



Good Shepherd
FOOD BANK OF MAINE

2017

**Community Health and Hunger
Program Report**

Program Overview

One in seven Mainers cannot access enough nutritious food to engage in a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, 27% of Maine residents have three or more chronic health conditions often exacerbated or brought on by poor diet quality. Nutrition is well established as one of the most important elements in chronic disease prevention and management, but lack of access to healthy food options is often overlooked as a factor in the rise of chronic illness in low income and food insecure populations.

Lack of access to nutritious food leads to a consumption pattern of lower quality meals with less nutritious, less expensive grocery items. The result, a diet made up of refined carbohydrates and high sugar and salt content, has been directly linked to an increased risk for developing chronic illnesses such as type II diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. For individuals already diagnosed with a chronic health condition, food insecurity can further exacerbate symptoms and lead to costly medical interventions which mean higher healthcare costs and a greater need for expensive medications.

The cycle of food insecurity and chronic illness is difficult to break as many individuals are forced to make decisions between food and medicine/medical bills and household utilities. **In many households, the quality of food is the only budget item that can be adjusted to make room for other expenses.**

Launched in 2016, the Community Health and Hunger Program is designed to address the issues of health and nutrition in food insecure populations by increasing the integration of the health care system and the emergency food network to remove barriers to accessing healthy foods. This is accomplished by providing training to health care professionals on the importance of screening patients for food insecurity, assisting with the integration of the Hunger Vital Signs™ screening tool into patient visit workflow, supplying up-to-date community resource guides for patients identified as food insecure, and providing pre-packed emergency food boxes and non-perishable items for health care staff to distribute to food insecure patients during their office visit.

What are the Hunger Vital Signs™?

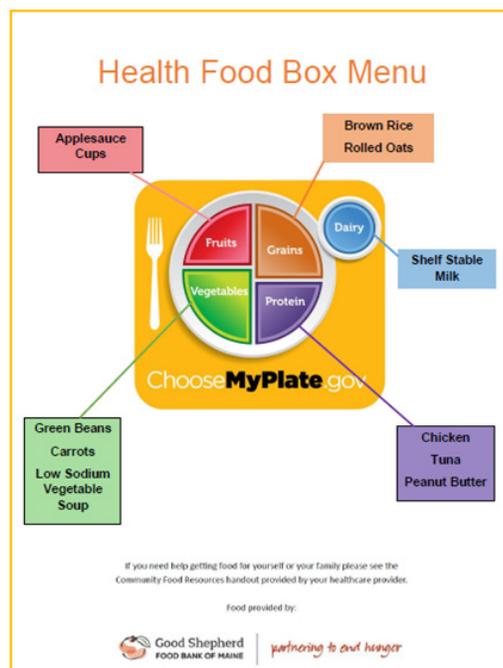
The Hunger Vital Signs™ screening tool is a nationally validated screener for medical professionals to assess patient food security status. Developed in 2010 by Children's Health Watch, the Hunger Vital Signs™ is the most widely used screening tool for medical professionals to determine whether or not a patient is food insecure. If a patient responds "sometimes" or "often" to either question, they are considered to be food insecure and should be connected with ending hunger resources.

A. *"Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more."*

B. *"Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more."*

What's in the Bag?

If a patient screens as food insecure by answering 'sometimes true' or 'often true' to the Hunger Vital Signs™ screening, it's important that the patient is connected to ending hunger programs in their community. Our health care pilot sites provide food insecure patients with community resource guides, instructions for applying to the federal nutrition programs, and a take-home bag of non-perishable grocery items to prepare meals at home. Each bag weighs approximately 10 pounds and provides 2-3 days of meals for an individual.



2017 Accomplishments

Increasing Awareness of the Health and Hunger Connection

2017 focused on increasing awareness of the connection between food insecurity and chronic health outcomes and building effective referral pathways for food insecure patients between health care providers and ending hunger programs. Applying research and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, AARP, and the Food Research and Action Center, Good Shepherd Food Bank created training materials, screening implementation guides, and data collection tools for health care pilot sites to utilize as they began screening patients for food insecurity. Good Shepherd Food Bank also partnered with Maine Hunger Initiative to ensure that eligible patients were fully utilizing SNAP (food stamps), WIC (nutrition programs for new parents and children under 5), and CSFP (senior grocery program).

