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Identifying and Treating Food Insecurity

Nicholas Field

Berlin Family Health, June 2014

Mentors: Drs. Kris Jensen, Lise Kowalski, Dale Stafford, and Stuart Williams;
Allyn Webert CHT RN

Community Problem – Food Insecurity

- Food security is defined by the WHO as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.”

13% Vermont Households who are Food Insecure

45% Increase in household food insecurity since 2000.

25,400 Vermont children who live in food insecure homes.

8,319 Washington County residents participating in 3SquaresVT

1 in 5 Children in Washington County who are food insecure.

7,800 Vermont seniors living with food insecurity.

Public Health Cost

- “Hunger costs our nation at least \$167.5 billion due to the combination of lost economic productivity per year, more expensive public education because of the rising costs of poor education outcomes, avoidable health care costs, and the cost of charity to keep families fed.”
- Based on metrics including poor health, hospitalizations, and lower educational productivity, food insecurity cost the State of Vermont \$340,000,000 in 2010 alone.
- Washington County alone (BFH location) represents 32 million dollars worth of lost revenue and cost to taxpayers.
 - 20% of children in Washington County are food insecure.
 - 8,319 residents are participating in 3SquaresVT at the cost of just under 4 million dollars annually in Federal aid.



Community Perspective

- Interview
 - *Name Withheld*, 3SquaresVT Advocate at Hunger Free VT
- Outcome
 - Provided with details about Hunger Free Vermont's efforts to educate physicians and publicize resources for those who are food insecure.
 - Discussed local Vermont resources.
 - Learned about the 1-hour online, accredited "Childhood Hunger in Vermont: The Hidden Impacts on Health, Development, & Wellbeing"; a Hunger Education resource for Health Professionals.
 - <https://hungerfreevt.globalclassroom.us/portal/>
 - Expanded Hunger Free Vermont's reach to Central Vermont Hospital

Community Perspective

- Interview
 - *Name Withheld*, Director of Burlington Children's Space
- Outcome
 - Discussed Burlington Children's Space unique approach to providing sustainable, healthy meals to their 50 enrolled children.
 - Learned about Vermont Food Help and the Harvest Health coupons, which allow 3SquaresVT participants to double their value when buying fresh local produce and farmers' markets.
 - Discussed other Vermont outreach programs such as the Central Vermont Community Action Council.

Methodology

- Worked with community agencies to compile a list of resources for food insecure families and seniors.
- Provided the physicians and Community Health Team member at Berlin Family Practice with screening strategies, resources, and a 1-hour CME course developed and offered by Hunger Free Vermont.
- Developed two SmartPhrases for PRISM that allow physicians to easily integrate information about Food Resources in Central Vermont into the After Visit Summary that is automatically printed for patients.

Methodology

Senior Food Resources in Vermont

For more information on any of the following resources, please contact the **Vermont Senior HelpLine: 1-800-642-5119**

1. 3SquaresVT
Formerly food stamps, 3SquaresVT is a federal USDA program that helps Vermonters stretch their food budgets and put three square meals a day on their tables. Further information can be found at <http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com>
2. Meals on Wheels & Community Meals
Delivers prepared meals to homebound seniors' homes. Community meals are also held throughout the state at various locations. For more information, call the Vermont Senior HelpLine or visit the Central Vermont Council on Aging's web site <http://www.cvcoa.org>
3. Commodity Supplemental Food Program
Provides income-eligible seniors age 60 and older with a box of nutritious food. For more information, call the Vermont Foodbank's toll free number 1-800-214-4648 or visit www.vtfoodbank.org

Food Resources in Vermont

1. 2-1-1 Vermont
Provides information about hundreds of community resources including emergency food and shelter, food pantries, and housing and heating assistance. Call 2-1-1 anytime. Information is also available at <http://www.vermont211.org>
2. 3SquaresVT
Formerly food stamps, 3SquaresVT is a federal USDA program that helps Vermonters stretch their food budgets and put three square meals a day on their tables. Further information can be found at <http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com>
3. WIC - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
A nutrition program that helps pregnant women, new mothers, and young children eat well, learn about nutrition, and stay healthy. Information is also available by calling 1-802-863-7333 or at <http://www.healthvermont.gov/wic/>
4. Free/Reduced School Meals
Children in families that earn up to 185% of the federal poverty level are eligible for free/reduced price school meals and can apply anytime. Information can be found at http://www.hungerfreevt.org/school_meal.php
5. Health Care Share
Run by the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and medical professionals, HCS provides fresh vegetables, herbs, and poultry from the Farm at VYCC. Workshops through The Learning Kitchen help recipients gain tools to maintain a healthy diet, shop on a budget, and have a greater understanding of how to

Results

- Helped to educate the providers at Berlin Family Health about the growing issue of Food Insecurity in Vermont.
 - Provided physicians with a simple screening tool, referral options, and resources for food insecure patients.
- Provided the Community Health Team member with a database of local and state-wide resources to provide to patients.
 - Allyn Webert RN will be sharing the resources I provided to him with other members of the Community Health Team at Central Vermont Medical Center
- Made contacts with multiple community agencies that will benefit my continued involvement in treating Food Insecurity throughout my time in Vermont.

Effectiveness

- Providers at BFH seemed enthusiastic about exploring the resources I provided them.
- Easy to use prewritten SmartPhrases provide simple inclusion of resources into patient After Visit Summary.
- Easy to disseminate resources to other Community Health Team members and residents.

Limitations

- Due to my limited time at BFH, it is difficult for me to monitor the outcome of the intervention. However the Community Health Team will be tracking referrals.
- Food Resources are readily changing, however I will be able to maintain and update the SmartPhrases throughout my time at UVM.

Future Directions

- Pilot Project: Include the 2-question food insecurity screening tool into annual Medicare Wellness visits (depression, anxiety, and alcoholism are already screened for).
- Expand the project to include education of other Family Health practices in Central Vermont.
- Maintain SmartPhrases with the most up-to-date resources available.
- Directly involve Hunger Free Vermont with Berlin Family Health as they have extensive experience training community health providers.

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