

Food Stamps as Medicine for Infants & Toddlers

Ensuring Healthy Development by Strengthening Food Stamps

U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee

Staff Briefing

April 4, 2007

Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH

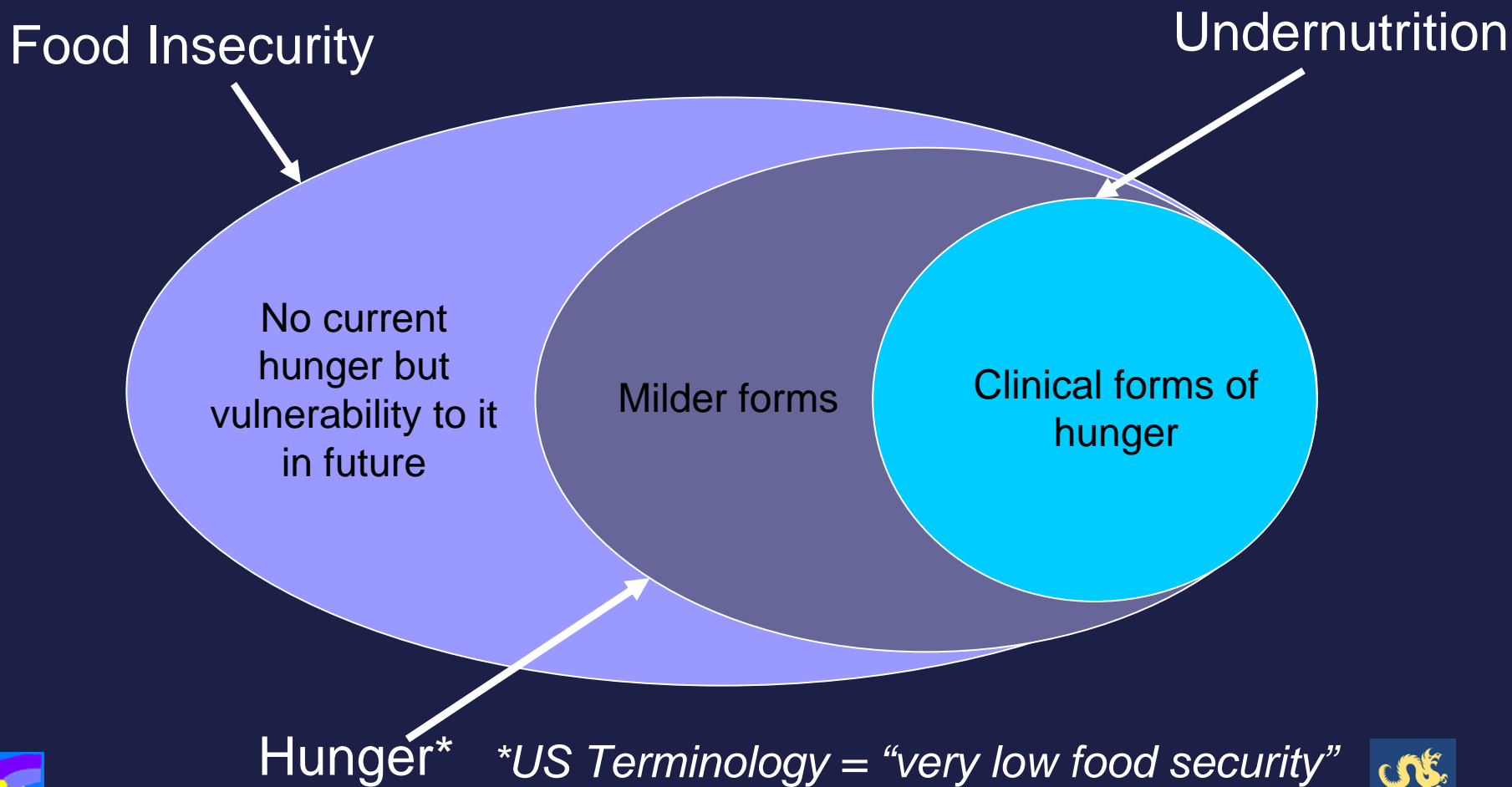
Drexel University School of Public Health



