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NC INTEGRATED CARE FOR KIDS

Integrated Care Rounds: Supporting Healthy Eating on a Budget

January 8, 12:00-1:00 PM

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Grounding for All InCK ICRs & Echos

- **Respect for All**: *There will be topics, situations, or maybe even resources that you as a person have various feelings about. We ask that in these spaces, we all show respect for all, by being supportive, caring, and professional.*
- **Take 2 and Pause**: *Discussion and hearing from you is so powerful, and what we strive for in these spaces. We ask that if you have shared twice, take a pause, to encourage colleagues to take the floor and share as well.*
- **Questions Encouraged**: *If you have a questions please ask, in most cases someone has the same one. Be BOLD and PROUD, ask it! You are always welcome to private chat questions to any member of our team.*
- **Play, Learn, Grow**: *Just like Fisher Price, we want you to enjoy this learning space, learn and grow from/with each topic!*



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Food Insecurity and Child Health

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as: ***"A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food."***

- Food insecurity is about ***not having reliable access*** to healthy food—not just being hungry.
  - It includes the **quality** of food and whether families can get it **consistently over time**
  - **A family can still face food insecurity even if children do not appear hungry**

Food insecurity is a preventable risk factor that intersects with safety, health, and long-term stability.

- Families who struggle to afford food are more likely to:
  - Rely on **cheaper**, **less healthy foods**
  - Have children with **more health, behavior, and school challenges**
  - Experience **higher stress, depression, and anxiety**
  - **Have more involvement with child and adult support systems**, e.g. Child & Adult Protective Services

Source



Eating Better on a Budget

GINGER CALHOUN, MS RD LDN CDCES

Low-Cost Grocery Stores

Best Prices	Good Prices	More Expensive
Aldi	Food Lion	Harris Teeter
Lidl	Wegman's	Publix
Walmart	Trader Joe's	Target

Comparing store prices

- If time allows, it may be worth comparing store prices when considering where to shop
- Prices will vary based on geography and whether shopping in-person or online
- WRAL News Grocery Tracker helps shoppers track and compare prices for grocery staples
  - https://www.wral.com/lifestyle/food/best-prices-grocery-staples-triangle/

Grocery prices are for stores in the Raleigh and Cary area as of Dec. 11, 2025

Item	Food Lion	Harris Teeter	Lowes Foods	Wegmans	Walmart	Aldi	Average
gallon 2% milk	$2.19	$2.99	$2.39	$2.79	$2.23	$2.45	$2.51
white bread	$1.59	$2.00	$1.79	$1.49	$1.42	$1.39	$1.61
chicken breast -boneless, skinless, price per pound)	$2.69	$2.99	$2.49	$2.69	$2.67	$2.49	$2.67
ground beef (80% lean, price per pound)	$5.99	$4.99	$4.99	$4.99	$4.75	$4.99	$5.12
dozen eggs	$1.99	$2.49	$1.99	$289	$1.97	$2.19	$2.25
potatoes (per lb in 5-10 lb bag)	$0.80	$1.30	$0.50	$0.70	$0.50	$085	$1.38
baby carrots (price per 1 pound bag)	$1.49	$1.79	$1.79	$1.19	$1.17	$0.85	$1.38
peanut butter (16-18 oz jar)	$2.18	$1.99	$2.49	$2.29	$1.94	$2.15	$2.17
grape jelly (18-20 oz jar)	$2.39	$2.50	$1.99	$2.79	$1.98	$2.65	$2.38
bananas (price per pound)	$0.54	$0.59	$0.69	$0.59	$0.50	$0.48	$0.57
iceberg lettuce	$2.19	$2.79	$2.49	$2.59	$2.34	$1.99	$2.40
All items, total	$24.04	$26.42	$23.60	$25.00	$21.47	$22.27	$23.80

Additional options/considerations

- **Asian and Hispanic markets** often offer high-quality, inexpensive fresh produce and international goods
- **Warehouse clubs** like Costco, BJ's, and Sam's club may be a good option for bulk purchases, non-perishables, and paper goods (does require annual membership)
- Consider smaller local or independent grocers

Ways to get produce at lower prices

- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they're in season
  - Consider produce stands or farmers markets for in-season produce
  - Many local farmers markets accept EBT/SNAP benefits and some even offer to double EBT bucks
- Use grocery store flyers or apps to check for weekly sales
- Purchase frozen fruits/vegetables (without sauces/seasoning)
- Purchase canned fruits (in 100% juice or water)
  - For fruits in light or heavy syrup, drain and rinse to reduce added sugars
- Purchase canned vegetables (no salt added or low sodium)
  - Drain and rinse vegetables to remove almost half the sodium if no salt added/low sodium is not available

Canned foods are good choices!

