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Who’s accessing emergency food services?  
An analysis of the demographics and food needs of Chittenden County Residents Accessing the Charitable Food System  
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INTRODUCTION

• Last year, Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf provided 1,260,517 pounds of food to over 11,000 people each month via groceries, hot meals and home delivery, supplying an average of almost 40% of food for families.
• CEFS seeks to improve their services and offerings by better understanding the demographics, food preference, and needs of the clients they serve.
• Our goal was to collect demographic and utilization data to identify areas where CEFS could enhance services and improve client access to healthful food.

METHODS

• A literature search was performed to identify surveys and techniques for food shelves looking to increase healthy offerings and improve healthful food utilization.
• The search results were used to create a two page survey to assess current food shelf utilization and healthful eating knowledge.
• The survey was administered to 180 users of the food shelf over a three week period in October, collected both by CEFS volunteer staff and authors of this project.
• Responses were entered into a SQL database, analyzed using Microsoft Excel, and figures were also created with Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

A. Demographics

- Age Range
- Education Level
- Employment Status
- Living Situation

B. Length of Use

C. Frequency of Use

D. Travel Method

E. Average Travel Times (minutes)

F. Foods Desired/Eaten vs. Received from Food Shelf

- Families with children were more likely to consume 3 meals/day (p=0.005), white less men consumed 3 meals/day (p=0.015) and fewer fruits/day (p=0.03)
- Part-time workers ate less meals and fruits/day & while homeless were at biggest risk for not eating >3 meals/day
- The homeless, males between 18-25 yrs, and those with a high school education relied on the CEFS for > 75% of their food needs
- Most clients have been accessing CEFS for > 1 yr, 46% of clients travel to CEFS by car with an average travel time of 20 minutes

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Impact

- Identified the demographics that are most reliant on CFES for their food needs
- Discovered the clients of CFES are from a broad geographic range
- Assessed the food education level of the clients to help CFES develop future education program
- Elucidated a discrepancy between the food desired/eaten by clients and the food received from CFES

Limitations

- Survey responses were limited to individuals who can read or write in English
- Data collection took place only from 12PM-1PM and Monday-Friday for 3 weeks of October

Future Directions for CFES

- CFES should work to meet the unmet meat, dairy, and produce requests of their clients
- The health of the residents accessing charitable food system can be improved by expanding services and food education program (especially targeting males between 18-25 years old) to encourage consumption of ≥3 meals and fruits/vegetables per day.

REFERENCE