Undernutrition still found in the US GROW Clinic: Failure to Thrive



Relationship between undernutrition, hunger and food insecurity



Food Insecurity Definitions

- **Household Food Insecurity**

Limited or uncertain availability of enough food for an active and healthy life for all household members due to financial constraints

- **Child Food Insecurity**

When children in food insecure households experience repeated reductions in dietary quality or quantity



Households with Children are Nearly Twice as Likely to be Hungry

Percent of U.S. Households With and Without Children Under 18 that are Food Insecure



Health Impact of Food Insecure

- Food Insecure children suffer 2-4 times as many health problems as non-hungry children *within same income*
 - Physical & cognitive development
 - Stomach aches, head aches, colds, ear infections
 - High hospitalization rates
 - Iron-deficiency anemia
 - More susceptible to lead poisoning



Social Impact

- **Psychosocial & behavioral**
 - Aggression, hyperactivity, anxiety
 - Difficulty getting along with other children
 - Need for mental health services
- **Learning and academic performance**
 - Less capacity to learn; lower test scores
 - School absences, tardiness and suspensions

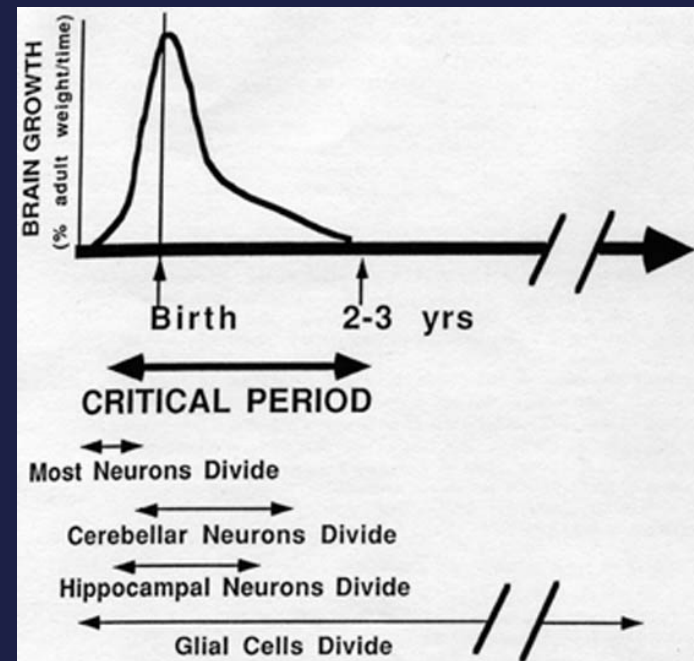
Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP)

- Nonpartisan resource for research in pediatric settings on the effects of U.S. social policies on young, low-income children's nutrition and health.
- Multi-site Research Study
 - Boston, MA
 - Philadelphia, PA
 - Minneapolis, MN
 - Baltimore, MD
 - Los Angeles, CA
 - Little Rock, AR
 - Washington, DC



Why children 0-3?

- Children 0-3 are in a period of rapid brain growth, essential for their cognitive, social and physical development
- Any interruption in their nutrition may have lasting effects later on in life
- Few other studies are documenting the health and wellbeing of infants and toddlers



Food Insecurity & Achievement Gap

- Food insecurity--in mildest forms--is associated with poor academic performance
- Among 8000 children followed from kindergarten to third grade,
 - If a family *began* food stamps --> achieved **greater improvement in reading and math scores** than those whose families *stopped* receiving food stamps



