Meeting Minutes
May 3rd, 2018 • 9:30 - 11:30

Present: Rick Aupperlee (Laraway School Inc.), Sara Babcock (Lamoille Community Food Share), Katie Black (UVM Extension - EFNEP), Jim Curran (United Way of Lamoille Valley), Alexandra Duquette (Copley Hospital), Nicole Grisgraber (Meals on Wheels of Lamoille County), Joyce Majors (Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District), Suzanne Masland (Vermont Department of Health), Carly Monahan (Salvation Farms), Cathy Nellis (Vermont 2-1-1 and Help Me Grow), Meredith Scott (CLiF), Lillian White (Johnson Food Shelf)

Co-Chairs: Susan Bartlett (former Vermont State Senator) and Scott Johnson (Lamoille Family Center)

Hunger Free Vermont Staff: Drake Turner and Jenna O’Donnell

Welcome, Updates and Announcements

Scott Johnson and Susan Bartlett welcomed the group to the meeting and asked for announcements:

Meredith Scott (CLiF) – CLiF is now accepting applications for their Summer Readers grant. Every June, July, and August, CLiF presenters visit children’s summer programs in communities across New Hampshire and Vermont. They share books, tell inspiring stories, and talk about the power of reading with children up to 12 years old. After every summer event, each child in attendance can choose two new books to keep. This grant is designed to battle the "summer slide" in reading - especially for kids who lack access to books in the home. Past Summer Readers partners are encouraged to apply each summer! The application deadline is May 15, 2018 but early applications are encouraged.

Jim Curran (United Way of Lamoille Valley) – Jim reminded Council members of the upcoming Postal Workers Food Drive. Jim will be picking up the food and distributing it to food shelves (including the Lamoille Community Food Share) on Monday.

Jim Curran and Carly Monahan (Salvation Farms) – Jim and Carly shared an update on an aspect of the Council’s food diversion and processing project. The United Way owns an empty barn on Pleasant Street, and after a connection from Susan Bartlett and many conversations, Salvation Farms will be using this space for storing its gleaned produce. Some funds have been secured and there will be a meeting with the USDA soon; Carly and Jim hope that Salvation Farms will be able to use this space as early as this fall.

Susan Bartlett shared that with this storage space in place, Mental Health Services is now even more interested in helping use its space for light processing. Susan, Joyce Majors, Jenna O’Donnell and others will be visiting a processing facility in Morrisville on May 14th, and there is still room on the tour of Salvation Farm's Vermont Commodities Project in Winooski on May 18th – contact Joyce if interested.

Jenna O’Donnell (Hunger Free Vermont) – Jenna presented an overview of the results from last meeting’s Tracking Outcomes Survey (attached), and highlighted how responses helped set the focus for today’s meeting on the Hunger Vital Signs and social determinants of health.

Action Steps & Handouts:

For more information: visit http://clifonline.org/literacy-programs/summer-readers/ or contact Program Manager Jana Brown at jana@clifonline.org.

Action: Contact Joyce Majors if interested in joining the Vermont Commodities Project tour on May 18th at info@lrswmd.org.

Handout: Tracking Outcomes Survey Results (attached)
Drake Turner (Hunger Free Vermont) – Drake gave an update on the Farm Bill Reauthorization process. Since the Council’s last meeting in February, the House has passed their proposal. As expected, it would hurt many Vermonters, and Drake encouraged Hunger Council members to sign on in support of the Vermont Farm Bill Nutrition Coalition’s Priority Recommendations (click here) and collect signatures from their networks. These sign-ons will be shared with Vermont’s Congressional Delegates to help with their reauthorization negotiations. Drake also shared new rack cards focusing on connecting older Vermonters with 3SquaresVT. These were crafted using a lot of community feedback, and a new card for the general community will be produced soon as well.

Hunger Free Vermont is hosting 6 3SquaresVT Basic Trainings across the state. These free half-day trainings will be focusing on things like eligibility, outreach strategies, and myth busting. To learn more and sign-up, visit https://www.hungerfreevt.org/adult-nutrition/ (The St. Albans training on May 29th is nearly full, but there is still space at the Barre training on May 30th.)

### Summer Is Coming!

As we prepare for warmer months, the Hunger Council checked in with local summer programs that support food access.

**Summer Meals Programs** – The list of summer meal sites will be coming out in early June, and Jenna O'Donnell encouraged Council members to help spread the word about these great free meals for kids 18 and under.