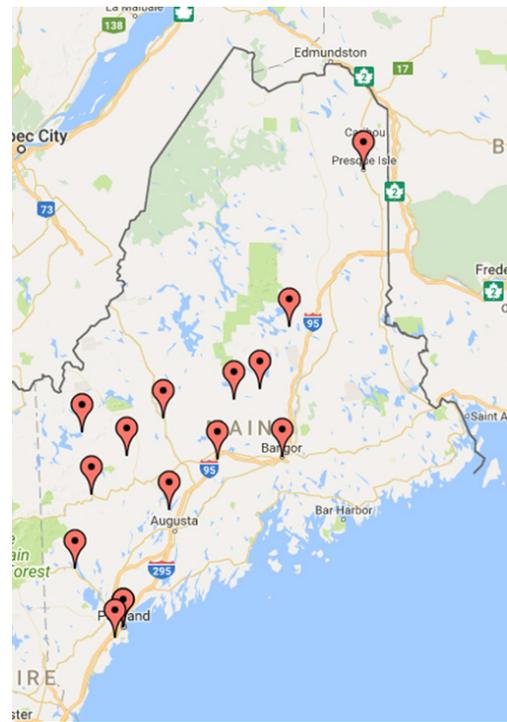
Growing Our Network

The Community Health and Hunger Program launched partnerships with 15 health care organizations in 2017. These initial program pilot sites screened over 55,000 patients for food insecurity using the Hunger Vital Signs™ screening tool and provided 1,400 referrals to local ending hunger organizations. In addition to referrals, the health care pilot sites distributed 12,000 pounds of non-perishable product to food insecure patients and their families.

In 2017, the Community Health and Hunger Program provided \$5000 to local ending hunger partners in the form of capacity building grants to support referrals from health care providers to local agencies. Our local agencies are key to program success; our health care partners depend on local ending hunger organizations to provide their patients with nutritious food options after referral, and they often rely on local agencies to support program logistics.

2017 Health Care Pilot Sites:

1. Bridgton Hospital
2. Bingham Area Health Center
3. Strong Area Health Center
4. Belgrade Regional Health Center
5. Rangeley Family Medicine
6. Millinocket Regional Hospital
7. Hometown Health Centers, Dover-Foxcroft
8. Milo Family Practice
9. New England Rehabilitation Hospital, Portland
10. New England Cancer Specialists, Scarborough,
11. Rumford Hospital
12. The Aroostook Medical Center- Family Practice, Presque Isle
13. Sebecook Valley Health, Newport, Pittsfield, Clinton
14. St. Joseph Healthcare, Bangor
15. St. Joseph's Rehabilitation and Residence, Portland



2018 Priorities

Focus on Strategic Growth

Beginning in 2017 and continuing into 2018, Good Shepherd Food Bank is looking at strategic health care partnerships across Maine. With the dedicated attention of a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA, Rachel Moyer, the Community Health and Hunger Program will be creating a statewide needs assessment that outlines where chronic diet-related illness and food insecurity overlap. This needs assessment will provide a roadmap for growth by identifying not only the geographic areas of focus but drilling down further to what type of health care provider community members are most likely to access and what organizations are most likely to serve a food insecure population. With a goal of increasing the number of pilot sites from 15 in 2017 to 28 in 2018, we will be focusing on integrating the program within the larger hospital networks and their outpatient practices. We will also continue to focus on serving rural Mainers through the Federally Qualified Health Centers.

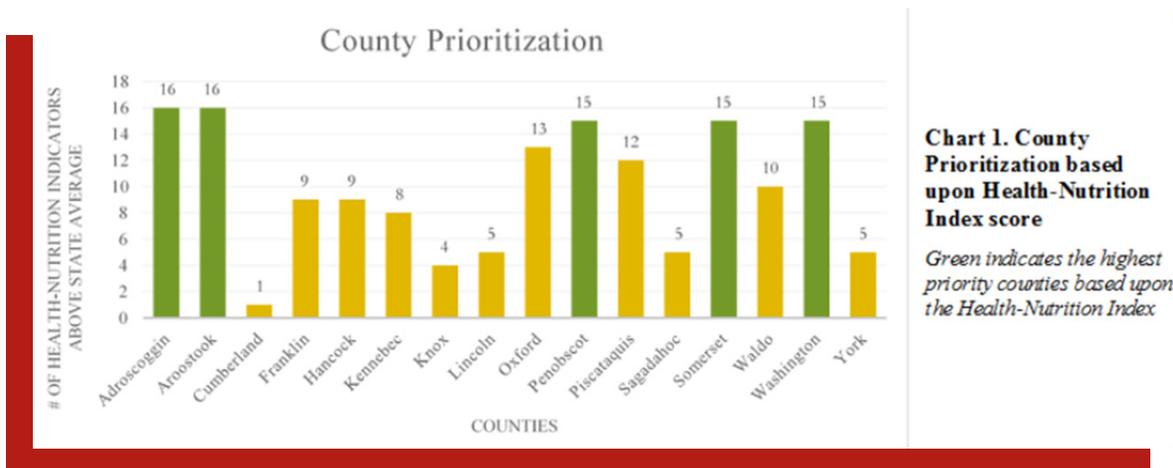


Chart 1. County Prioritization based upon Health-Nutrition Index score
Green indicates the highest priority counties based upon the Health-Nutrition Index

We would like to thank the following foundations for their support of our work:

- *The Betterment Fund*
- *The Bill and Joan Alford Foundation*
- *The Fortin Foundation of Florida*
- *TD Charitable Foundation*

We also want to thank our Health Care Partners for their support!



New England
Rehabilitation
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A joint venture of Maine Medical Center
and **HEALTHSOUTH**.

