Addressing Food Insecurity Among Young Children During the Pandemic

April 13, 2021, 1:00-2:00 pm ET

Part of CHCS’ Early Childhood and Medicaid Innovations Amid COVID-19 webinar series

Made possible through support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Questions?

To submit a question online, please click the Q&A icon located at the bottom of the screen.
This webinar is first in a series, *Early Childhood and Medicaid Innovations Amid COVID-19*.

The webinar series, made possible by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is spotlighting state efforts to align or innovate early childhood and Medicaid programs to help families with young children find resiliency in the face of the pandemic and beyond.

The series is part of *Aligning Early Childhood and Medicaid*, a national initiative led by the Center for Health Care Strategies, in partnership with ZERO TO THREE, the National Association of Medicaid Directors, Social Determinants of Health Consulting, and the Public Leadership Group.
Upcoming Webinars in the Series

- **Opportunities for Early Childhood Programs to Support the Well-Being of Families During COVID-19 and Beyond**
  
  » April 20, 2021, 2:00-3:00 pm ET

- **Supporting Early Childhood Learning and Development During COVID-19 and Beyond**

  » April 27, 2021, 2:00-3:00 pm ET

- To learn more and register, visit [www.chcs.org](http://www.chcs.org).
Welcome and Introduction
Session Overview and Goals
Vermont’s Statewide Approach to Hunger Screening: Lessons from the Pandemic
Destigmatizing Emergency and Long-Term Solutions to Food Insecurity in Pierce County, Washington State
Moderated Q&A
Wrap Up
Today’s Presenters

- Armelle Casau, PhD, Senior Program Officer, Center for Health Care Strategies
- Daniela Lewy, EdLD, MPH, Managing Partner, Social Determinants of Health Consulting
- **Vermont**
  - Beverly Boget, Director of Early Childhood, Health Care, Integration, Let’s Grow Kids
  - Tanya Lachapelle, Community and Program Supports Specialist, Let’s Grow Kids
  - Lauren Smith, Help Me Grow Coordinator, Vermont Department of Health
- **Washington State**
  - Taylor Caragan, MPH, Healthcare Liaison, Help Me Grow Pierce County
  - Stacey Crnich, CEO, Bonney Lake Food Bank
Addressing Food Insecurity Among Young Children During the Pandemic: Innovations from Vermont and Washington State

Daniela Lewy, EdLD, MPH, Managing Partner, Social Determinants of Health Consulting
Before the pandemic, the overall child food insecurity rate had reached its lowest point since it began to be measured in the 1990s at 10.7 million (1 in 7).

An estimated 15 million children (1 in 5) may have experienced food insecurity in 2020.

Feeding America projects 13 million children (1 in 6) may experience food insecurity in 2021.
Black & Hispanic households with children are nearly twice as likely to be struggling to afford food during the coronavirus pandemic as white families, according to new research.

39% of Black households with children and 37% of Hispanic households with children were food insecure over the summer. The rate for white households with kids was 22%.
Help Me Grow

An Opportunity to Maximize Children’s Potential

The early years present incredible opportunity to build a strong foundation as the brain rapidly develops during the first five years of life. All children benefit from an organized system of community resources to help them thrive, like health care, quality early learning experiences, healthy nutrition, and parent support. However, when the system is not well organized, it can be difficult for families to access resources for their children and challenging for service providers to connect families to needed supports. This can have long-lasting consequences on children’s health and well-being.

A Solution to Help Young Children Shine

A network of community resources works like a power grid. When the grid functions well, families can plug in to an organized flow of resources and easily access the ones they need. Help Me Grow strengthens the grid by maintaining a current directory of available services and connecting service providers to each other to create an interconnected system. Families benefit as Help Me Grow listens to them, links them to services, and provides ongoing support. Help Me Grow is available to all children, including those whose families may have concerns or simply want to learn more about their child’s development.

A Vision for a Brighter Future

Thriving communities depend on the well-being of all members. By providing families with equitable access to the resources they need when they need them, Help Me Grow works to ensure we all enjoy more vibrant years ahead.
Help Me Grow National Affiliates
Why Vermont and Washington?