Federal Assistance Programs-- monitored by C-SNAP

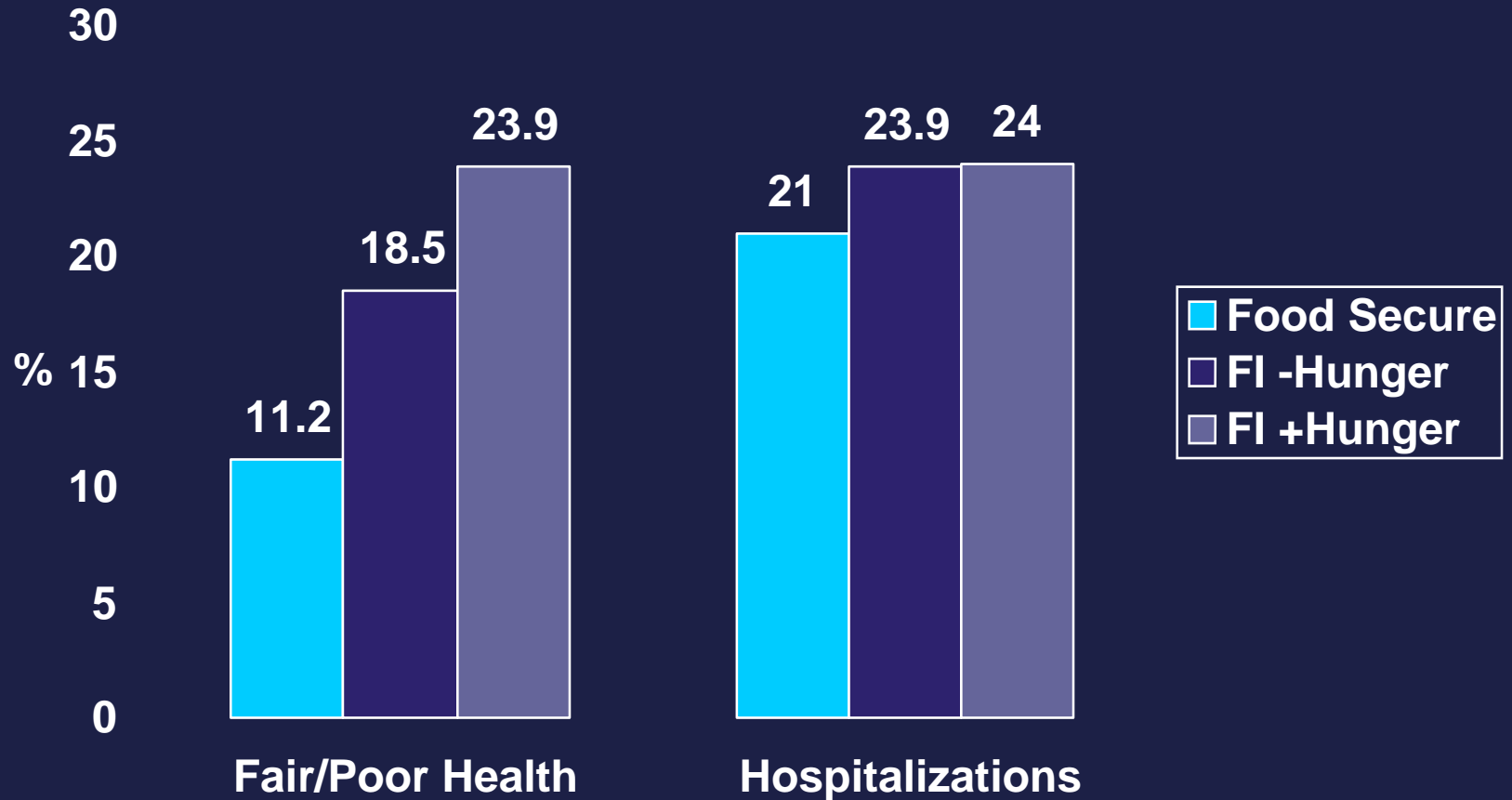
- Food Stamps
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Medicaid
- Federal Housing Subsidies
- Energy Assistance



Health

- Food Insecurity
- Hospitalizations
- Child Wellbeing
- Maternal Depression
- Child Growth
- Child Development

