

2023 HAP Achievement Award
Community Champions - Large Division

Main Line Health

One Health System's Journey to Address Food Insecurity in its Communities

The Goal

To implement a robust program to screen patients for food insecurity across Main Line Health's four emergency departments.

Intervention

Processes were implemented whereby nursing staff are empowered to converse with patients about their food needs and make resource referrals prior to discharge. The information for these referrals is printed on the patients' discharge paperwork. Post-discharge follow-up calls by social work and community health workers help ensure patients are connected to food and other resources.



Results

Many improvements were made along Main Line Health's journey to accomplish this screening without putting an unsustainable amount of additional work on the already short-staffed, busy ED staff. Over time, food insecurity screening has become an integral part of the overall nurse workflow.

In addition, the health system utilized operational excellence and process engineering techniques to implement a free food bag distribution program, which provides access to two to three days' worth of food to help address a patient's immediate food insecurity need.

This program is sustainable, adaptable, and transferable, and also provides a scalable model by which the health system can impact other social barriers to health that patients may be facing.