

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT PATIENTS: FOOD LIFELINE AND SEA MAR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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About Food Lifeline and Sea Mar Community Health Centers

Founded in 1979, Food Lifeline is part of the national “Feeding America” network that assists in collecting food that would otherwise go to waste to provide meals to thousands of people across Western Washington. Food Lifeline rescues millions of pounds of this surplus food from farmers, manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants and focuses on a long term solution to hunger. Volunteers sort and repack this food in a 130,000-square-foot Hunger Solution Center, where it is distributed to more than 300 food banks, shelters, and meal programs throughout Western Washington, providing the equivalent of 97,000 meals every day to people in need. At the same time, Food Lifeline is working to activate allies and advocates to help shape policy, while partnering with organizations that are addressing the needs of low-income families.

Sea Mar Community Health Centers (Sea Mar) is a community based organization dedicated to providing comprehensive health, housing, and education services to diverse communities in Washington since 1978. Sea Mar’s network of services includes over 90 medical, dental, and behavioral health clinics.

Sea Mar and Food Lifeline partnered in 2017 to provide nutrient-dense, diabetes-appropriate foods to food-insecure diabetes patients through a mobile food market pilot program in Burien, WA.

Building a Partnership

In response to Feeding America’s 2014 assessment and published report of community needs, [Food Banks as Partners in Health Promotion: Creating Connections for Client & Community Health](#), a larger organizational shift at Food Lifeline began a new focus on the intersection of food and health insecurity. In response to this new focus, Food Lifeline gathered healthcare industry stakeholders to explore the issue more fully. This workgroup created guidelines for a pilot project to address these gaps and ensure that the project would be replicable, measureable, and not duplicative of current efforts. They then decided to seek partnership with a Federally Qualified Health Center. Sea Mar was in the process of conducting their own independent assessment of population needs and

health gaps, and discovered that food insecurity and the number of patients diagnosed with diabetes were two of the most prominent concerns for their patient population. Physical proximity and existing connections facilitated the decision for Food Lifeline and Sea Mar Community Health Centers to partner and address food insecurity and access to nutritious foods.

An official pilot began in July 2017 and will continue for 12 months, ending in July 2018. There are plans to continue the pilot beyond this initial time frame, as well as to expand to additional Sea Mar clinics as early as spring 2018 with the potential to scale into as many as 31 Sea Mar clinics as well as other FQHC providers throughout Western Washington

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The Healthcare Initiative Pilot Program

Sea Mar's health educator provides targeted outreach to patients who are eligible for the Healthcare Initiative Pilot Program by mailing letters and text messaging patients to encourage them to come to the clinic and discuss diabetes management options with their primary care provider.

After meeting with a provider, patients that meet inclusion criteria (A1C > 8%, diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, and determined to be "food insecure" through a food insecurity assessment) are given a referral to the mobile food market. A referral to the mobile food market is also noted in the patient's electronic health record.

Clinic care coordinators track enrolled patients and the frequency of their visits to the mobile market, which is available at the Sea Mar – Burien location twice a month. Health educators and Food Lifeline volunteers are available to help patients shop. Patients do not have a limit on the produce and other nutrient-dense foods they can choose from at the mobile food market. They are asked to complete a "Healthy Food Distribution Survey" periodically for the purpose of the pilot study.

Early Results and Lessons Learned

Both organizations feel optimistic about the program's success from the patients' results thus far. With over 200 enrollees, Sea Mar has observed that 50% of the target population has experienced a 1% decrease in their A1C levels, which corresponds to up to a 21% reduction in their individual risk of diabetes-related complications¹. The community response has also been extremely positive, with volunteers from the community and the clinic taking time to help at the mobile food market.

Food Lifeline and Sea Mar continue to collaborate and streamline the program with the goal of replicating this pilot in other clinics. They are exploring ways to align with other services, such as cooking classes, on days when the mobile food market is open. They have also streamlined the referral tracking system to be part of the EHR instead of needing a separate system.

“It has been encouraging to see this level of patient engagement and investment, not only in their health, but in the health of others and their community”

— Nick Jackal, Director of Community Programs, Food Lifeline

¹Stratton, I. M., Adler, A. I., Neil, H. A. W., Matthews, D. R., Manley, S. E., Cull, C. A., ... Holman, R. R. (2000). Association of glycaemia with macrovascular and microvascular complications of type 2 diabetes (UKPDS 35): prospective observational study. *BMJ : British Medical Journal*, 321(7258), 405–412.

