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Recommended Citation
Huang, Jia Xin; Hudson, Michael; Kelley, Johanna A.; Kien, Billy; Mayhew, Christopher R.; Naser-Tavakolian, Kiyon; Richter, Jamie Elyse; Thomas, Alexander W.; McLemore, Kelly; and Christensen, Judith, "Who's accessing emergency food services?" (2015). Public Health Projects, 2008-present. 209.
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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

Demographics

Age Range

- 18-25 yrs: 12%
- 26-35 yrs: 23%
- 36-45 yrs: 23%
- 46-55 yrs: 15%
- >55 yrs: 28%

Education level

- High school: 23%
- Some college: 23%
- Undergrad: 48%
- Grad: 3%

Employment Status

- Unemployed/disabled/unable to work: 24%
- Retired: 3%
- Part-time: 2%
- Full-time: 70%

Living Situation

- Homeless: 22%
- Renting: 5%
- Owning: 10%
- Rented: 23%
- Couched/surfing: 5%

Length of use

- <1yr: 47%
- 1-5 yrs: 40%
- 5-10 yrs: 7%
- 10+yrs: 6%

Frequency of use

- Daily: 63%
- Weekly: 23%
- Once per week: 8%
- Monthly: 6%

Food Desired/Eaten vs. Received from Food Shelf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Type</th>
<th>Eaten from CEFS</th>
<th>Received from CEFS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/poultry/fish</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh produce</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Travel Times (minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Method</th>
<th>Time (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Impact

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

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 CEFS

• CEFS 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 yrs old) to encourage consumption of 3 meals and fruits/vegetables per day.

REFERENCE