C-SNAP Earliest Results



N=11,539

Cook et al 2004



C-SNAP: Latest Results

Food Insecurity & Developmental Risk

- Children in food insecure household are have a higher prevalence of developmental risk.
- Language delays or difficulties
- Short-term Memory deficits
- Attention Deficit
- Gross-motor skill delays
- Hyper-activity
- Lower academic achievement

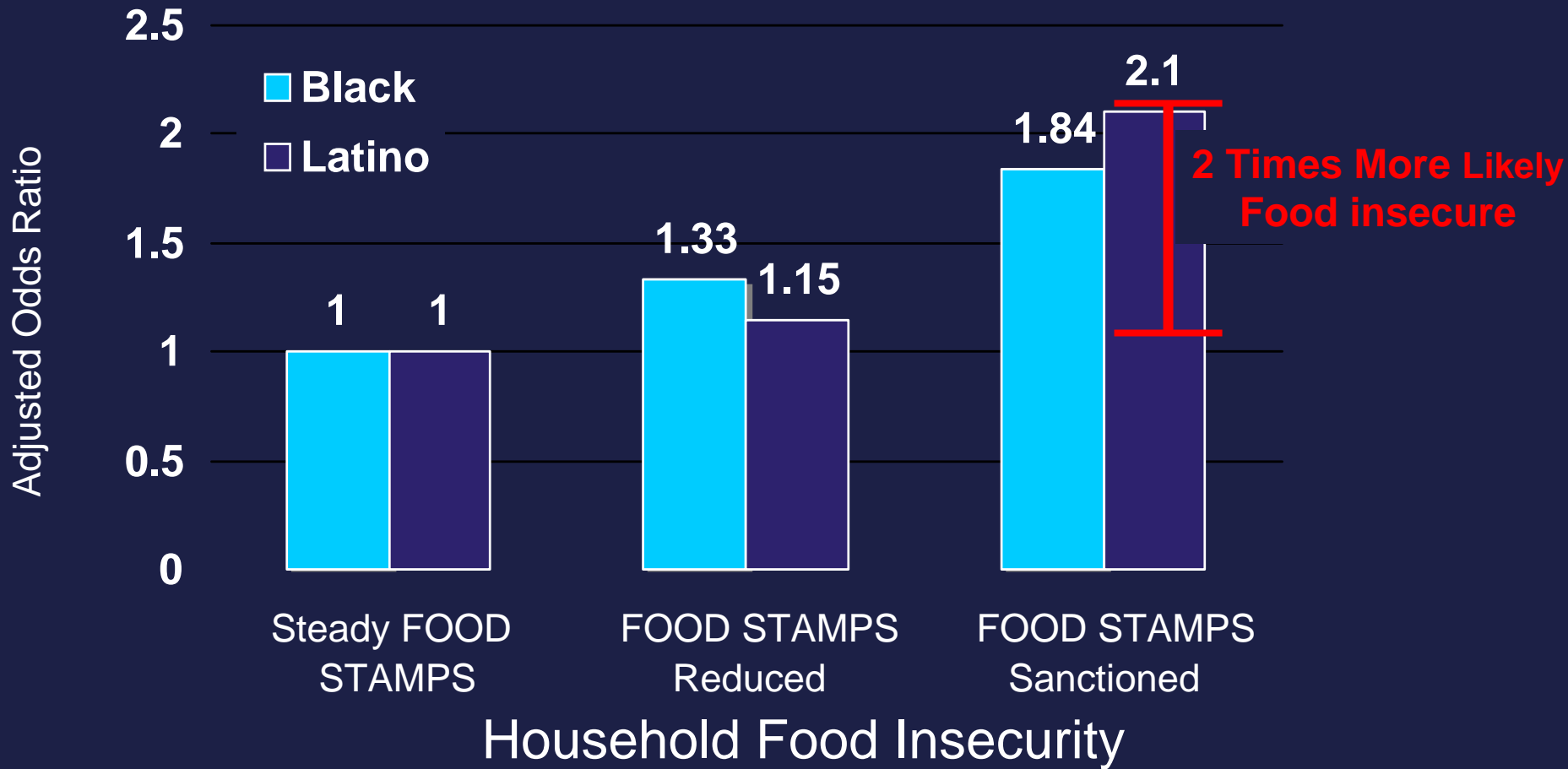


C-SNAP, 2006 "Nourishing Development: A report on food insecurity and the precursors to school readiness among very young children"