- Many canned foods are just as nutritious (or even more so) compared to their fresh/frozen counterparts
- Canned fruits/vegetables are always in season and offer consistent quality and nutrition year-round
  - Picked at peak ripeness and canned within hours of harvest
- Canned foods like beans, chicken, tuna, fruits/vegetables, low-sodium soups, and broths cut down on prep time to make cooking at home easier
- Canned foods are often more affordable than fresh/frozen and contain few ingredients (no preservatives needed)
- Canned foods are packed in the most recycled food container, helping to minimize waste

Less expensive produce available year-round

Fruits

- Bananas
- Apples
- Oranges
- Pears
- Frozen/canned fruits

Vegetables

- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Celery
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Beans
- Tomatoes
- Onions
- Greens
- Mushrooms
- Broccoli
- Eggplant
- Frozen/canned vegetables

Inexpensive protein choices

Plant-based Proteins

- Legumes
  - Lentils, black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, etc.
  - Dried are cheapest, but canned are more convenient
- Nuts & seeds
  - Peanut butter, peanuts, sunflower seeds
- Grains
  - Oats, whole grains
- Soy
  - Edamame (frozen)

Animal Proteins

- Eggs
- Dairy
  - Milk, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt
- Canned fish
  - Tuna, salmon, sardines
- Budget meats
  - Ground turkey, chicken thighs, drumsticks, frozen white fish (tilapia, haddock)

Smart shopping strategies

- Check grocery sales, plan a few healthy meals, and make your shopping list
  - Consider meals that will stretch more expensive items like stews, casseroles, and stir-fries
- Start with basics first (perimeter of the store)
  - Produce (fruits/vegetables)
  - Lean proteins
  - Milk/dairy
- Use unit prices to compare items and find the best value
- Limit options from soda, chips, cookie, and juice sections
  - Less nutritious options and higher prices
- Try the store/generic brands instead of name brands
- Look on higher and lower shelves for less expensive items



Best buys for cost & nutrition

Produce

- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables
- Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes (more expensive and spoil faster)
- Buy fresh fruits/vegetables in season
- Frozen/canned fruits and vegetables are good year-round

Breads/Grains

- Look for sales on day-old bread or shop at bread outlets that sell day-old breads at a discount (store refrigerated so they last longer)
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal, and grits instead of instant (less money, sugar, and calories)

Dairy/Proteins

- Buy the largest sized container you can use before it expires for low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese
- Ultra-pasteurized milk has a longer expiration date
- Dried beans and peas are good sources of protein and fiber and last a long time
- Chuck or bottom round roast has less fat and is cheaper than sirloin
- Stock up on bulk or sale meats and freeze for later
- Canned chicken, tuna, and beans are great lean protein sources

Ways to add fruits/vegetables to inexpensive meals

- Ramen
  - Use only half the seasoning packet and add chunks of vegetables (carrots, celery, onions, mushrooms, potatoes)
- Macaroni and cheese
  - Use only half the amount of butter and add vegetables like peas, broccoli, or cauliflower
- Meat and cheese sandwich
  - Sauté peppers, onions, mushrooms to add to the sandwich and use whole wheat or white wheat bread
- Cereal
  - Add banana slices or berries to cheerios, raisin bran, or oatmeal

Ways to add fruits/vegetables to inexpensive meals (cont'd)

- Spaghetti O's
  - Mix in fresh cut tomatoes and cooked spinach (frozen spinach works great)
- Cheese grits
  - Top with cooked collards
- Rice
  - Sauté cooked rice with chopped fresh broccoli and frozen vegetable mix, seasoning with olive oil and salt-free seasonings of choice
- Baked potato
  - Leave the skin on and top with cooked broccoli and cheese or salsa

Ways to add fruits/vegetables to inexpensive meals (cont'd)

- Canned soup
  - Use extra water to feed more people and lower the sodium content per serving
  - Add a frozen carrots, peas, and green bean mix
- Frozen pizza
  - Top with vegetables of choice (peppers, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, spinach, pineapple, etc.) before baking
- Canned chili
  - Cook with black beans and sweet potato chunks

Maximize SNAP/WIC benefits – Before shopping

- Know your benefits and check balances
  - WIC benefits do not roll over month to month, SNAP balances do
- If qualifying for both, **plan weekly meals around WIC items first, then use SNAP** to fill in the gaps
- Use leftover items or items you already have first when planning meals to limit waste or spoiling
- Find out if you qualify for additional assistance programs
  - USDA offers 16 nutrition assistance programs https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs
- Download the Shop Simple with MyPlate app to find savings in your area and new ways to prepare budget-friendly foods

Maximize SNAP/WIC benefits – Shopping strategies

- Combine benefits – use WIC for staples (milk, cereal, bread, cheese, fruits, vegetables, baby food) and SNAP for meat, pantry items, and household goods
- Shop sales, BOGO deals, and use coupons
- Buy non-perishable items (rice, pasta, beans, and oils) in bulk
- Look for farmers markets that accept EBT and offer the "Double Up Food Bucks" program to double your benefits
- Download the WIC app (ebtEDGE) to scan barcodes and confirm item eligibility
- Order groceries online if distance/transportation are barriers
  - Instacart and DoorDash accept SNAP/EBT payments and have limited offers of waived delivery fees
- Visit https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online to look for farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits and stores that accept SNAP for online orders

SNAP Work Requirement Updates

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SNAP Work Requirement Changes

As of Dec. 1, 2025, more people, including parents of older children, must start to meet SNAP work requirements to keep SNAP for over 3 mos.

