



## Addressing Hunger as a Health Issue

While delivering food is central to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey's mission, so is inspiring healthy and positive lifestyles through programs that provide medical screenings, nutrition counseling, and regular access to healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and dairy.

In fiscal year 2020, the FoodBank delivered about 17.8 million pounds of fresh produce, 22% of the total food distributed last year. In addition, about 67% of the food we distribute comes from highly nutritious "foods to encourage" categories.

Our initiatives that address hunger as a health issue include:

**Nutrition Education** – Launched in the summer of 2018 through the NJ SNAP-Ed program, the FoodBank employs a large team of full-time Nutrition Educators who deliver more than nine different interventions that address nutrition and physical activity education and policy, system and environmental strategies (PSE) in 12 counties throughout the state.

**Healthy Families Farmers Markets** – Modeled after traditional farmers markets with a variety of types of fresh produce, the FoodBank works with established community partners to offer monthly distributions of 7,000 to 12,000 pounds at 21 sites.

**Food, Health & Hope: An Answer to Diabetes** – Provides free health screenings, diabetes-friendly food, and nutrition education at nine partner agencies. Last year, in partnership with the Summit Medical Group Foundation, we delivered more than 3,500 specialty food boxes, along with health screenings and nutrition education, to help 276 clients maintain healthy lifestyles. FHH: Diabetes is now in its second year and includes nutrition education provided by the FoodBank's SNAP-Ed educators.

**Healthy Pantries Initiative** – The FoodBank worked with 42 pantries last year to expand access to produce and other healthy "foods to encourage" acquired in the food pantry setting. We educate food pantries in adopting best practices around the promotion and distribution of nutritious foods. An additional 28 sites will be added to the Healthy Pantries Initiative this year. Some strategies include:

- Redesigning pantries to promote a "client choice" model, providing our neighbors in need with the dignity that comes with choice and making the healthy options most accessible.
- Promoting healthy products such as fresh, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Offering on-site nutrition education along with recipes and healthy food tastings

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**Trinitas Medical Center Care Transitions Program** – Food Service Training Academy (FSTA) staff and students prepare heart-healthy meals for Trinitas Medical Center’s Care Transitions Program in Elizabeth, NJ. Under the supervision of FSTA staff, the culinary students prepare a five-day menu of medically tailored meals for low-income seniors after they are discharged from the hospital, which has led to lower readmission rates. The meals produced by FSTA students have received high marks from patients. This program also provides the students with experience in planning and preparing a medically tailored menu, which is useful for students pursuing careers in hospital kitchens or other culinary settings where dietary requirements are important.

**Pantry at the Plex** – The FoodBank partners with AtlantiCare Health Services to address hunger as a health issue at its Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), the William L. Gormley AtlantiCare HealthPlex in Atlantic City to help combat chronic diseases and get more healthy food to our hungry neighbors in South Jersey. This collaboration has included initiatives such as a recently conducted diabetes wellness pilot, an on-site food pantry and a summer food service program site at the HealthPlex.

**Newark Beth Israel Medical Center Partnership** – The FoodBank partners with Newark Beth Israel Medical Center around several initiatives:

- **Nutrition Education** – Our nutrition educators provide the “Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables” content at NBIMC’s farmers markets, at which produce from their hydroponic greenhouse is distributed.
- **SNAP Outreach** – The FoodBank’s SNAP outreach team visits NBIMC regularly.
- **Onsite Pantry** – The FoodBank will be supplying food for an onsite pantry at NBIMC’s Rev. Dr. Ronald B. Christian Community Health and Wellness Center. The pantry will serve mothers, seniors, and eventually the broader community.
- **Summer Meals** – NBIMC is a site for the FoodBank’s Summer Meals program, serving approximately 25 children per weekday.