**Vermont**
- Statewide Help Me Grow System
- Legislative support for Early Childhood (EC)
- EC education and health collaboration
- Food insecurity screening by EC educators

**Washington State**
- Local Help Me Grow System
- Pediatric partnerships for SDOH
- SDOH Provider referral system
- Robust food bank system
Vermont’s Statewide Approach to Hunger Screening: Lessons from the Pandemic

Beverly Boget, Director of Early Childhood, Health Care, Integration, Let’s Grow Kids
Tanya Lachapelle, Community and Program Supports Specialist, Let’s Grow Kids
Lauren Smith, Help Me Grow Coordinator, Vermont Department of Health
Food Security in Vermont: Optimizing Child Health by Aligning Screening in the Early Childhood and Education and Health Care Sectors
Ensure That All Children Have a Healthy Start by Optimizing the Development of Every Vermont Child
Developmental Screening Buffers Against Difficult Circumstances

- Birth
- Early Infancy
- Late Infancy
- Early Toddler
- Late Toddler
- Early Preschool
- Late Preschool

"Ready to Learn"

"Healthy" Trajectory

- Toxics Stress
- Domestic violence
- Parental Substance Abuse
- Socioeconomic disparities
- Parent education
- Emotional health
- Protective Home Environment
- Medical Home
- Quality Early Learning and Development Programs

"At Risk" Trajectory

- Neighborhood Safety and Support

"Delayed/Disordered" Trajectory

Graphic Concept Adapted from Neal Half on, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities
2019 Help Me Grow Food Insecurity Screening Data

Percent worried food would run out:
- Never: 61%
- Sometimes: 35%
- Often: 4%

Percent ran out of food:
- Never: 73%
- Sometimes: 24%
- Often: 3%
“One in six children suffers from food insecurity and hunger. If children are poor, then almost one in two is food insecure. Unless you ask, you won’t be able to tell which child is going to bed hungry, and you won’t be able to connect their families to resources—like SNAP, WIC, or food pantries—that will help them get food.”

— Benard P. Dreyer, MD, AAP Past President, American Academy of Pediatrics
Participating Programs

- Seven programs serving 449 families in five Vermont counties participated in the pilot.
- All of the programs provided meals to families.
- 80% of the families in participating programs had some tuition paid for by the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

“I have learned the families we serve are struggling and they have learned to trust us for support ... We serve a diverse population and some of the folks have never had to ask for help. This was a rewarding program for all involved.”
Hunger Vital Signs Two-Question Screening Tool

• “Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.”

• “Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more.”
Key Findings

• 79% of families in pilot programs were screened using the Hunger Vital sign tool.

• Of the 360 families who were asked to complete the screen, only 2 refused to complete it.

• Of the 358 families who completed the screening, 35% (127) were found to have some food insecurity (positive screen).

• All programs reported that the tool was easy to use for the programs and families and a valuable tool for connecting with families.

Learn more: tanya@letsgrowkids.org
Help Me Grow Is a Resource to Connect Families to Local Food Resources

• Help Me Grow has over 268 food resource statewide listings in our database
• Help Me Grow connects families to:
  • 3 Squares
  • Summer meal programs
  • VT Emergency Response food drop-off events
  • WIC
  • Other local food resources

VT Emergency Response Food Drop-Off
From Pilot to Practice: Goal That All Vermont Children Are Screened Before Kindergarten

• All providers aligned (Primary Care Medical Home, Home Visiting, Early Care and Education)

• Using evidence-based tools consistently across settings
  • ASQ and ASQ SE
  • Hunger Vital Signs Food Insecurity Screening
  • Others in future?

• Technology infrastructure across settings
  • ASQ Enterprise On-line
  • Universal Developmental Screening State Registry
  • Part of Vermont Health Information System in future?

• Centralized referral resource
Key Vermont Takeaways from This Work During Covid

• Need for universal social determinant of health screenings and help connecting families to community supports and services

• Important role of child care – child care is an essential part of community infrastructure

• Early childhood educators are willing and able to offer food insecurity screening as they are offered in other child serving settings

• Leveraged existing initiatives, like Farm-to-School/ECE, to go beyond nutrition focus and help connect families to food and farmers to customers

• Important opportunity to continue to build on this new awareness and sense of urgency along with political will to sustain gains for children and families
Destigmatizing Emergency and Long-Term Solutions to Food Insecurity in Pierce County, Washington State

Taylor Caragan, Healthcare Liaison, Help Me Grow Pierce County
Stacey Crnich, CEO, Bonney Lake Food Bank
Powerful grid = Right Resources at the Right Times

Families and providers can plug in whenever they need resources and supports

Family-focused grid
Community Planning

Families can ask for resources via phone and web

Community partners review data on what families need and population health

Informing health providers of available support to connect their patients

Informing families and community partners of available support
First 5 FUNdamentals supports the entire HMG Pierce County structure

Leadership and staffing is aligned with the Help Me Grow Washington organizational structure
• 10 Diaper Bank locations throughout the county
• From 5/2020 to 2/2021:
  • 3,434 families served
  • 6,384 children served
  • 162,171 diapers distributed
  • 3,539 wipe packs distributed
  • 315 oz of formula distributed
Provider Referral Form

