juckett & Robinson 2019; Schmeltzer & Leto, 2018).

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Food insecurity is not an issue that occurs in isolation. Traditional food provision programs rarely address psychosocial factors, food literacy, the skills needed to manage food resources, or occupations (Begley et al., 2019; Schmelzer & Leto, 2018).

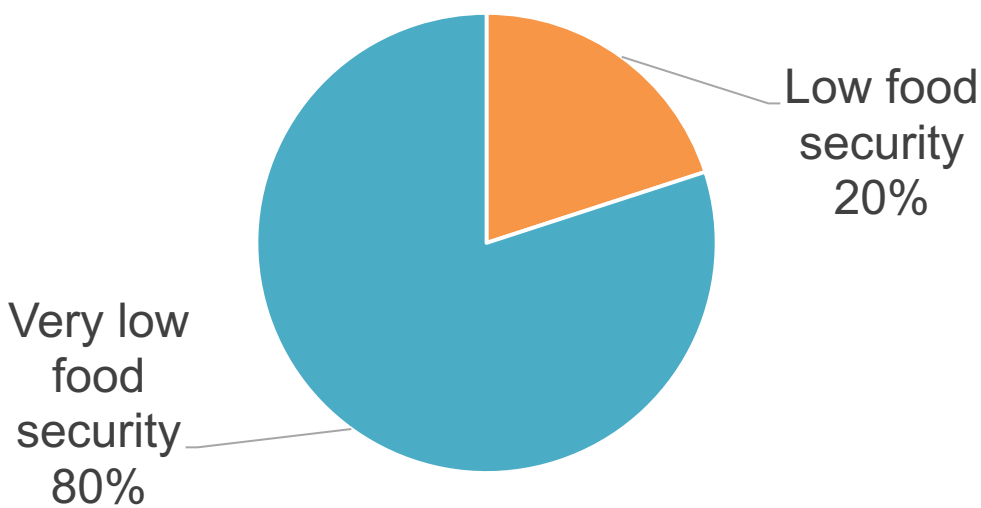
## PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to conduct a needs assessment in order to design programming that will promote lasting food security and occupational engagement among emerging adults and college students of all ages.

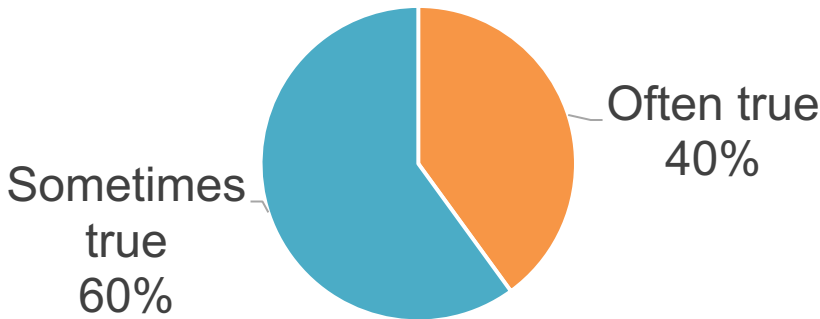
## NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

All research participants (n=5) were classified as food insecure according to the U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (USDA, 2012).

Food Security Status (n=5)

