From evidence to action: How can we build systems to promote children's nutritional health with a focus on equity?

Dr. Gabriella McLoughlin
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College of Public Health, Temple University

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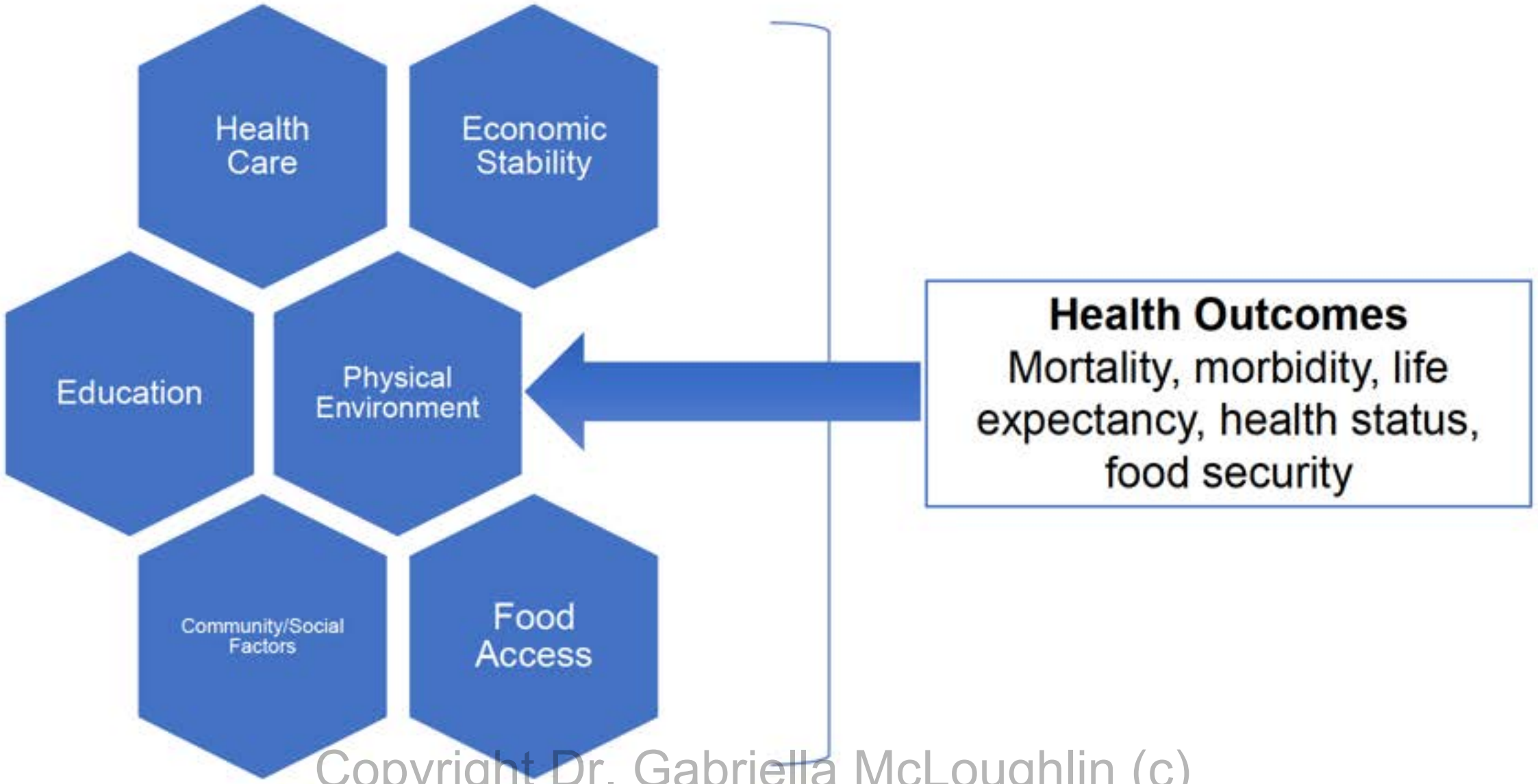
The Case for Equity



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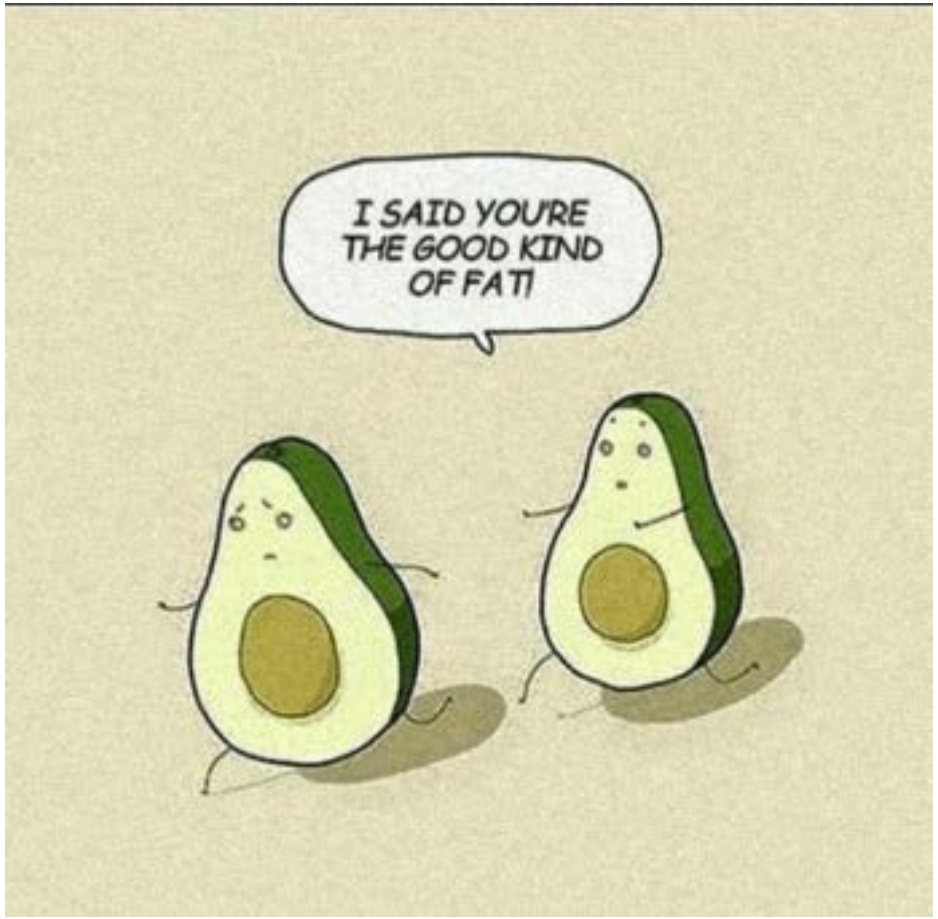
Food Insecurity



"Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more."

"Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more."

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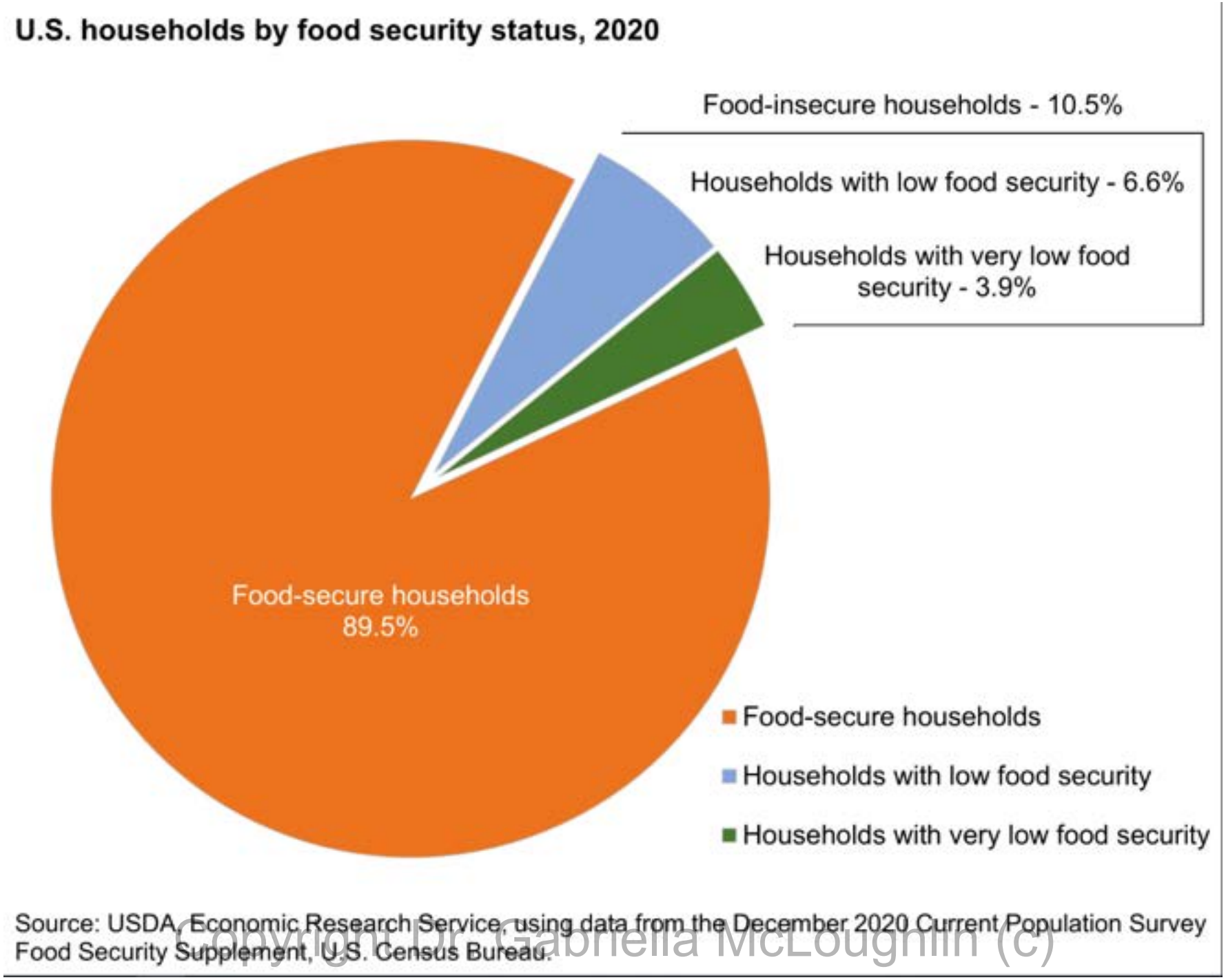

