Strategies for Addressing Obesity through the Emergency Food System

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Background

- Demand for emergency food has changed over the past 20 years
- Simultaneously, the United States is facing an obesity epidemic
- Food Banks have seen an increase in the amount of energy-dense, nutrient-poor food donations
The Levels of Food Distribution through the Emergency Food System

Clients

- Food Bank
  - Some Direct Service to Clients
    - Food Pantries
    - Soup Kitchens
    - Shelters
Identifying the Problem

- Concerns regarding the amount of donated soda
- Increased investment in nutrition and nutrition staff
- Nutrition staff and executive director discussion
- Encouragement and support from state funding source
Implementation

- Food Sourcing and Nutrition Department developed a nutrition position statement
- Presentation to management staff; proposed solution
- Management staff voted on nutrition policy
- Implementation and follow up

This policy sparked a discussion within the Food Bank Network.

What do Emergency Food Recipients want to receive at a program?
Evaluation of “No Soda and No Candy Policy”

- **Objective 1**: Evaluate the impact of the FBCNY’s “No Soda and No Candy” policy on the types of donated foods and beverages accepted.

- **Objective 2**: Assess Emergency Food Program (EFP) recipients’ preferences for foods and beverages.

- **Objective 3**: Assess the EFP directors’ perceptions of recipients’ food and beverage preferences and their own decisions about what foods and beverages to stock.
Trends in Donations of Soda, Candy, and Sweets
February 1, 2003 - January 31, 2006

Evaluation Period
Percent of Total Pounds of Donated Food
Candy
Soda
Sweets
Considerations for Food Selection by Emergency Food Guests

- 98% of guests indicated that having nutritious food available for them to choose at the food pantry was either very important or important.

- However, 94% reported that taste was also a very important/important consideration when choosing food for their households.

- Approximately 70% of guests did not place a priority on receiving snacks at the food pantry by reporting it was somewhat or not important to them.

- Guests (94% very important/important) placed a high priority on the availability of staple items.
# Guests' Food Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat/Poultry/Fish</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Soup</td>
<td>9.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>Frozen Meals</td>
<td>10.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>Peanut Butter</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>10.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td>12.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta, Rice</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>Candy</td>
<td>14.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of Fruits and Vegetables Preferred by Food Pantry Recipients

% of Food Pantry Recipients

% Fresh % Canned % Frozen

Fruit

Vegetables

Types of Fruits and Vegetables Preferred by Food Pantry Recipients

Fresh

Canned

Frozen
### Directors’ Perspectives for Food Pantry Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Distribution Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of the Food Pantry is to provide healthy food items only</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the Food Pantry is to provide a variety of foods including soda and candy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Food Bank of Central New York does not accept or distribute soda or candy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Directors’ Perceived Barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Costs too much (%)</th>
<th>Inconsistent availability (%)</th>
<th>Food pantry storage problems (%)</th>
<th>Guests do not like it (%)</th>
<th>Guests cannot store it (%)</th>
<th>Guests cannot cook it (%)</th>
<th>No problems (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Vegetables</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/Poultry /Fish</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerated Milk</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Wheat Bread</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Rice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Beans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

- To what extent can the emergency food system change nutrition and procurement policies to meet demand of guests?
- To what extent would the infrastructure of the emergency food system need to change to accommodate healthier foods? Is this sustainable?
- Do guests, directors, food bank staff, and nutrition experts define nutritious food similarly?
- How do inventory improvements impact the emergency food system in recipients’ overall diet quality?