

Montgomery County Food Security Plan

Community Engagement Meeting Minutes: September 1, 2016

Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

Attendees

Christie Balch (Crossroads Community Food Network); Jack Bell (Nourish Now); Marla Caplon (MCPS); Lisa Gonzalez (UMD Extension); Mark Hodge (Montgomery County HHS); Rev. Mansfield Kaseman (Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships); Andrea Kempner-Wink (Community Ministries Rockville); Cheryl Kollin (Community Food Rescue); Kim McBride (Holy Cross Health); Shawn McKintosh (Sugar Free Kids MD); Paul Newman (Gaithersburg HELP Volunteer); Akil Patterson (Sugar Free Kids MD); Melanie Polk (Montgomery County HHS Senior Nutrition Services); Susan Topping (Capital Area Food Bank); Meredith Weisel (Jewish Council); Jessica Weiss (growingSOUL); Woody Woodruff (Red Wiggler).

Innovation Program & Food Council Attendees

Daniel Hoffman, Heather Bruskin, Massa Cressall, Christine Bergmark, Brandon Bedford

Barriers Identified

- Food Insecurity in County
 - Food insecurity in Montgomery County often hidden and dispersed throughout the County, not confined to one geography
 - Emergency food is often provided in a small scale, community based informal capacity, such as a closet with food at a school
 - Upcounty food insecurity: Transportation is a significant issue in that area, as there are limited bus routes and it can be dangerous to walk
 - Communities with limited need might have difficulty identifying existing need or acknowledging that food insecurity is a problem in their community
 - Increasing language and cultural barriers
 - Granularity of data – since MoCo is a generally affluent County, demographic data needs to be broken down to zip code level to identify populations in need
 - MoCo has fourth highest incidence in diabetes expenditure for the Medicaid population
 - Do not need more farmers markets in our County
 - Seasonal employment exacerbates food insecurity
 - Need more consistent seasonal availability of food
 - Lack of uniform, reliable food waste data
 - Economic security closely connected to food security
 - Safety of products from community/urban gardens
 - Lack of culturally appropriate food

- Limited agricultural production levels at local food sources
- Food pantry supplies in agricultural off season
- FARMs
 - FARMs participation stigma
 - Anecdote about a church across the street from a school that feeds lunch to children who don't participate in FARMs
 - Programs like Smart Sacks and weekend bags are successful in meeting the needs of children in communities with high FARMs rates, but not addressing the full population. Communities with any FARMs rate still have food insecurity
- Access or Healthy Access?
 - African American and Latino populations at significantly elevated risk for diabetes and obesity
 - Addressing food access may not adequately address health and nutrition concerns
- Existing Resource Barriers
 - Resistance to signing up for SNAP
 - Community knowledge of how to access services. E.g., food services are available but residents don't know who is eligible and how to access the services
 - Lack of awareness of existing operations
 - Collecting information on existing community hubs when they are often not visible
 - Aging population running services. Church congregations are aging and getting smaller.
 - Evolving and dynamic structure of food assistance
 - Lack of places to preserve food. Few licensed kitchens. There are a lot of unused church kitchens, offer potential sites
 - Church kitchens and pantries can be unclean, out of date
 - Excess Supply: Organizations like Growing Soul have more food than they can donate or properly store.
 - Many donation recipients are only open on weekdays, yet food donations and volunteers are most available on weekends
 - Food recovery efforts are particularly challenging in January and February
 - Poolesville's lack of grocery store (Mixed Greens, a community based market, closed last year)
 - Food insecurity in Germantown area Latino population
- Household Level Barriers
 - Lack of access to cooking skills
 - Lack of available healthy prepared foods
 - Distrust of government based programs

- Presentation of food: TV dinner package, family style, etc.
- Seniors
 - Baby boomers have food insecurity but do not want to be called seniors
 - Seniors moving into assisted care from their homes have to transition services
 - Direct Senior Nutrition Program for MoCo programs are decreasing but they want to expand them. Fewer people are signing up for their program. They want to grow their congregate meal program.
 - Serving seniors with appropriate food
 - Seniors food allowance may be spent in a way that is not productive
- Adults with Disabilities in Group Homes
 - Job not not done until people consume it because they have disabilities
 - People need to consume the food
 - Developmentally disabled people need food prepared
 - Preparation and processing facilities are needed for this
 - Food literacy and time are needed as much or more than funding

Feedback and Suggestions

- Hard copy survey for clients be distributed and collected by our emergency food provider partners
- Focus on the Communities of Low Access (COLAs) defined in the Community Food Access Report
- Buying clubs may be a potential community based solution; noted that this has been successful in Baltimore.
- Programs like Smart Sacks and weekend bags are successful in meeting the needs of children in communities with high FARMs rates
- Some grocery stores provide free rides home
- Legislation around extending WIC distribution
- Exploring year-long road market
- Expand opportunities for organizations addressing food security concerns to connect with MCPS students so that MCPS students can get SSL hours with them
- Ensure variety in food

Existing Resources

- Kunzang Palyul Choling (KPC) Buddhist Center has provided food assistance for decades in the County
- Community Food Rescue is working with Data Montgomery to identify licensed food providers in the County and determine who is most likely to have donations, such as caterers. It is difficult to connect with these food businesses and alleviate concerns of liability through donating.

- Holy Cross Hospital has a program called Links in the Aspen Hills area that links people with social services. They conduct outreach at churches, grocery stores and health centers in Aspen Hill.
- Growing Soul is a nonprofit that seeks to create sustainable opportunities for universal learning.
- Sugar Free Kids is trying to create better access to healthier foods and beverages in Maryland.
- Seniors have a health clinic, housing, language outreach via assistance from MCAEL
- Linkages to Learning at Gaithersburg Elementary

General Information about the Plan

- Hosting listening sessions is key to capturing community input
- This plan will be a living document with implementation extending 5 years