

Community Health Service Agency, Inc.

GREENVILLE, TEXAS

FOOD 4 HEALTH: NUTRITION ASSISTANCE IS PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE

Serving five areas in rural northeast Texas, Community Health Service Agency, Inc. (CHSA) confronts many obstacles when facing the issue

of food security. These rural areas are spread out with few services between them. Public transportation is limited and many of the patients have language barriers as well. Despite the presence of some local food pantries, there are limited local resources to assist patients.

for the program. Health data are collected after the patient is enrolled in the program.

Staff identified 25 patients in just the first day of screening. About half of the enrollees were Spanish speaking and most were in young families. Family size is a factor in determining food needs.

After enrolling, patients are given vouchers to use at the NTFB distributions. Distributions are coordinated with patient tracking, which includes information on body mass index (BMI), chronic disease status, blood pressure and glycated hemoglobin level (HgbA1c). NTFB staff visit the site weekly for three months.

The weekly food packages include shelf stable foods such as rice and beans, as well as fresh produce. Recipes are included and patients get a weekly gift, like an oven mitt. If they attend all distributions they get a graduation gift and additional resources.

CHSA is rolling the program out to all of its sites, 25 patients at a time. They are already seeing real change. Patients report less food insecurity, healthier selections and increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Complete data isn't in, but one woman dropped her HgbA1c from 12 to 8 percent and also lost 20 pounds.

CHSA hopes to expand and show how food assistance impacts the overall well-being of their patients.

Community Health Service Agency, Inc. partners regionally with the North Texas Food Bank to couple food distribution with continuity of health care, addressing health outcomes as well as food quality and access.

The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) approached CHSA about partnering to identify and address food insecurity in these rural locales. Rather than just add extra food delivery sites, the NTFB designed the Food 4 Health program, which includes screening for needs, tracking health outcomes associated with nutritional practices, distributing fresh healthy foods and educating about healthy food choices that are budget friendly. The goal is to assist patients to overcome food insecurity through a three-month program intervention.

Outreach and enrollment workers at health center sites screen patients for food insecurity using a standardized brief assessment (see Getting Started with your Own Food Insecurity Program on page 48). The screening is done in Spanish and English, with positive answers qualifying patients

IMPROVING FOOD INSECURITY LEADS TO IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

Community Health Service Agency, Inc. (CHSA) has been serving patients and community members for close to 40 years in Northeast Texas.

Among those served is a patient by the name of *Bobby. Bobby has lived in Northeast Texas most his life. Once Bobby was diagnosed with diabetes a few years ago, he knew he had to make some lifestyle changes.

Bobby began coming to CHSA in 2015 where he quickly learned how to manage his diabetes through care coordination that included education and self-management. He was screened in 2016 for the Food 4 Health program and anticipated the start date in early 2017.

Bobby began his weekly distributions with the North Texas Food Bank and quickly made friends with the staff. He enjoyed discussing the various healthy food topics and new recipes provided by the staff. Sometimes his wife would even tag along to hear the good news.

Bobby saw a dramatic decrease in his glycated hemoglobin level (HgbA1c) levels from before the program at 13.5 in late 2016 to end of the program at 10.8 in the summer of 2017.

He says he's feeling great and has really enjoyed the new recipes and will continue with this lifestyle change even though the program has ended for him.

**Name has been changed for anonymity.*



INTERVENTIONS

USING FOOD SECURITY SCREENING TOOLS TIED TO VITALS

CREATING A 3 MONTH "FOOD 4 HEALTH" PROGRAM WITH EDUCATION AND SERVICES (IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH)

OFFERING FOOD VOUCHERS AND NUTRITION EDUCATION

PARTNERING WITH LOCAL FOOD BANK

PARTNERS

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

HOPE CLINIC PILOTED THE PROGRAM IN 2015

NORTH TEXAS FOOD BANK