Adults meeting **ALL** these criteria are generally subject to SNAP work requirements:

- Between the ages of 18 and 64
- Not living in a household with someone under age 14 and not pregnant
- Considered mentally and physically able to work

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Veterans who do not receive any VA disability compensation and adults who were in foster care on their 18th birthday are NO LONGER exempt from SNAP work requirements.

SNAP Work Requirement Exemptions

The following groups are **still exempt from SNAP work requirements**:

- Children under 18
- Adults 65+
- Adults ages 18-64 who:
  - Are pregnant
  - Have at least one child under 14 in the home
  - Receive disability benefits (e.g. SSDI, SSI, any % VA disability, Workers' Comp)
  - Are experiencing chronic homelessness (e.g. live in a car, shelter, or on the street)
  - Have a health condition affecting their ability to work at least 20 hours/week
  - Are a caretaker for a child under 6 OR an incapacitated person of any age

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Caseworkers screen for work requirement exemptions upon application and recertification.

Meeting SNAP Work Requirements

SNAP recipients can meet work requirements by doing **any combination of the following activities** for 80 hours/month (about 20 hours/week):

- Working
- Volunteering
- Participating in More Than a Job NC, NC's free employment and training program for SNAP recipients
  - As of 1/5/26, this program is available in **all InCK counties <u>except Granville</u>**
  - More than a Job will be available in **all** 100 NC counties later this year

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When Will SNAP Recipients Know if They are Newly Subject to Work Requirements?

All **new** SNAP applicants will be assessed for work requirement eligibility **upon applying.**

Current SNAP enrollees who have previously been exempt from work requirements **do not need to start meeting work requirements immediately**. They will be assessed for work requirement eligibility **the next time they recertify**. During recertification, their caseworker will clarify if they are now subject to work requirements or still exempt.

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YOU Can Help Keep Families Enrolled in SNAP!

- Ensure caregivers of older children know about work requirement changes and when they might apply (i.e. upon next recertification or initial SNAP enrollment)
- Educate caregivers about options to meet work reqs, including volunteering and/or participating in More Than a Job NC
- Encourage caregivers to keep ePASS contact info updated and notify DSS caseworkers ASAP if issues like illness, family emergencies, transportation or childcare issues prevent them from meeting monthly work reqs
  - SNAP recipients can qualify for a "good cause" exemption to their monthly work requirement if a crisis outside of their control causes their hours to drop

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A Look Ahead

For more events in the 5 NC InCK Counties, check out our NC InCK Webpage and Facebook. Also, explore our new NC InCK training page for archived ICRs, takeaways, and shared resources.

Upcoming NC InCK Events:

March Integrated Care Rounds: Thursday, March 12, 2026, 12-1 pm

Please contact Josie Hatley (anna.hatley@duke.edu) if you need the invitation for the ICR/Echo series.

Reminder: Request a certificate of attendance for today's ICR at this link

Upcoming Events and Resources:

15th Annual Book Harvest Dream Big Book Drive and Community Celebration: Monday, January 19, 2026, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at Boxyard RTP in Durham

Tax Prep Resources: Low-income taxpayers can qualify for free basic income tax preparation assistance from IRS-sponsored community-based, volunteer tax return preparation programs. Local VITA site information available on this website or by calling 1-800-906-9887. *Many volunteer sites have language specialists to assist people with limited English skills.*

Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP): Applications are open **NOW through March 31st** to all income-eligible applicants. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis, so **families should apply ASAP.** Apply via ePASS or in-person at a local DSS office.

Summer Activities: It is never too early to start thinking about summer plans! We will send out a starter list of summer options early February. Also check out the Triangle Camp Fair at NC State University in Raleigh.

White Flag Shelters

White Flag shelters are available generally between November 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026, due to extreme cold weather. Inquire per county for more information:

- Durham County list or call Entry Point at 984-287-8313
- Wake County daily White Flag alerts and shelters or call 919-263-2911.
- Orange County emergency shelter program or call 919-245-2490
- Alamance County list or call Allied Churches of Alamance County Emergency Shelter 336-229-0881, ext. 108
- Granville/Vance: The primary “white flag” warming shelter location mentioned in recent Facebook posts for Oxford is Cornerstone Christian Community Church at 3237 Knotts Grove Rd, Oxford. Contact Minister Wondelon and Nathaniel Royster (919) 939-3984

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Did You Know: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. This law ensures homeless children and youth get a stable education by providing rights like immediate enrollment, transportation to their "school of origin," and comparable services (free meals, supplies) regardless of unstable housing (shelters, cars, doubling up). ***Every NC school district has a liaison to help families access these services***, removing barriers to academic success, with support for items like hygiene, clothing, and tutoring.