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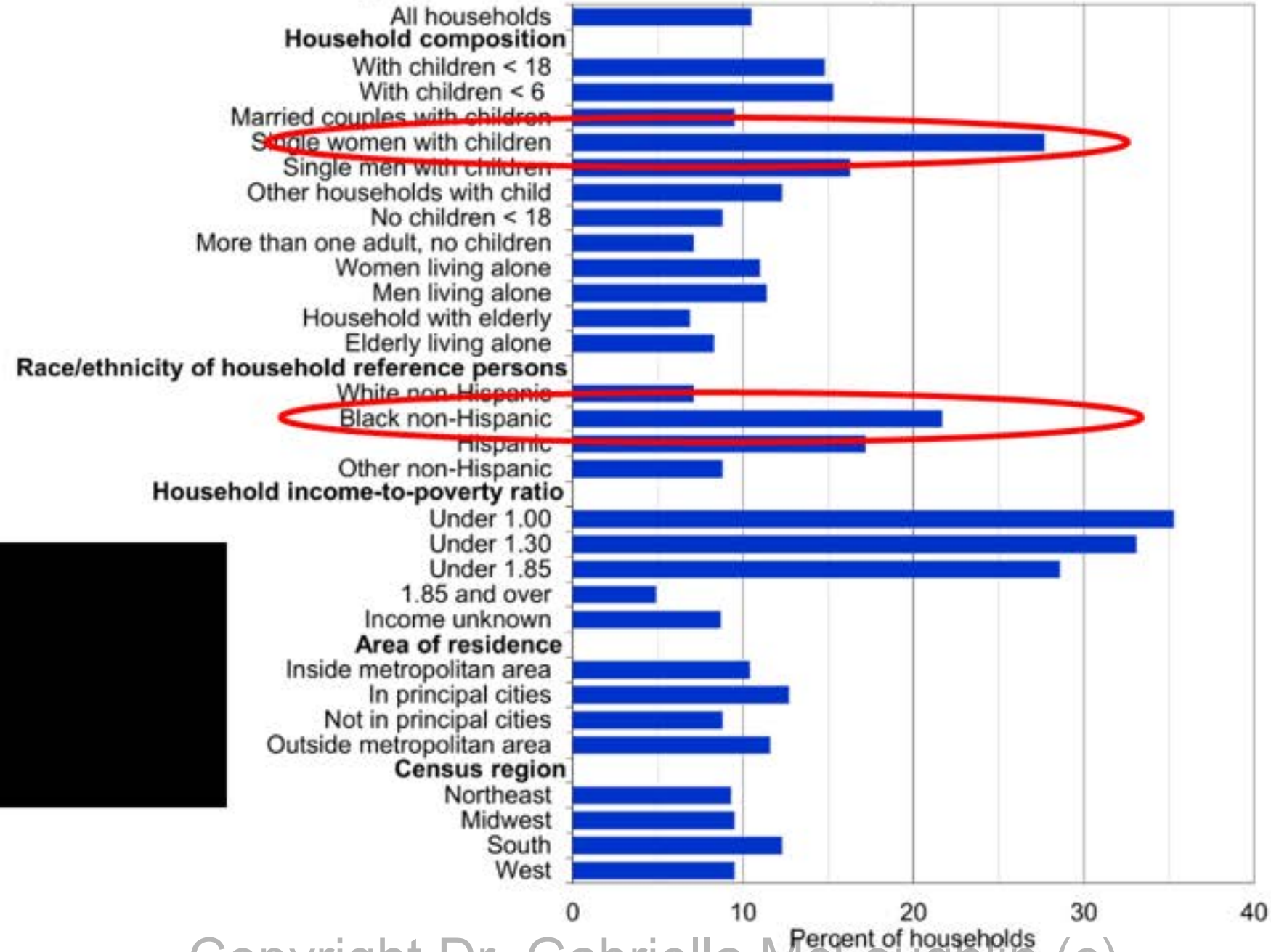
Prevalence of food insecurity by selected household characteristics, 2020



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, U.S. Census Bureau.

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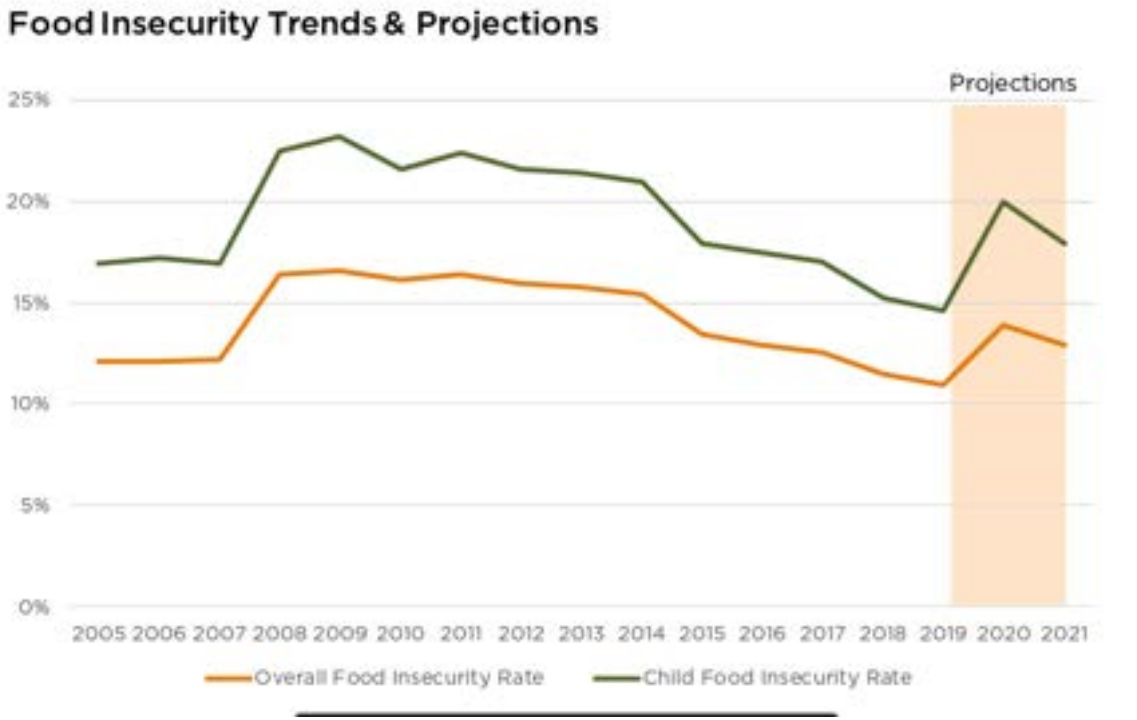
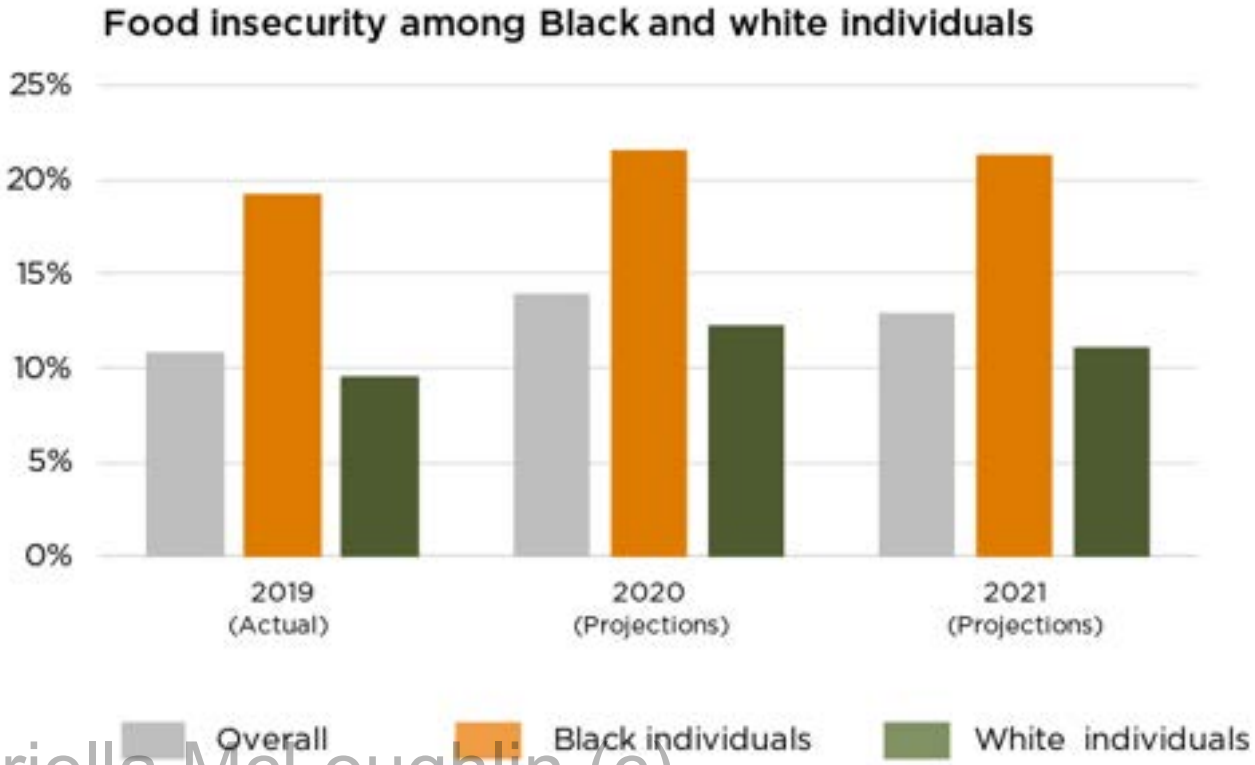