Food Stamps and Food Insecurity

- Children whose family received food stamps were
 - *26% less likely to be food insecure*
- But, babies & toddlers whose family food stamp benefit was terminated or reduced were
 - *80% more likely to be in food insecure households*
 - *More than twice as likely to experience child food insecurity*

FOOD STAMP Sanctions & Food Insecurity





Fair/Poor Health Black Children & Food Stamps



Fair or Poor Health



Food Stamps as Medicine

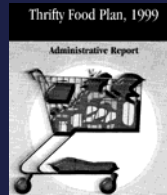
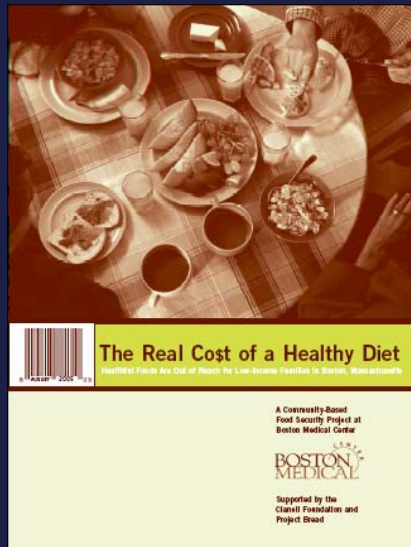
A New Perspective on Children's Health



*If food stamps are medicine,
is the dosage enough?*



“Thrifty Food Plan” & Food Stamps



- Maximum annual income allowed for family of 4: \$26,004
- In Boston, family receiving maximum benefits = \$800 short for the year, if they shopped in Boston

- Food Insecure households spend about same as the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan
- Food secure households spend 33% more than food insecure families on food

