Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Complete Eats: Summer Meals Offered by the Emergency Department for Food Insecurity

Visit Article

More than 21 million low-income children rely on free or reduced-price meals during the school year. The US Department of Agriculture Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides meals to children during the summer months, but these programs are underused. The emergency department (ED) of urban medical centers is 1 of the few establishments that children access during the summer months, and as such, it may be a prime point of entry for such programs. This advocacy case study describes the implementation and evaluation of situating an SFSP in the pediatric ED and explores the impact on participant intention to connect with community resources after the ED visit. In this 7-week pilot, we partnered with a community agency to provide free lunch to all children ages 2 to 18 during their ED visit at an urban, freestanding children's hospital. After patient rooming and clarification of nil per os status, boxed meals were delivered to patients and siblings along with information regarding the SFSP and how to access community program sites. Parents completed a survey about the experience with the meal program in the ED, previous knowledge of the SFSP, and intention to use community SFSP sites in the future. This case study demonstrates that situating the SFSP in the acute-care clinical setting is acceptable and has strong potential to improve the historically poor connection between families and critical community resources. Additionally, this project highlights the potential of community-clinical partnerships to improve family resources and enhance the reach of established programs.

Journal:

Pediatrics
Authors: Cullen D, Blauch A, Mirth M, Fein J

Related Content

- Food for Thought: A Randomized Trial of Food Insecurity Screening in the Emergency Department
  Article
  Jan 2019
- Food for Thought: How We Screen for Food Insecurity Matters
  Blog Post
  May 15, 2019
- Hungry for Information: Lessons Learned from Food Insecurity Screening in Pediatrics
  Blog Post
  Oct 19, 2017

- [USDA Request for Public Comment: SNAP Requirements for Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents](#)
  Tools and Memos
  Apr 2019
- [Exploring the Gap: Food Insecurity and Resource Engagement](#)
  Article
  Aug 2020