

Talking Points on Nutrition Readiness & Food Access for Military Leaders

To win our nation's wars, our force must be food secure, but moreover, they must be optimally fueled to fight. **By prioritizing nutrition readiness and food access, leaders can directly strengthen warfighter performance, resilience and quality of life.**

Nutrition readiness and food access are centered on three primary domains: physical access to food, food affordability or economic access to food, and food quality or nutrition.



The Defense Department is committed to ensuring all service members and their families have consistent access to quality, affordable food.

- **A key focus:** DOD remains committed to ensuring a ready and resilient force, which is strengthened by providing our military community access to affordable, quality food.
- **Access to quality food:** Strengthening nutrition readiness and food access means ensuring service members can eat quality food at dining facilities, galleys and chow halls on installations. It also means they can buy healthy items at commissaries and at other food establishments on military installations.
- **Affordability of quality food:** DOD is ensuring service members and families can save money by shopping at the commissary and eating on installations.
- **Heightened visibility:** To maximize the nutrition readiness of our warfighters and their families, DOD is training leaders and service providers to identify those in need and connect them to available resources. DOD is also implementing a wide array of policies and programs supporting the food and economic security of the force.

More information is available at:
www.militaryonesource.mil | 800-342-9647



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Assessing Food Security Through Conversation

If a service member is experiencing issues with nutrition readiness or food access, it may be tied to issues like time, money and stress. Start conversations during routine meetings like a morning stand-up or other times you meet with your service members to address these issues.



Sample script you can use:

"I know some warfighters and their families experience food insecurity, but not having enough quality food to perform your mission is a real concern. It's important to address this. Let me ask two questions to help identify if you face food insecurity. If so, I can connect you with resources. Remember, food insecurity affects both single and married service members."

Ask if the following are 'often true,' 'sometimes true' or 'never true':

- A.** Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.
- B.** Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more.

Responses of 'often true' or 'sometimes true' indicate potential food insecurity. Understanding the reasons is crucial for connecting service members to the appropriate resources. Offer support and follow up on their progress. You can phrase it this way: "I have some resources I want to share with you that can help get you the support you need."

With a response of 'never true,' you could suggest: "If food ever becomes an issue in the future during a move or other transitions - reach out or call Military OneSource if you need support."

Note: The two questions are the Hunger Vital Sign Measure® and can be included in confidential unit surveys to understand local context.

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