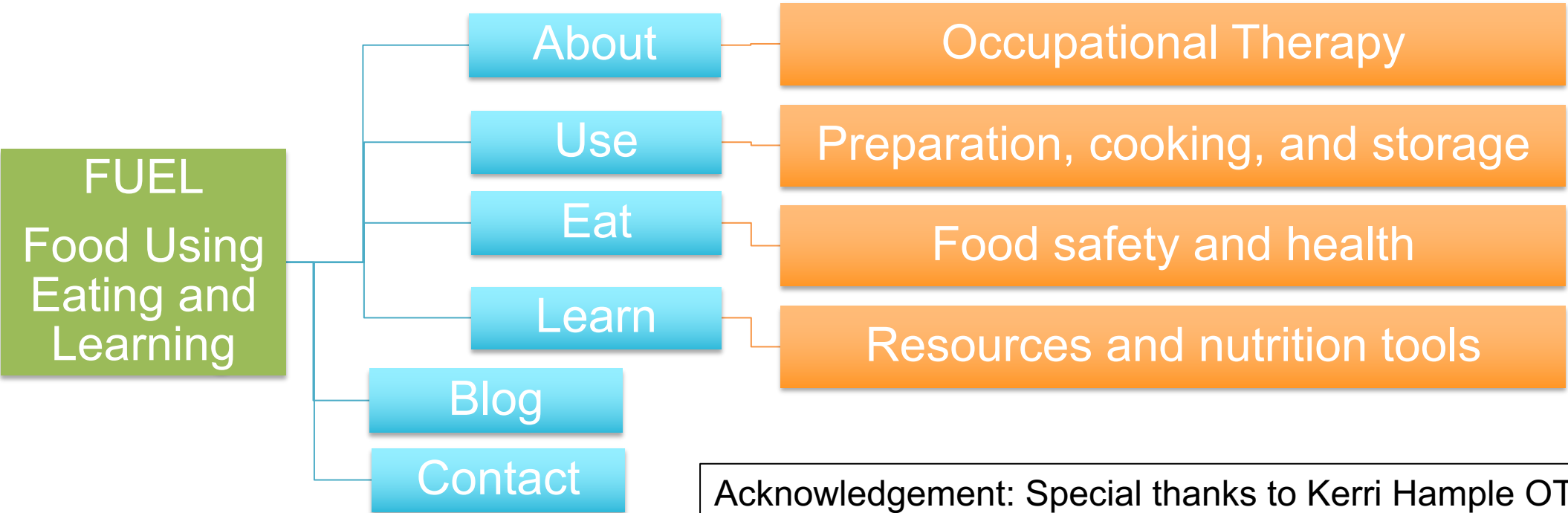


“(I/we) couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?



Risk Factors	Food Literacy in College	Results of Needs Assessment Interviews
Income Participants were below 200% of the federal poverty line and earned \$2,400-\$30,000 per year.	Low food literacy associated with food insecurity (Begley et al., 2019).	Financial Literacy Grocery budgeting, financial planning, and understanding loans/financial aid
Employment 1 out of 5 participants had full-time employment. 4 out of 5 participants were either unemployed or worked less than 20 hours per week.	Participant 3 expressed challenges in planning, managing, selecting, preparing and eating nutrient dense meals.	Nutrition and Food Literacy Nutrition education, cooking skill tutorials, appropriate recipes, how to use and stretch food items
Transportation 2 out of 5 participants did not have personal transportation to obtain food resources.	Are you satisfied with the way that you are obtaining or managing food now? “Somewhat yeah. I mean but I feel like we can manage it better or just like buy more” (Participant 3).	CalFresh/Food Resource Increase CalFresh outreach and reduce barriers to CalFresh enrollment
		System/External Increase awareness on campus and in community Legislative, policy and funding support

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



Acknowledgement: Special thanks to Kerri Hample OTD, OTR/L, Timothy Bolin, Ph.D., and Jaclyn Randall Crowe, M.S for their support in this project.

## METHODS

- Research Question:** How does food insecurity impact occupational engagement/performance?
- Design:** Mixed methods research study (survey and interview) and needs assessment
- Recruitment:** Emails, flyers, food distribution events and a video for Palo Verde College students.
- Survey:** U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (USDA, 2012), socio-demographic factors and health behaviors (n=5).
- Interview:** Health behaviors, food literacy, barriers to food security or occupational engagement (n=1).
- Needs Assessment:** Interviews with college food security/basic needs staff and food security/food literacy organizations (n=14).

## DISCUSSION

- This project
- Adds to literature on the role of occupational therapy for food insecurity.
  - Identified need for OT to become more involved in health promotion and prevention.
- Role of OT:
- Support food literacy and food security
  - Adapt and modify to reduce personal, contextual or environmental barriers to occupation
  - Advocate for people with food insecurity
  - Support lifestyle modification and skill acquisition

Future research should continue to explore the role of OT in food security for emerging adults/college students at various institutions.

Please scan the QR code to view the references.



Use the QR code to view the F.U.E.L. Resource Guide

