Hospital-Community Partnerships: Using Local & Institutional Policy to Address Root Causes of Food Insecurity

Questions and Answers from 7/25/17 webinar

Below we answer some important questions from our webinar audience that we were not able to get to during event.

Question 1: What role does racial equity play in the work of the presenters and the issues discussed during the webinar?

Answer 1: Racial equity plays a central role in this work as communities of color disproportionately experience food insecurity and lack of access to healthy food. Both Rio Holaday and Holly Calhoun touched on this point in their presentations but there is much more to say. Visit the website of The National Collaborative on Health Equity for guidance on how to ensure that initiatives to address food insecurity also to promote health equity through action, leadership, inclusion, and collaboration.

As advocates pursue the policy strategies discussed in this webinar, they must involve affected communities in the policy prioritization, development, and enforcement process. Advocates must work to enhance the power of affected community members to engage in the policymaking process; and recognize how the legacy of racially discriminatory policies has led to the food insecurity disparities we see today.

Additionally, a broad understanding of community data that includes both quantitative and qualitative sources should be used to ensure that community experiences inform the policymaking process.

Question 2: How can we increase hospitals' investments and support for upstream health interventions?

Answer 2: This is an excellent question without a clear answer. The hospital initiatives described in this webinar are driven by innovative approaches to hospital community benefits. Health systems like Nemours, Kaiser, and Trinity Health are looking at how they can improve community health through the community benefits' investments. A recent blog post in *Health Affairs* examines this trend and urges "a strategic rethinking of community benefit policy."

Hospitals are also looking at how they can pool resources with other community stakeholders. ChangeLab Solutions' BLOCK Project is working towards systems change among hospitals, housing authorities, and public health agencies by creating a space for each type of institution to learn from each other and work together on upstream issues.

Relevant initiatives working to catalyze these types of innovative collaborations include the BUILD Health Challenge and the Root Cause Coalition among others. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's website also has resources on payment reforms that incorporate aspects of public health prevention into healthcare system payment models.

Question 3: Can you share the data sources for food insecurity among different populations?

> **Answer 3:** These are some of the data sources that were used in the introductory presentation on food insecurity:
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> - Disability and food insecurity
> - General information about food insecurity
> - USDA definitions of food insecurity
> - How USDA measures food insecurity
> - Food insecurity among African-Americans
> - Food insecurity among Latinos
> - Food insecurity in rural communities

Question 4: Are there mapping tools that illustrate which communities are food deserts and/or experience food insecurity?

> **Answer 4:** Community Commons has lots of data on both food insecurity and food deserts. You can make your own map and select which data you want to display. Also, there is a USDA food access research atlas which focuses on food access indicators (and used to be the food desert locator).