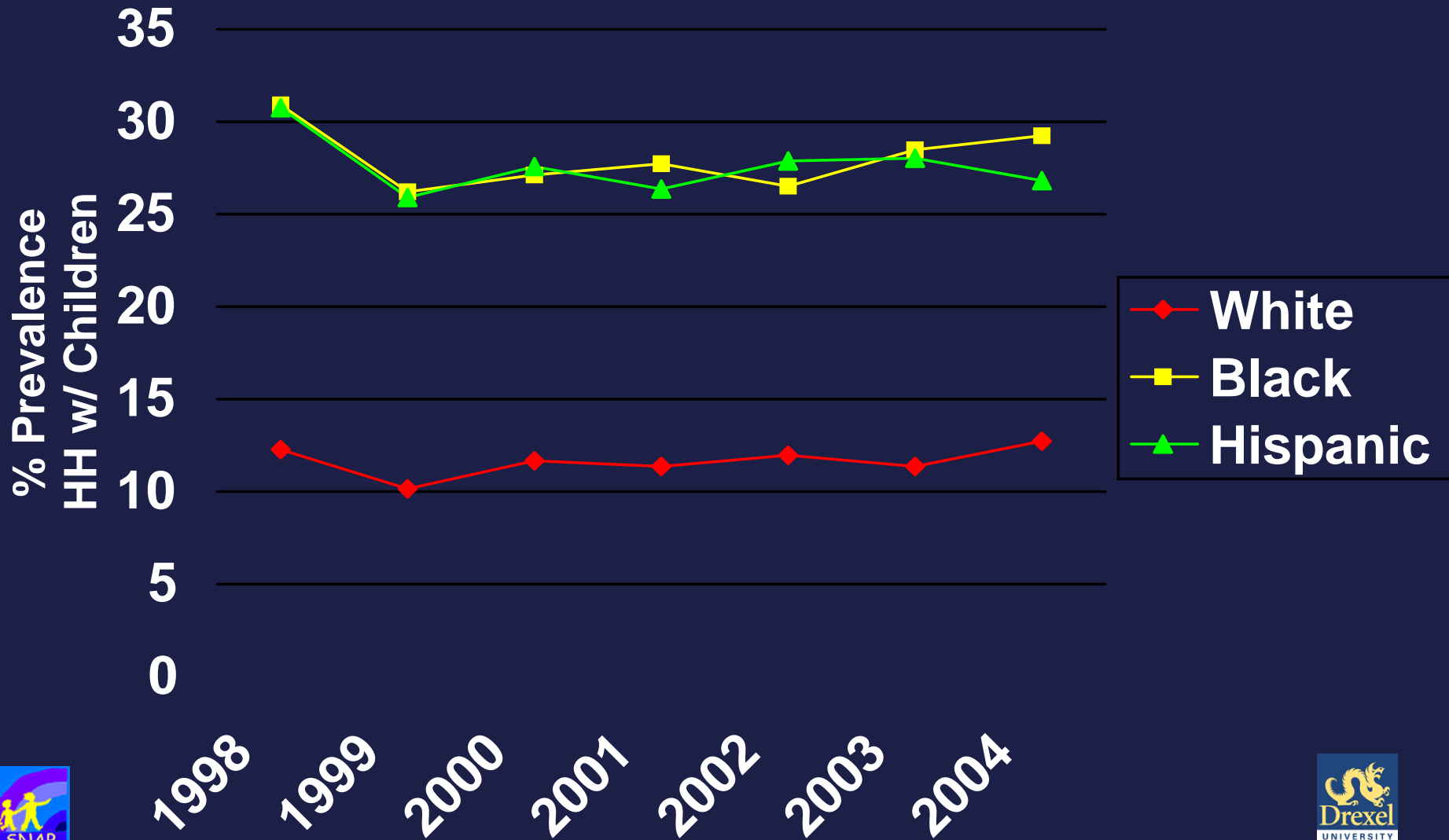
Annual Gap Between Maximum Monthly Food Stamp Benefit & Cost of Surgeon General's Low-Cost, Healthier Diet