What happened as a result of COVID-19?



Feeding America, 2021

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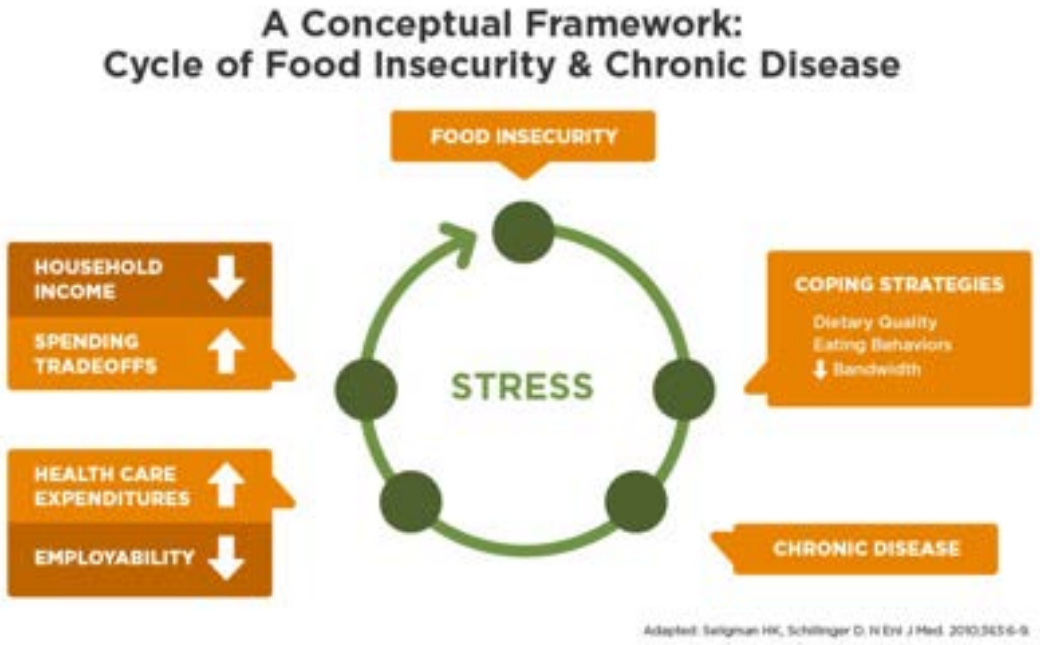
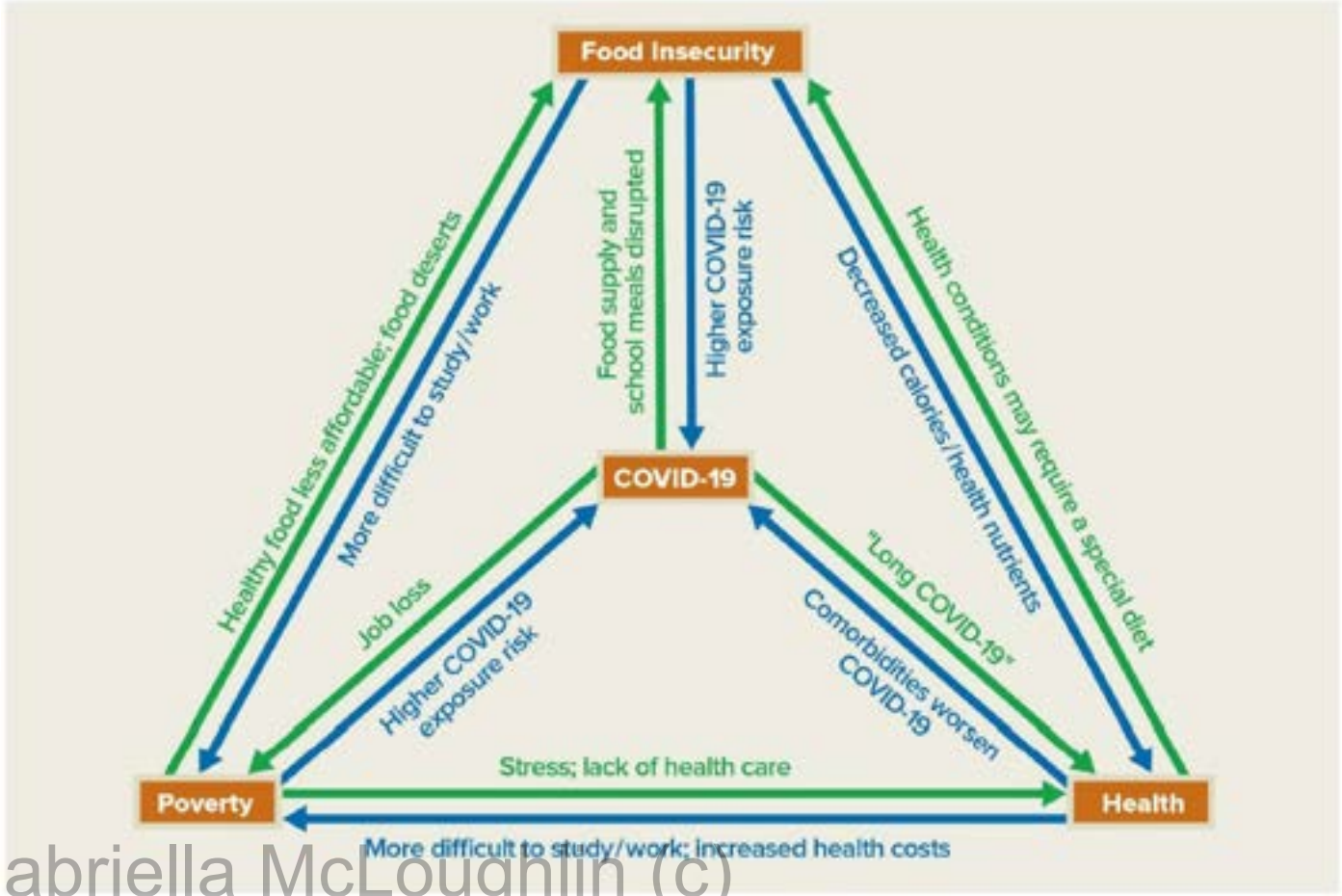
Childhood Obesity Disparities and Food Insecurity





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Getting To Equity (GTE) Framework

Kumanyika S. *Am J Public Health*. 2019;109(10):1350-1357

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COVID-19 Emergency School Meal Distribution

Emergency school meals provision during COVID-19

Distribution of free meals
Provide menu & nutrition facts
Give social distancing guidance
Offer broad geographic eligibility & operating hours

Address barriers to accessing meals
Address fear of discrimination
Provide multilingual communications
Empower Households
Accessible locations

Facility tour showcases how Nutrition Services is mobilizing to safely feed families

Assist with child and family needs
Increase household minimum wage
Access to food assistance programs
Access to federal stimulus funds

Facilitate Maximum Benefit
Build community partnerships
Leverage community resources
Promote healthy behaviors

