



We're all  family here!
Solano County Family Health Services



Solano County **Mobile Food Pharmacy**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Solano County patients receive a prescription for fresh produce from the **We're All Family! Mobile Food Pharmacy** during their appointments to help alleviate food insecurity.

Challenge

Food insecurity can be described as without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. Limited income individuals often turn to inexpensive food that is rich in calories but poor in nutrients. The challenge is often complicated by the lack of transportation, time, and resources to access healthy food, especially in “food desert” communities where grocery stores and farmers’ markets are scarce. Many food deserts contain an overabundance of fast food chains selling processed foods that are high in fat, sugar, salt. With **45% of Solano County residents living in areas with limited access to healthy and affordable food**, it isn’t surprising that 15.2% of the population report food insecurity. Furthermore, **Family Health Services (FHS)** has experienced an increased number of missed patient appointments. This can have a detrimental impact on the patients, such as worsening of an illness or poor management of a chronic disease.

Solution

FHS plays an important role as a community healthcare provider for Solano’s vulnerable population. The Solano County **Mobile Food Pharmacy (MFP)** is a deliberate approach in improving health because we especially need to pay attention to what we eat when we are sick, so we can give our bodies the nutrients it needs to heal.

Mobile Food Pharmacy Approach:

- *During FHS appointments, patients receive a prescription for a presorted box of fresh produce*
- *After the patient completes the appointment, he/she can meet the MFP vehicle to fill the food prescription*
- *The MFP commercially refrigerated vehicle fulfills the patient’s food prescription for a box of nutritious goods and a fresh bag of produce along with recipe card*

MFP Project Pilot Phase: A pilot phase was kicked off at the Fairfield FHS. Representatives from FHS and the Nutrition Services Program (NSP) came together to staff a table in the clinic waiting room. Patients were able to learn about the program while taste testing healthy recipes and obtaining health education materials. Since the pilot phase, patients and employees have been highly receptive of the MFP project. When the MFP team approached the medical assistant and provider teams regarding their role as the gatekeepers to the **healthy food prescriptions**, many were excited to see our clinics as a

“one-stop shop” and commented on how “this will help people keep their appointments!” Not only does the patient coming in for their appointment appreciate the resources provided by the MFP project, but even their family members or caregivers accompanying them appreciate the opportunity to **taste test a healthy recipe** and learn about positive programs in their community.

Innovation

The vision of the program was formed to provide healthy, nutritious food to low-income individuals and families who are affected with, or are at risk for, chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, or hypertension. MFP provides fresh produce and simple recipes to prepare the food and to educate FHS high-risk patients on how to improve their health and reduce risks associated with chronic health conditions. Distributing food at the time of a patient’s appointment also helps to ensure appointments are kept resulting in patients being seen and treated.

Results

Project **outcomes** are measured by factors such as the number of families served, the number of food prescriptions written, patient appointments kept, and patient feedback. Solano MFP anticipates serving between **3,500 and 7,500 families per year**. As the project progresses, prescription recipients’ specific health measures will be compared to see if the healthy food and education provided results in positive life changes. Throughout the course of the eight-month pilot phase, the We’re All Family! Mobile Food Pharmacy distributed over **13,300 pounds** of fresh produce to **955 patients** and their families between March and October 2018. Since the MFP vehicle began its regular clinic rotation schedule, data from November 2018 through January 2019 show a total of **443 boxes** of healthy food items and **13,397 pounds** of fresh produce were distributed to **1,027 households**. The total boxes distributed represent the number of food prescriptions redeemed at the Solano Mobile Food Pharmacy by FHS patients. Though the project is still in the early stages, preliminary data reveal that the percentage of **missed appointments has improved**.

Replicability

The **Mobile Food Pharmacy** is a model that links health care with access to free, fresh produce and healthy cooking resources. MFP can potentially be replicated by other California Counties by partnering with regional Food Banks and leveraging county health professionals and education specialists. The **Mobile Food Pharmacy** is a model that links health care with access to free, fresh produce and healthy cooking resources. This **Food is Medicine** approach utilizes the symbolic nature of the prescription and communicates that healthy eating is part of “doctor’s orders.” Healthcare providers already give patients nutritional recommendations without offering a way to obtain these foods. Enabling patients to use prescriptions that reduce the cost of purchasing healthy food is a critical step toward making healthy food more accessible.

Project Contact

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