Policy Recommendations

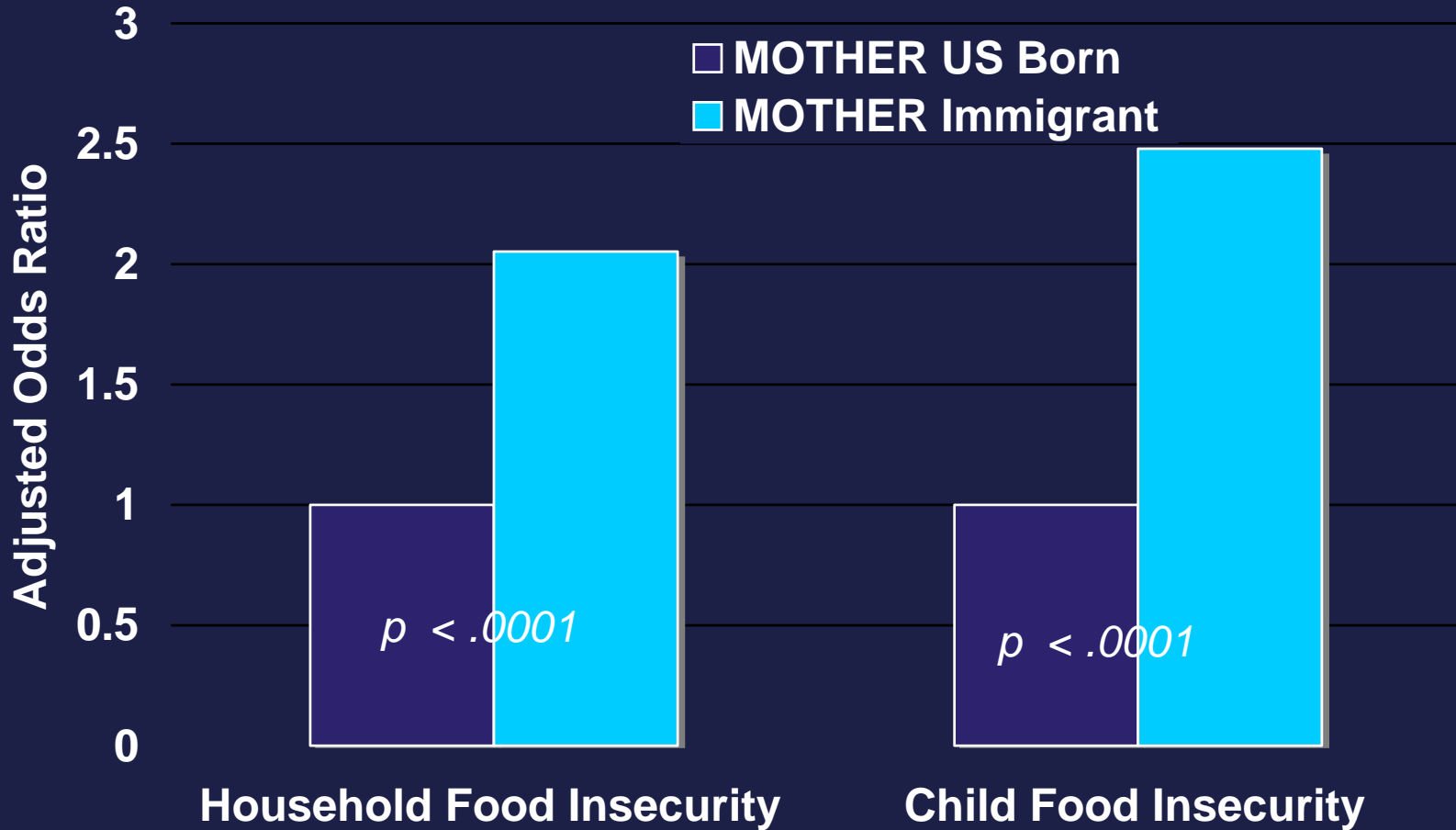
- Base Food Stamp benefits on actual costs of healthy diet for all members of the family
- Index Food stamp benefits in relation to cost of living by geographic location
- Increase the minimum Food Stamp benefit from \$10 to at least \$25
- Raise the asset cap above current \$2,000 level

Disparities in Prevalence of Household Food Insecurity in US



C-SNAP Results: Citizen Children of Immigrants

Controlled for site, race, child age, caregiver age, marital status, education, birth weight, child breastfed



AOR
95% CI

2.05
1.84, 2.27

2.48
2.15, 2.86



Recommendations

- Restore food stamp eligibility to all legal immigrants
- Level the playing field
- Help stream-line application processes by reducing paperwork

Benchmarks



Objective	Measure	Targets
Decrease Food Insecurity among US households	Prevalence of food security among all households	1995 - 12% 2010 - 6%

By 2010, our public health goal is to cut the rate of food insecurity in the US from 11% to 6% (from 11%)

Food Stamps are Good Public Health

Title VI Civil Rights Act, 1964



- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance

Contact Information

- **C-SNAP National Contact**

Deborah Frank, MD

Principal Investigator

725 Massachusetts Ave., Mezz. SW

Boston, MA 02118

Tel: 617-638-5850 Fax: 617-414-7047

dafrank@bu.edu

www.c-snap.org

- **C-SNAP National Contact**

Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, MPH

Research and Policy Director

725 Massachusetts Ave., Mezz. SW

Boston, MA 02118

Tel: 617-638-5850 Fax: 617-638-5066

sedc@bu.edu

www.c-snap.org

- **C-SNAP Philadelphia**

Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH

Co-Principal Investigator

Drexel University School of Public Health

1505 Race Street. Philadelphia, PA 19102

Tel: 215-762-6512 Fax: 215-762-4088

Mariana.Chilton@drexel.edu

www.growproject.org