Individual and household resources and capacity

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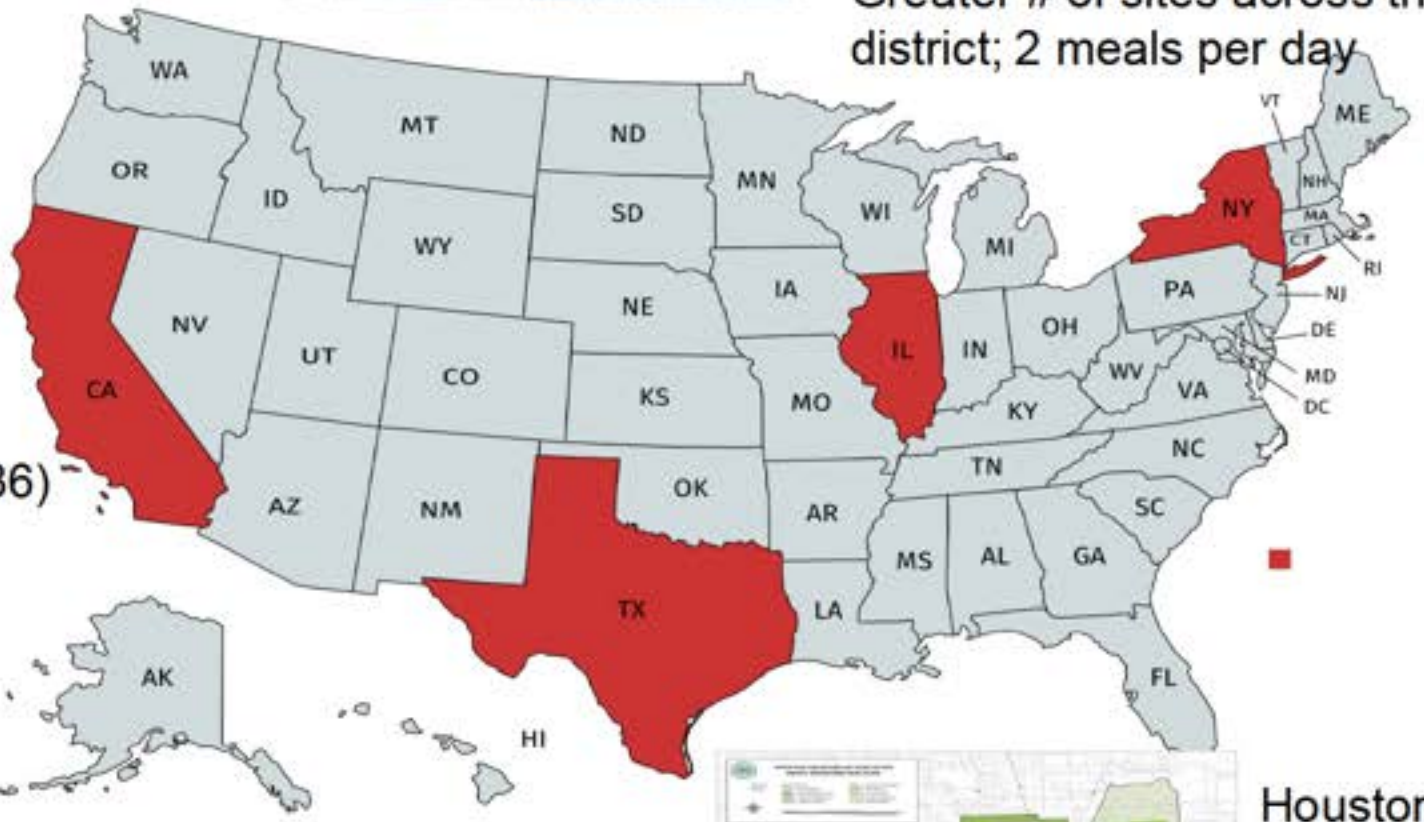
Los Angeles Unified School District (N=1386)
577,560 enrollment
80% FARM Eligible
Fewer sites- more centralized
2 meals per day

Chicago Public Schools (N=642)
377,644 enrollment
76.4% FARM Eligible
Greater # of sites across the district; 2 meals per day



New York City Department of Education (N=1866)
1,126,501 enrollment
72.8% FARM Eligible
Greater # of sites across the district; 3 meals per day

Houston Independent School District (N=280)
209,772 enrollment
74.9% FARM Eligible
Fewer sites- food bank-style distribution; 1 week of food per visit

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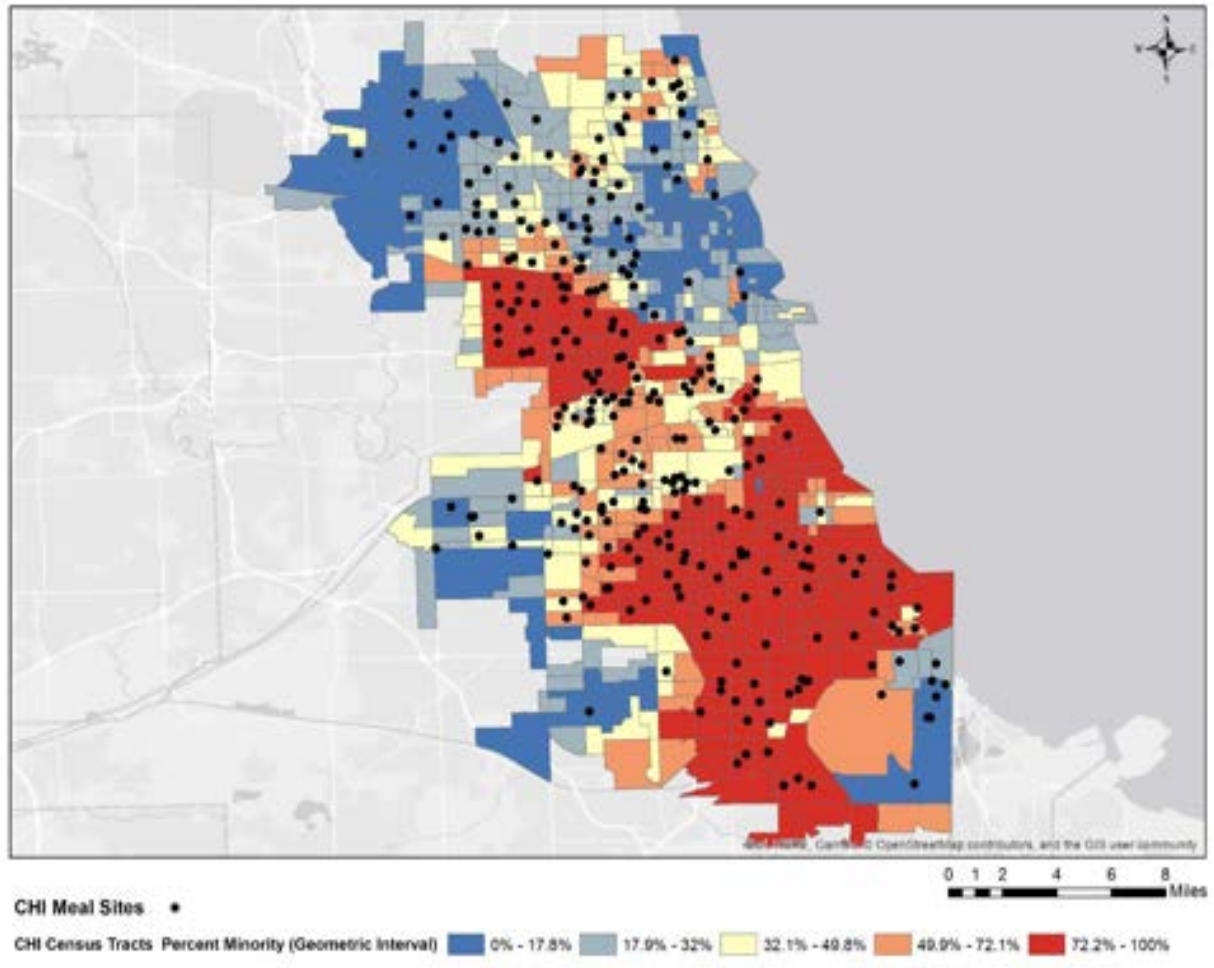
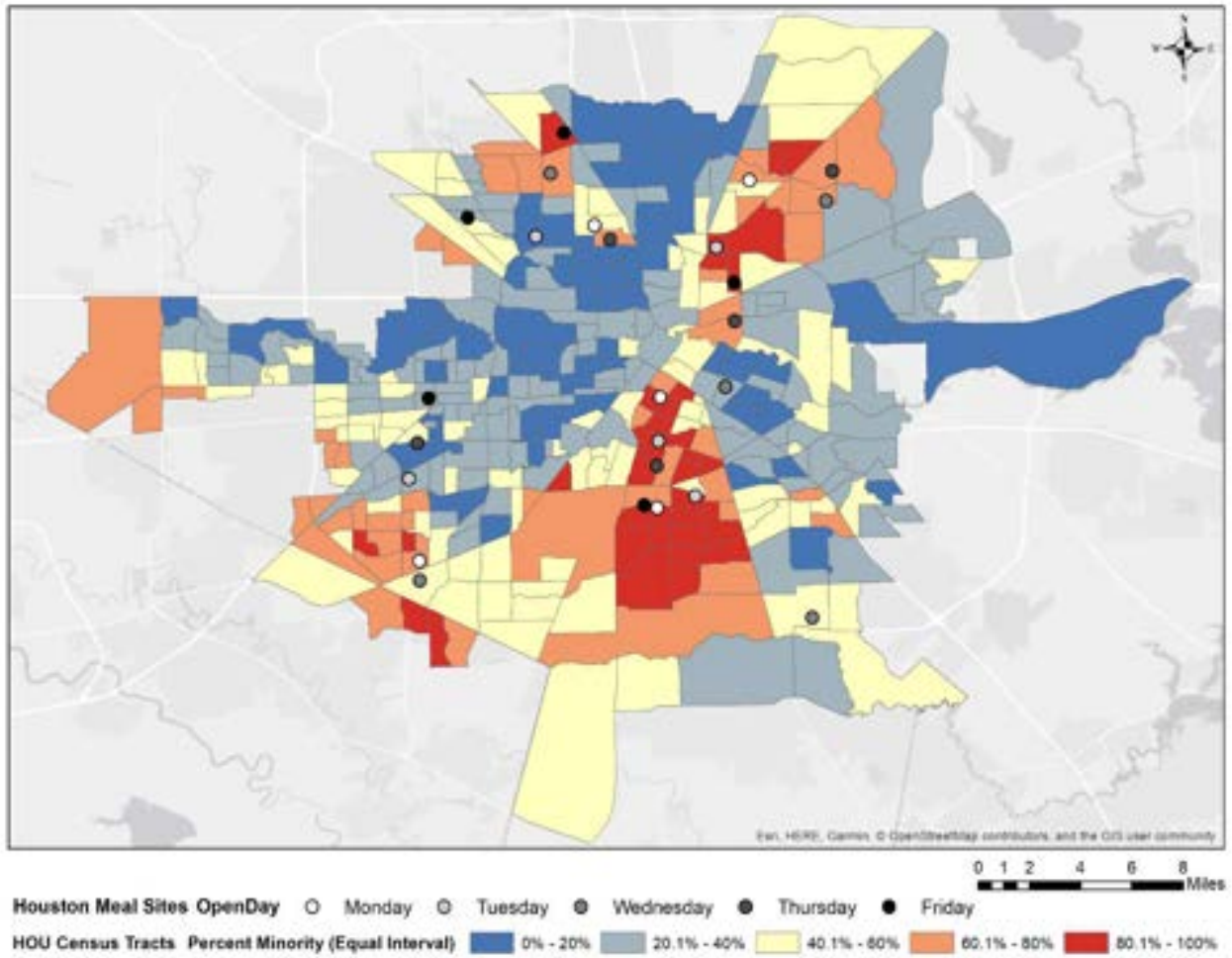
GIS Data Snapshot – Racial/Ethnic Minority





