

Screen to Intervene: Social Needs Screening and Food Distribution at a Federally Qualified Health Center

Background: Social determinants of health (SDOH) significantly influence health outcomes, necessitating targeted interventions. A social needs screening initiative using an adapted PREPARE tool was implemented at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to address patient needs, particularly focusing on food insecurity.

Objective: The objective was to establish a sustainable program by September 2024 addressing food insecurity and providing resources through proactive screenings and community partnerships. The initiative aimed to effectively identify and support patients with unmet social needs.

Methods: Collaboration with God's Pantry, a local food pantry, enabled monthly non-perishable food distributions. College volunteers facilitated screenings and distribution events at the FQHC. Resource managers developed a comprehensive list of community resources and referral protocols for patients with identified needs.

Results: Since September 2022, 103 patients were screened, with 47.9% reporting food insecurity as their primary concern. Metrics included screenings conducted, food boxes distributed, follow-up calls made, and specific needs identified with corresponding referrals.

Conclusions: This initiative demonstrates the feasibility and impact of integrating social needs screenings into primary care settings to address SDOH. Collaboration with community partners facilitated effective resource distribution and enhanced patient support. Transitioning leadership to local college students ensures program sustainability, promoting long-term health equity and resilience. Proactive screening and community partnerships are essential in addressing social determinants of health to improve overall health outcomes.

Key Words: Social needs screening, PRAPARE tool, sustainability, food insecurity, food distribution, social determinants of health, FQHC