The Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project (SHFPP)

University of Wisconsin

Overview

The Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project (SHFPP) is a PSE change intervention designed to improve the food environment and food safety practices within an emergency food pantry. The SHFPP manual provides tools to support the adoption of research-informed strategies likely to expand access and promote safe and healthy food. Users are encouraged to follow an action cycle with 5 steps outlined in the manual (e.g., assessment, strategies, action planning, implementation, and evaluation). The project is implemented and maintained with collaboration between SNAP-Ed educators, food pantry staff and volunteers, and other stakeholders. This team is encouraged to assess where changes can be made including readiness and sources of food procurement. The stand-alone tools help guide the team to plan policies and practices that change the food pantry environment in terms of health and safety. Example strategies include donor education, improvements in food layout or display, signage, procuring local food, and food safety and nutrition policies. Finally, the toolkit emphasizes continuously evaluating and assessing the efforts and changes made in the pantry. Target Behavior: Healthy Eating, Food Insecurity/Food Assistance, Other: Food Safety Intervention Type: PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

SHFPP targets food pantry clients in the food pantry setting. Food pantries are a SNAP-Ed priority setting due to the likelihood of reaching a SNAP-Ed eligible audience. The first edition of SHFPP in 2015 was pilot tested at 6 urban and rural food pantries in Wisconsin. There have been over 300 downloads of the SHFPP manual in 39 states. SNAP-Ed educators assisted 41 pantries in adopting the intervention with an estimated reach of 90,363 in 2018. Setting: Food pantries Target Audience: Adults, Older Adults, Homeless/Food Pantry Clients Race/Ethnicity: All
Intervention Components

SHFPP includes a toolkit that guides pantry staff and volunteers through a five-step action cycle to assess current pantry operations, review research-informed strategies and best practices, develop an action plan and implement and evaluate strategies to improve the food environment and food safety practices within an emergency food pantry. These intervention components provide the capacity and tools and help build the relationships necessary to implement sustainable PSE changes in food pantry settings. The self-assessment and action cycle are core components of the intervention. Proposed strategies may be adapted or modified according to pantry capacity and previously adopted strategies. The implementation tools can be used alone or in tandem with each other. While the SHFPP could be independently adopted, a collaborative approach engaging pantry staff, volunteers and guests in addition to community partners is recommended due to the increased likelihood to support sustainable change and leveraged resources. The timeline for implementation varies depending on stakeholder readiness and capacity; the minimum length of time from partner development, self-assessment and strategy implementation is typically 3-6 months.

Intervention Materials

The SHFPP toolkit is available at no cost online as a downloadable PDF. The toolkit is organized into 5 steps, each with accompanying tools:

- Assessment of current food pantry operations to identify priority areas where changes can be made to the pantry
- Strategies section for research-informed recommendations and best practices
- Develop Action Plan with instruction, samples, and template included
- Implement strategies using available tools
- Evaluate process

Printed materials can also be ordered online, but they do have a cost.

Intervention Costs

Electronic materials available at no cost. Printed materials may be ordered for cost.

Evidence Summary

SHFPP began with a formative assessment. The results of this assessment informed the development of project materials and resources, which were then pilot tested by community partners with support from SNAP-Ed educators. Evaluation results of the pilot guided the development of the first edition of the SHFPP in 2015. A process evaluation comprised of key informant interviews and surveys were conducted with educators and food pantry staff/volunteers who field-tested SHFPP. Revisions were made to the first edition of the toolkit, and a second version of the toolkit was released in June 2018. Pilot testing results demonstrate pantry capacity to self-assess current procurement and distribution practices and develop action plans to improve the nutritional quality and safety of food distributed. Process evaluation shows the recommended team process is key to successful implementation. Pantries have reported that policies helped reduce donation of foods of low nutritional quality.
Pantry staff and volunteers report the assistance from educators helped pantry clients’ and volunteers’ accept changes. Program monitoring data reveal that pantries 26 food pantries adopted 41 changes to the food pantry environment to expand access or improve appeal for healthy eating in 2017 and 2018, this number almost tripled with 119 documented changes. Potential reach in 2017 was 530,212 individuals, which included a city-wide donor education campaign in the Green Bay. Potential reach for 2018 was 90,363 individuals and excluded the city-wide education campaign. Evidence-based Approach: Practice-tested

Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

| ST7 | MT5 | LT8 |
| Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST) | Changes – Medium Term (MT) | Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT) | Population Results (R) |

| Individual |
| Environmental Settings |
| Sectors of Influence |

- ST7a: Wisconsin SNAP-Ed educators worked with 26 food pantries on the Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project in 2017 and 47 pantries in 2018.
- MT5a: In 2017, Wisconsin SNAP-Ed educators reported 26 food pantries adopted 41 changes to the food pantry environment to expand access or improve appeal for healthy eating. In 2018, there were 119 documented changes.
- MT5b: In 2017, there were 15 policy changes reported in food pantries including policy changes related to food purchasing and vendor agreements specifying healthier foods. In 2018, 30 changes were made to pantry policies including establishing or improving a nutrition policy for the pantries.
- MT5c: There were 8 system changes reported among participating pantries in 2017 and 28 changes in 2018.
- MT5d: In 2017, there were 8 environmental changes including point-of-selection and distribution prompts and providing standardized recipes. In 2018, there were 61 reported changes including decreased shelf space, amount or variety of unhealthy options and including fresh produce in food pantry offerings.
- MT5f: Potential reach in 2017 was 530,212 individuals, which included a city-wide donor education campaign in the Green Bay. Potential Reach for 2018 was 90,363 individuals and excluded the city-wide education campaign.
- LT8a: During 2017-2018, there were five documented news articles about the Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project in Wisconsin. The reach for these publications is unknown but the communities they service are of a combined population of 588,291 individuals. The following are links to the news articles: FDL Reporter; Green Bay Press Gazette; Kenosha News; Florence Forest News; Pierce County Herald.
Evaluation Materials

A RE-AIM evaluation framework is available to Wisconsin Extension colleagues to support program development and evaluation. Within the SHFPP toolkit, a section is devoted to evaluation which includes sample client questions and how to use administrative data for process evaluation.

Additional Information

Website: The SHFPP website includes information about SHFPP, program steps, their online community, and additional resources. Contact Person: Jennifer Park-Mroch 608-262-8083 jennifer.parkmroch@wisc.edu