Chicago placed 40% of sites in census tracts above median %ethnic minority

Houston placed 76% of sites in census tracts above median %ethnic minority

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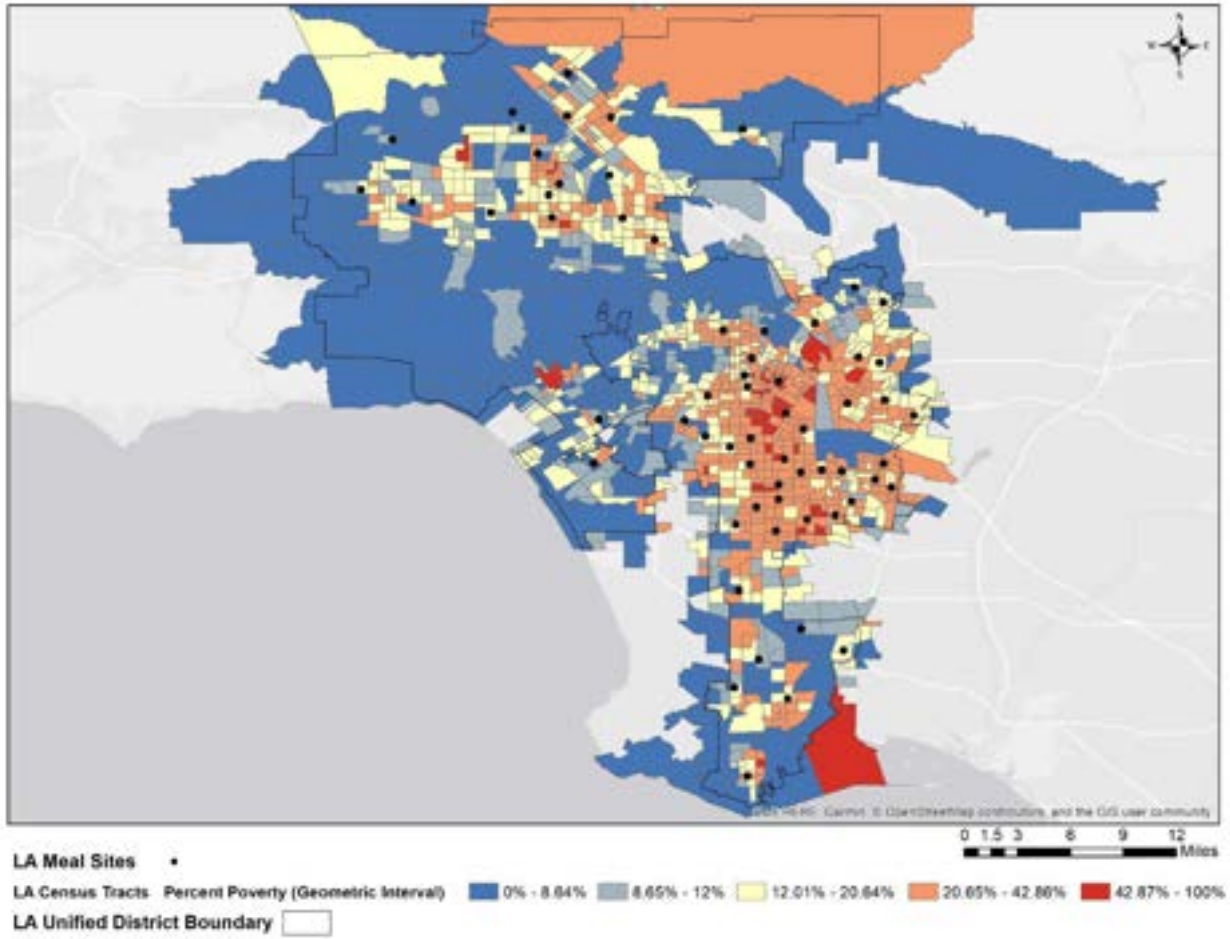
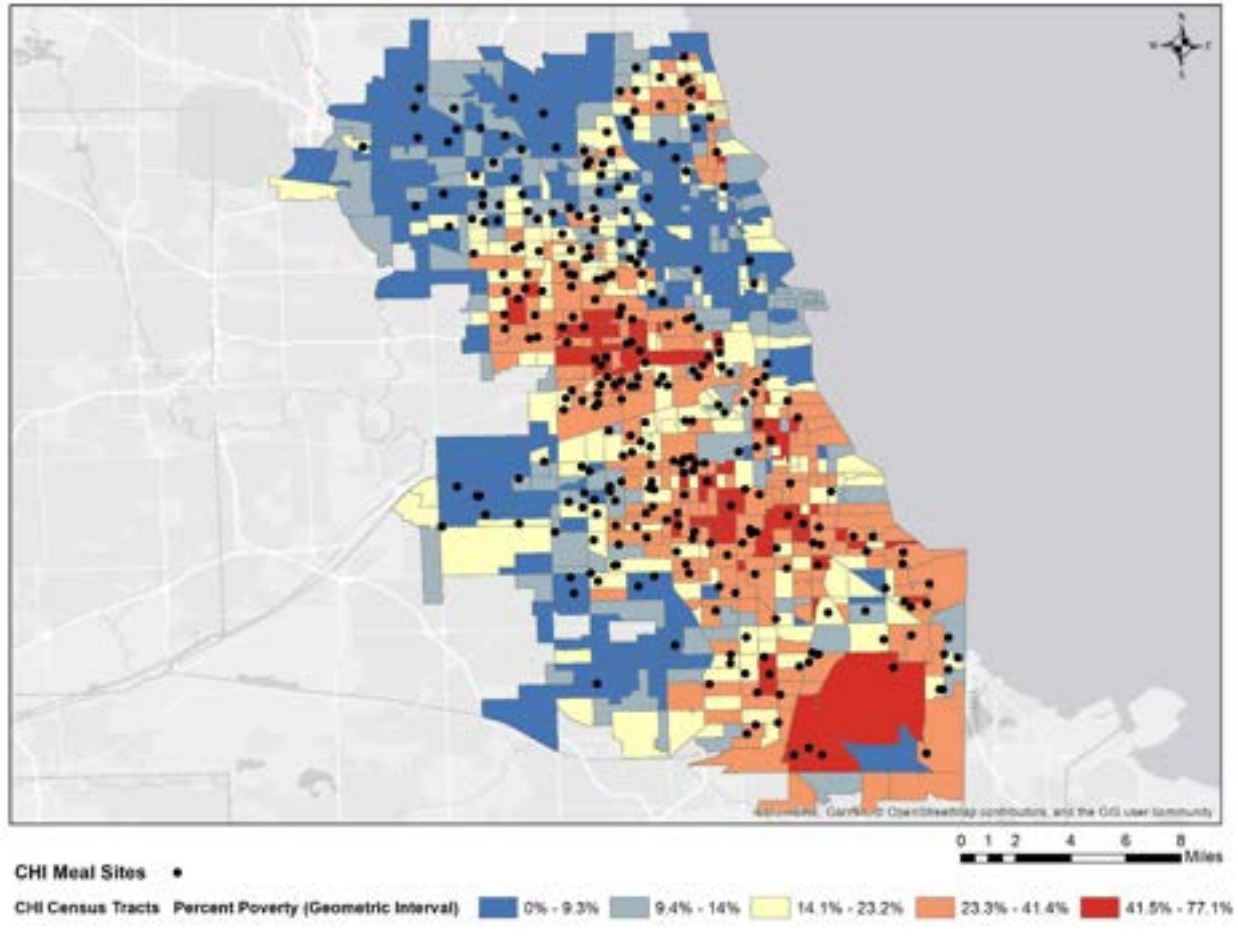
GIS Data Snapshot – Poverty





