



RELIAS | LEARNING



## Relias Spotlight Series

November 2021

Hello Providers,

Welcome to the Optum Idaho **November Relias Spotlight Series** — a series devoted to offering you access to **free, accessible and continuing education unit-eligible** online education about topics that are important to behavioral health providers.

We appreciate all your work serving members in Idaho. Your work is not easy, and we understand your members face challenges each day that can be overwhelming. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle includes five key elements: regular physical activity, maintaining a consistent sleep pattern, stress management, positive personal interactions and a balanced diet.

Proper nutrition is not always easy to achieve. Rural states, such as Idaho, experience a higher rate of food insecurity than other states, with 75% of Idaho's 44 counties considered rural.

Feeding America, a non-profit organization, is projecting that more than 202,390 Idahoans may experience food insecurity in 2021 due to the pandemic, which equates to one in nine individuals. Even more disconcerting is the 57,620 kids, or one in eight, of Idaho's children could be living with hunger.

**What is the difference between hunger and food insecurity?**

- **Food insecurity** is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.
- **Hunger** is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.

When someone is sick, having to choose between food and treatment can lead to serious complications. For example, for [food-insecure adults](#) living with diabetes, the choice between food and controlling the disease can lead to complications such as kidney disease, eye disease and nerve damage.

- Food insecurity can lead to Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity.
- Children at risk of hunger are more likely to be in poor health and struggle in school.

Family members in food-insecure households are also more likely to struggle with psychological and behavioral health issues; and kids struggling to get enough to eat are more likely to have problems in school and other social situations.

Facing hunger can be stressful. Constantly worrying about where your next meal will come from can cause mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) revealed that mothers with school-aged children who face severe hunger are 56.2% more likely to have PTSD and 53.1% more likely to have severe depression. The inability to feed your loved ones can have traumatic effects on a person's mental health.



### **Good News!**

There are some positive things in Idaho to help remedy these situations. One is the Idaho Food Bank. They have supported Idahoans in need for the last 37 years. A new facility in Meridian

opened in 2021 that will help increase their capacity to receive and distribute nutritious food to more Idahoans in need, as well as provide a designated community meeting space and a kitchen for in-house nutrition classes. In addition to distributing food through Idaho communities, the foodbank supports various hunger-relief and education programs that promote healthy families and communities. These programs include:

- Backpack program for kids
- School pantry
- Picnic in the Park
- Cooking Matters
- Mobile pantry
- Food rescue programs
- Senior nutrition programs
- Emergency food assistance programs



To learn more about these programs and locations of the Idaho Foodbanks, you can access their website at [www.idahofoodbank.org](http://www.idahofoodbank.org).

In addition, Relias offers FREE continuing education unit courses specifically geared towards your needs. If you would like more information and education around the topic of nutrition and its impact on health, we encourage you to log into [Relias](#) and search for the following modules:

- Diabetes: An Overview for Behavioral Health Professionals – REL-BHC-O-DAOBHP
- Addressing Overweight and Obesity: An Integrated Health Perspective – REL-PI-O-P2
- Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Individual with Mental Health Disorders – REL-BHC-O-AOOIMHD
- Assessing and Treating Anxiety in Children and Adolescents – REL-BHC-o-ATACA
- Identifying and Treating Anxiety Disorders Among Older Adults – REL-BHC-MHA-o-ITADAOA

Thank you again for the work that you do each day with our members so that Idaho can continue to improve access to behavioral health services. Optum Idaho is excited to offer these resources to you.

Sincerely,

The Optum Education and Training Team