Family Resource Navigators will follow-up with family within 48 hours

Family Resource Navigators

Secure Email

Feedback on referrals made back to provider
A New Concept Food Bank Serving East Pierce County
PROGRAMS
2020
IN REVIEW
## HOW WE OPERATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLES</th>
<th>PROGRAMS</th>
<th>SERVICE MODELS</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGY</th>
<th>VOLUNTEERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOARD</strong>&lt;br&gt;15 members – Bonney Lake FB&lt;br&gt;10 members – Sumner FB</td>
<td><strong>THE MARKET</strong>&lt;br&gt;new concept grocery model</td>
<td><strong>DELIVERY</strong>&lt;br&gt;70%</td>
<td><strong>CLOUD BASED PHONE LINE</strong>&lt;br&gt;OPERATIONAL&lt;br&gt;60 volunteer shifts each week</td>
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<td><strong>CEO</strong></td>
<td><strong>FOOD 4 KIDS</strong>&lt;br&gt;kids backpack program</td>
<td><strong>DRIVE THRU</strong>&lt;br&gt;30%&lt;br&gt;on demand - no appt</td>
<td><strong>ONLINE REGISTRATION</strong>&lt;br&gt;DELIVERY&lt;br&gt;5 volunteer drivers each day</td>
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<td><strong>STAFF</strong>&lt;br&gt;operations&lt;br&gt;food steward&lt;br&gt;communication&lt;br&gt;customer service</td>
<td><strong>BASICALLY NEEDED</strong>&lt;br&gt;diaper bank + personal care</td>
<td><strong>IN-PERSON SHOPPING</strong>&lt;br&gt;resumes May 1, 2021</td>
<td><strong>TEXT</strong>&lt;br&gt;BROADCASTING&lt;br&gt;communicate to all 1200 households in 3 languages</td>
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<td><strong>COMMITTEES</strong>&lt;br&gt;executive&lt;br&gt;finance&lt;br&gt;marketing + comm&lt;br&gt;grants + strategy&lt;br&gt;relationship mgmt&lt;br&gt;tech + innovation&lt;br&gt;farming</td>
<td><strong>FARM TO FORK</strong>&lt;br&gt;farmers market partnership</td>
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<td><strong>IPADS</strong>&lt;br&gt;universal and multilingual</td>
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<td><strong>PROGRAM COORDINATORS</strong>&lt;br&gt;food 4 kids&lt;br&gt;little pantry project&lt;br&gt;farm to fork&lt;br&gt;diaper bank</td>
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GROWTH FACTORS = RAPID INNOVATION + ACCESS

- Coordinator on call 7 days a week
- Self-service online grocery registration
- Stigma-free white van delivery service
- Text broadcast communication system
- Standardized processes
- On demand drive thru
A TRANSFORMATION FROM THIS....

At the onset of the pandemic, the BLFB looked like this. Already unsafe and insufficient, it buckled under the stress of the new normal. The distribution had grown to 6 times the size, serving over 3,500 individuals weekly in 800 square feet. By the 2nd month of the pandemic, all operations had to be moved to delivery model and outdoor production to ensure safety.
On December 1st, 2020, the foodbank was relocated to a farm in East Pierce after a 4 month renovation and capital campaign. A $450,000 project was fully funded by the community.

Future Plans:

- Community Garden
- Food Forest
- Teaching + Sensory Garden
- Hydroponic Greenhouses
- Lease Space To Small Farmers
- STEM + Agriculture Engagement Programs
DIGNITY. EQUITY. ACCESS.

What does it look like, sound like, feel like?

- Customer Centered Practices
- Comfortable, Beautiful Spaces To Shop
- Less Rules, More Grace
- Delivery In Unmarked Vans
- Grocery Bags vs Boxes
- Multilingual Communication
- Focused on Convenience
- Diverse Staff
- No Paperwork, No Institutional Processes
- Text Broadcasting
- Customer Service Staff
- No Appointments, No Lists
- Easy Online Sign-Up
- Saying "Customer", Not "Client"
FOOD STEWARDSHIP.

As a food bank, we are in the business of food. And we take the health and quality of our food very seriously. So we hired Jennifer Ahina as our Food Steward, to manage and care for all things that result in delivering a quality product to each of our customers.
CELEBRATING FOOD.
OUR COMMUNITY.

Nothing could have prepared us for the outpouring of support we've received from our community. We are reminded daily that this food bank is so much bigger than we are.
NAME THAT VAN!
OUR MOVE TO THE FARM.

On Sept 1st, we started renovating a farm in East Pierce County and signed a 25 year lease with option to renew.

On Dec 1st, we moved in.
Question & Answer
Questions?

To submit a question online, please click the Q&A icon located at the bottom of the screen.
Wrap Up
Visit CHCS.org to...

- **Download** practical resources to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of Medicaid services

- **Learn** about cutting-edge efforts to improve care for Medicaid's highest-need, highest-cost beneficiaries

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