Los Angeles placed 67% of sites in census tracts above median %low-income

Chicago placed 62% of sites in census tracts above median %low-income

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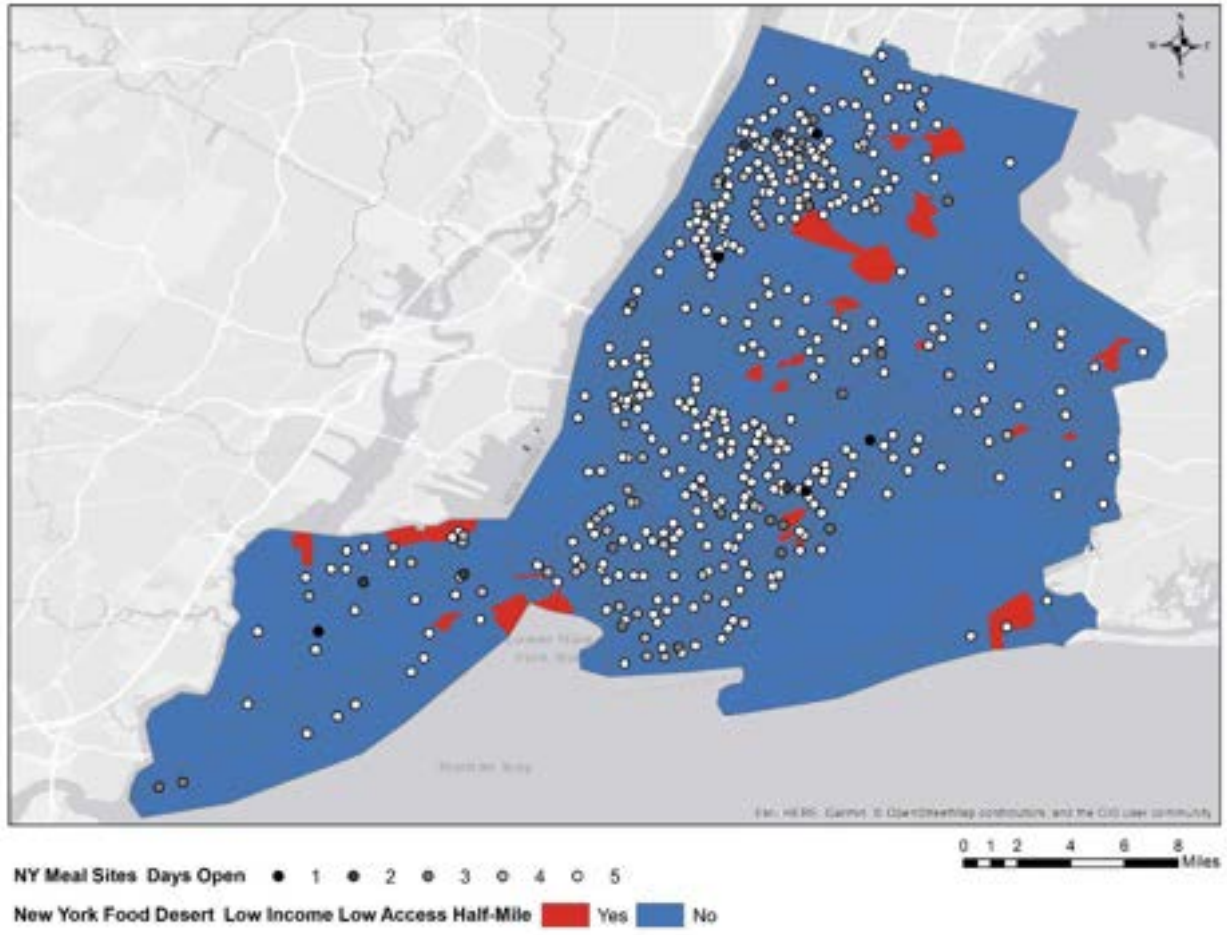
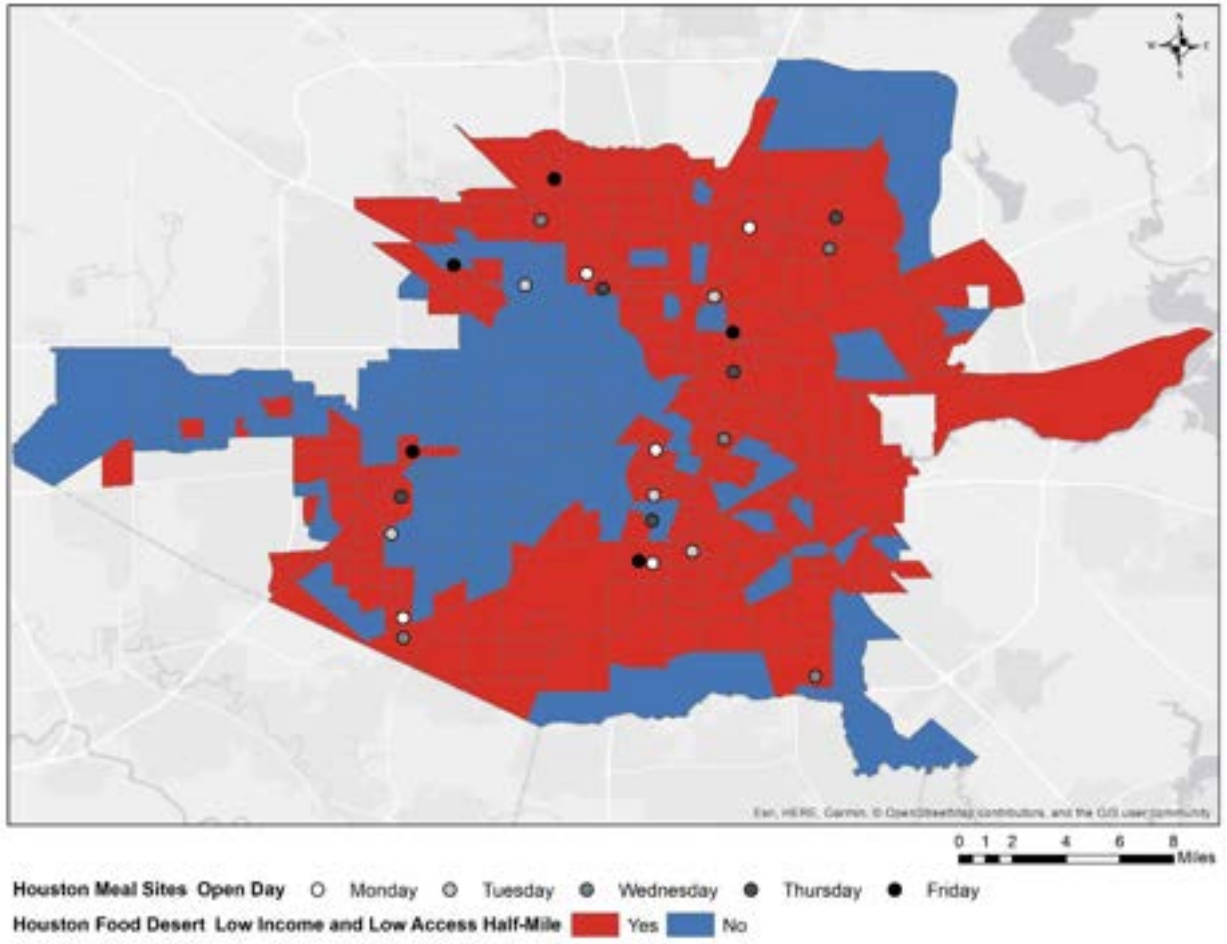
GIS Data Snapshot – Food Deserts (USDA Classification ½ mile)



New York City placed 1.1% of sites in census tracts classed as low income/low access (food desert)



Houston placed 80.7% of sites in census tracts classed as low income/low access (food desert)

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Document Analysis – Common Practices to Facilitate Equity

Distribute School Meals

Emphasize healthy eating as a priority

Greater # of free meals (2 or 3 each day)

No limit on visits to sites

Ensuring social distance guidelines

Address Barriers to Accessing Meals

"Find your meal site" interactive maps

Partnerships with food banks- increased supply

Announcements in multiple languages

Images promoting racial/ethnic diversity

School Meal Service During COVID-19

Assist with Child/Family Needs

Communication of access time slots

Weekend/evening meal pick-ups

Technology/WIFI support for e-learning

Facilitate Maximum Benefit

Community fundraisers

Partnering with local authorities

Childcare for first responders

Promotion of local wellness centers

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Dissemination

J Urban Health
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00476-0

Check for updates

Addressing Food Insecurity through a Health Equity Lens: a Case Study of Large Urban School Districts during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Gabriella M. McLoughlin · Julia A. McCarthy · Jared T. McGuirt · Chelsea R. Singleton · Caroline G. Dunn · Preety Gadhoke

- Article published
- Presentations at NOPREN, HER, SNA, and local stakeholder meetings
- Press Release → policy implications
- Localized efforts to replicate GTE document analysis coding (i.e., Maryland)

Food insecurity and schools during the pandemic

By Neil Schoenherr • August 31, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a number of challenges to schools, which were forced to close in the spring to help slow the spread of infection. One major challenge for schools was ensuring that students' nutritional supplementation needs were met when they were not attending school in person.

As schools across the country begin to welcome students back in person or for virtual learning, equity must be at the forefront of decisions pertaining to school emergency food services, finds a new study from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

"Ensuring access to food during these critical times is of paramount importance to meeting the public health needs of vulnerable populations at greatest risk for food security. Further, as schools contemplate reopening plans, greater emphasis should be placed on

McLoughlin

POPULAR STORIES

Obituary: Natalie Sorenson, engineering student, 18

Washington University develops COVID-19 saliva test

Itching for no reason? Immune system may be at fault

Nasal vaccine against COVID-19 prevents infection in mice

Brown School

brownschool.wustl.edu

Facebook

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Dissemination and Implementation Science (D&I)

- The processes by which evidence-based interventions are implemented and disseminated into practice
- Adoption of rigorous dissemination and implementation science (D&I) techniques can enhance program adoption and adherence

Damschroder et al. (2009) Implementation Science
National Cancer Institute (NCI) Implementation Science at a Glance
https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/IS/docs/NCI-ISaaG-Workbook.pdf

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Implementation Outcomes

Acceptability
- Degree to which intervention/practice is agreeable/satisfactory

Adoption
- Intention to act/initial actions of implementing stakeholders

Appropriateness
- Perceived fit/relevance

Feasibility
- How easy/hard it will be for agency staff to adopt/implement

Fidelity/Compliance
- Degree to which EBP is implemented as planned

Penetration
- Number/percent of sites implementing EBP

Sustainability
- Extent EBP/policy is maintained within a setting

Cost
- Cost impact of implementation effort

Proctor et al. 2011

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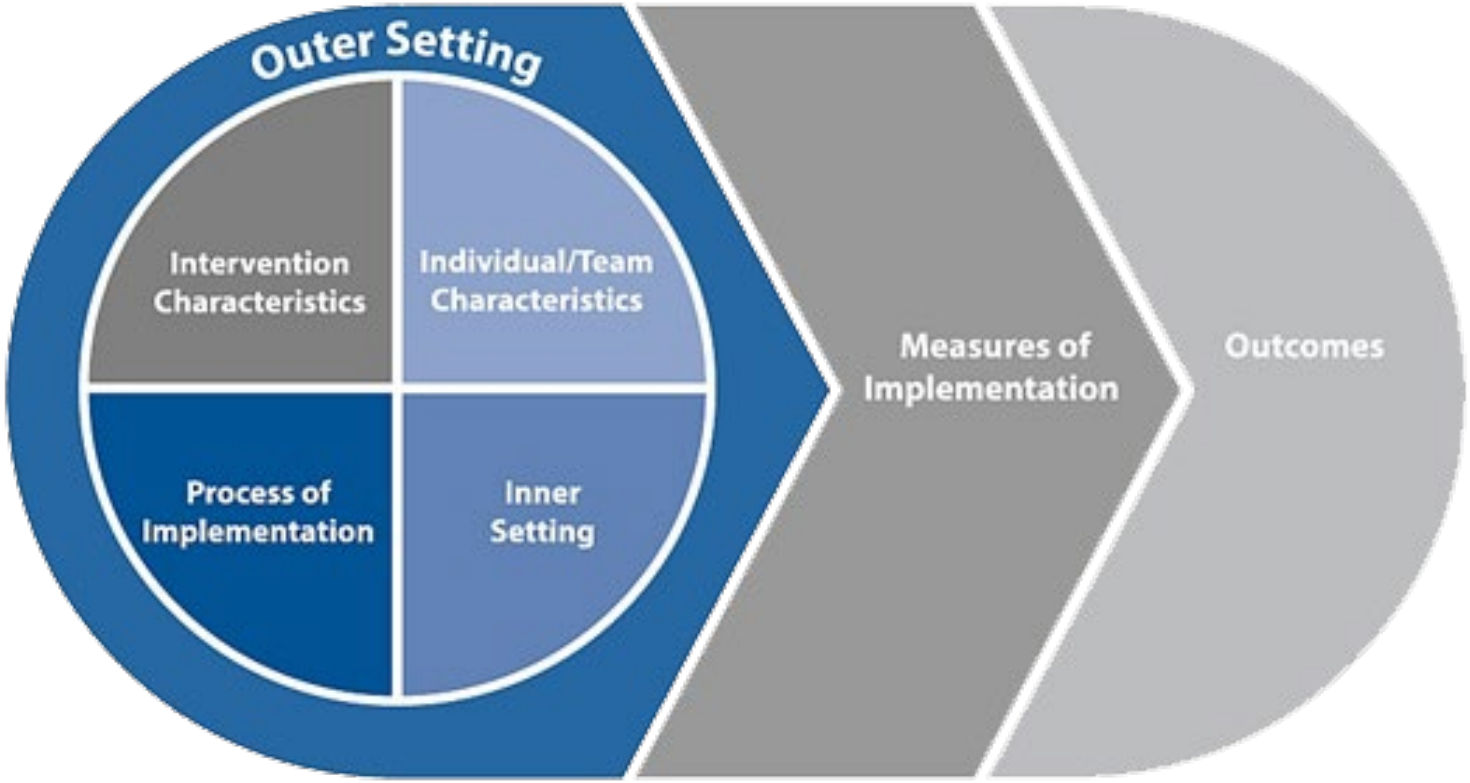
Implementation Determinants



Damschroder et al. 2013

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When defining implementation science, some very non-scientific language can be helpful…

- The intervention/practice/innovation is **THE THING**
- *Effectiveness* research looks at whether **THE THING** works
- *Implementation* research looks at how best to help people/places **DO THE THING**
- Implementation strategies are the stuff we do to try to help people/places **DO THE THING**
- Main implementation outcomes are **HOW MUCH** and **HOW WELL** they **DO THE THING**

National Cancer Institute (2020); Curran (2020)

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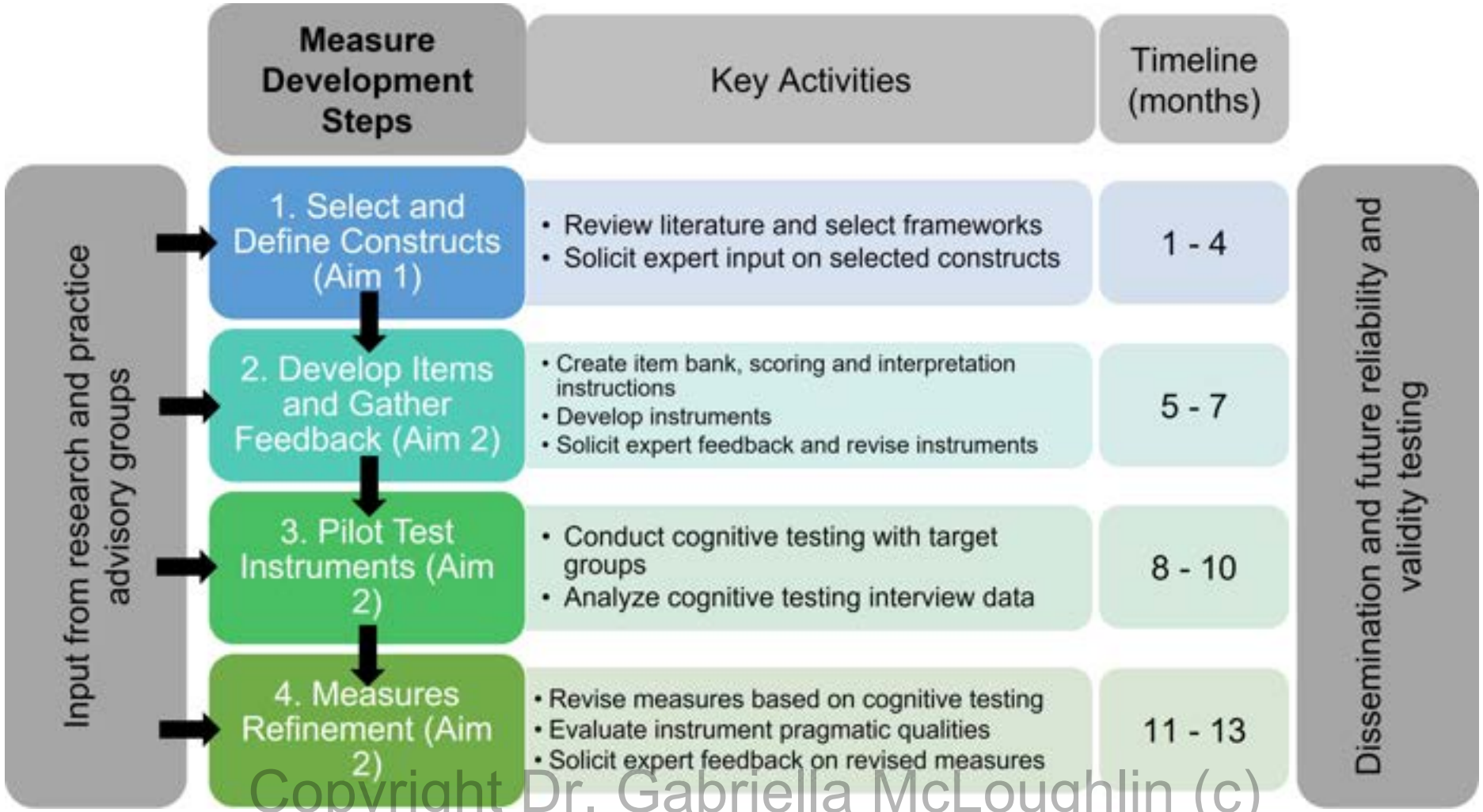
Measures development project
Urban School Food Alliance – in progress



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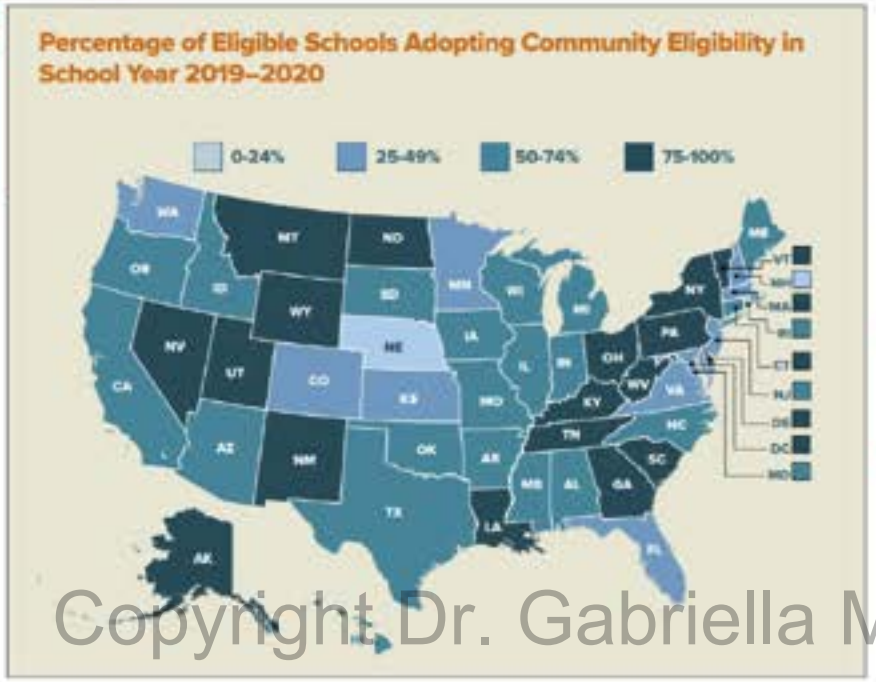
How can we better implement policy, systems, and environment (PSE) interventions with a focus on health equity?

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

USDA



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nutrients

MDPI

Article

Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review

Juliana F. W. Cohen [1,2,*], Amelie A. Hecht [3], Gabriella M. McLoughlin [4,5], Lindsey Turner [6] and Marlene B. Schwartz [7]

"Most studies examining universal free school meals that included free lunch found positive associations with diet quality, food security, and academic performance; however, the findings of studies examining only universal free breakfast were mixed."

Impact of The Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act on Student Nutrition, Behavior, and Academic Outcomes: 2011–2019

The Community Eligibility Pro… *Amelie A. Hecht, PhD, Keshia M. Pollack Porter, PhD, MPH, and Lindsey Turner, PhD*

"Strong evidence of benefits of UFM for meal participation rates; promising evidence for benefits for weight outcomes, food security, disciplinary referrals, and on-time grade promotion; and mixed evidence of impacts for test scores and attendance."

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Implementation Context and Challenge

- 64% of eligible districts participate; 60.3% in Pennsylvania; 78% of eligible PA schools
- All Philadelphia Schools are adopting CEP, but breakfast participation is ~40% and lunch is ~70% (pre-pandemic)
- Schools need to increase participation # to remain financially solvent
- Need is there, but why is participation so low?

Social determinants of health → social determinants of **IMPLEMENTATION?**

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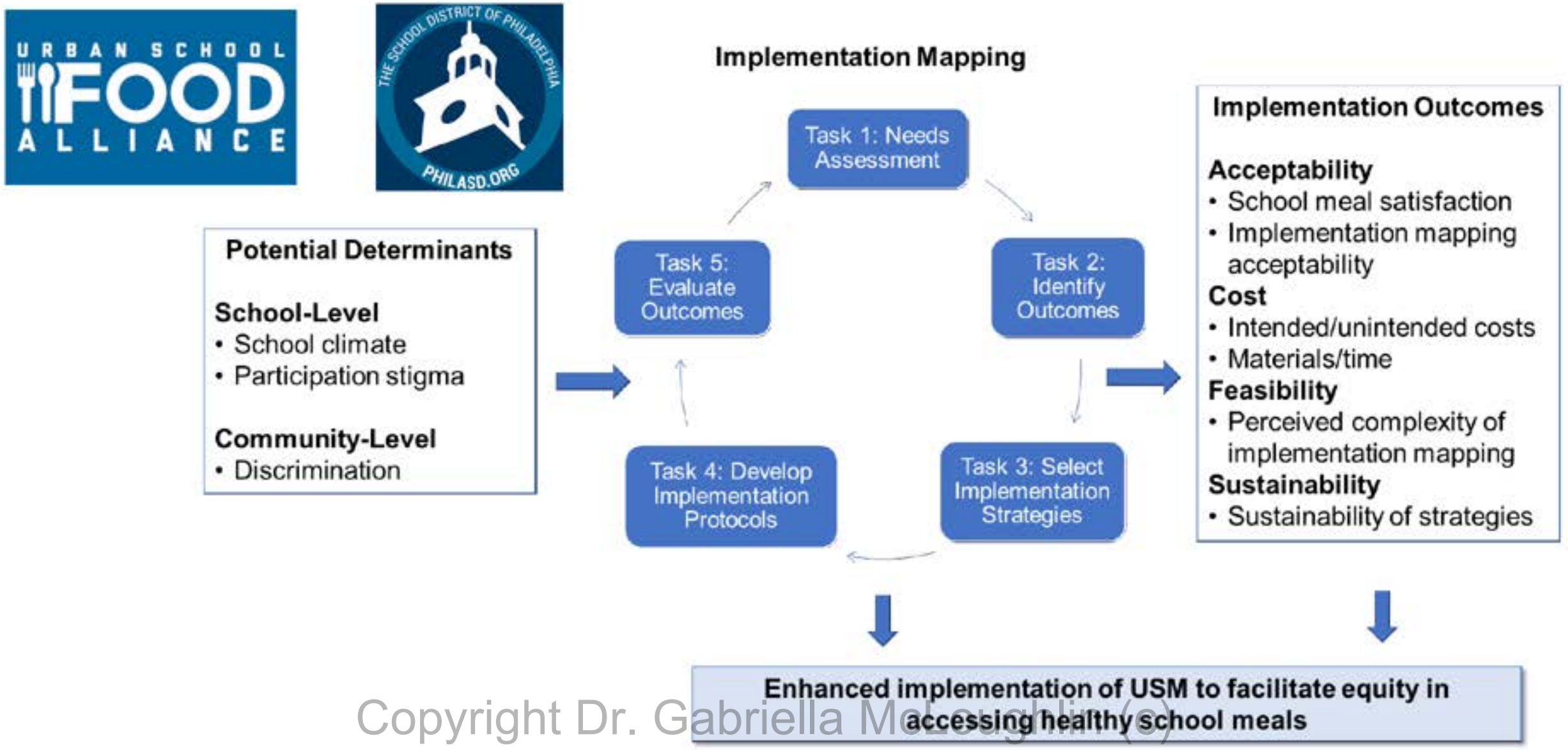
Building Partnerships with Implementation Experts



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Future Directions

Better understanding of factors influencing implementation

- Health equity and D&I frameworks
- Robust contextual data from key stakeholders

Tailored interventions which enhance capacity for implementation

- Considerations for context
- Implementation mapping

Appropriate Outcomes

- Need low-cost, sustainable solutions
- Pragmatic tools and metrics grounded in health equity

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Pilot Project – Urban School Food Alliance

- Goals:
  - Build diverse stakeholder advisory group within SDP
    - Collaborate with equity coalition
    - Involve students and parents as key stakeholders
  - Adapt existing measures to assess key implementation outcomes for use with SDP collaboration
    - Cost of implementing school meals
    - Feasibility of new strategies
    - Sustainability of innovations in meal service
    - Reach of school meal programs to students

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Get involved in our research

Teachers,

Administrators,

students, parents

Scan the QR code to contact us! >>

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Thank you!

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@Gabriella_McI

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