**Farmers Markets Programs** – Drake Turner and Suzanne Masland described two programs aimed at helping low-income Vermonters access farmers’ markets:

- **Farm to Family** – The Farm to Family program provides booklets of coupons worth $30 to WIC families and people over 60, with a few booklets also available for other low-income Vermonters. These coupons can be used at farmers’ markets to buy fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and culinary herbs. Booklets for WIC recipients are distributed through the Department of Health; booklets for older Vermonters are distributed through Capstone.

- **Crop Cash** – The Crop Cash program is available for anyone using 3SquaresVT, and matches up to $10 worth of 3SquaresVT benefits, which can be used to purchase fresh produce, herbs, and fruit and vegetable starts and seeds.

Drake Turner (Hunger Free Vermont) – Drake encouraged Council members to help spread information on these programs. It can also be helpful for the general public (not participating in Farm to Family or Crop Cash) to still go to the market manager’s tent to swipe their debit cards in exchange for tokens to spend at the market. These helps de-stigmatize getting tokens at the market managers’ tents, and swiping/processing fees can help support markets participating in these programs.

Cathy Nellis (Vermont 2-1-1 and Help Me Grow) – Cathy shared that when people call in to 2-1-1 and are on hold, Vermont 2-1-1 is playing a message about the Crop Cash program. Most callers to 2-1-1 are connected within 80 seconds, but this short message is hopefully helping raise awareness of the Crop Cash program.
Engaging with the Medical Community

Hunger and food insecurity have many effects on an individual’s and community’s health. Hunger Council members heard from local health experts on how they see this connection in their patients and communities, and discussed opportunities to connect medical providers and patients with community supports.

Scott Johnson – Scott reminded the Hunger Council that as there’s increasing talk about the social determinants of health, it is important to understand and help to guide the medical community’s work around overall health. Scott shared that food security was identified, along with maternal depression, as a top priority for pediatricians at last year’s CHAMP (Child Health Advances Measured in Practice) conference. There has also been increasing attention being paid to screening for food security and the effects of other social determinants of health for patients.

Jenna O’Donnell – Jenna reviewed an article (attached) on “Addressing Food Insecurity in Health Care Settings: Key Actions and Tools for Success.” This article from Children’s Health Watch, Feeding America, and FRAC (Food Research and Action Center) helps advocates understand the process to support medical providers and medical offices to screen for food insecurity. The Hunger Vital Signs is a well-validated screening tool that asks:

- “Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.” (often true, sometimes true, or never true)
- “Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to get more.” (often true, sometimes true, or never true)

Jenna reminded the Council of the importance of having medical providers ask patients these questions in order to identify people who are struggling and connect them with needed resources. However, Jenna also highlighted that establishing a system for asking the questions, recording and tracking results, and connecting patients with supports can be challenging, and it will require a long-view and sometimes creative approach in order to help health care providers engage in this work. (See the second page of the article, which displays the spectrum of responses as community partners and health care providers align their work.)

Scott and Susan invited health care providers to describe what they’re seeing in their institutions and how they are approaching food security and the social determinants of health.

Dr. Sarayu Balu (Community Health Services of the Lamoille Valley – Appleseed Pediatrics) – Dr. Balu has been practicing in the community for almost 4 decades. Dr. Balu spoke eloquently on the dramatic effects of poverty, which she views as a disease that causes the complex medical issues she has been struggling with for her patients, but is not yet widely recognized as a collective problem. She values wide-ranging and coordinated action to strengthen the safety net across the board so that all can count on being food secure, housing secure, and have access to health care, education, and the other essential resources.

Dr. Balu currently views her work as addressing the complex effects of poverty. Appleseed Pediatrics does use the Hunger Vital Signs, although Dr. Balu acknowledged challenges in getting families to open up about the issues they’re facing.

Dr. Balu shared that she sees a big shift in food security as families outgrow the WIC program. While enrolled in WIC, they are usually all set, but once the children age out (at age 5), she sees their health and food security worsen.

Handout: “Addressing Food Insecurity in Health Care Settings: Key Actions and Tools for Success.” (Click HERE)

For more information: Contact Dr. Sarayu Balu at 802-888-7737.
Alexandra Duquette (Copley Hospital) – Alexandra is a Registered Dietician at Copley, and shared information from her colleagues on how food security and other issues are identified and addressed at the hospital.

Alexandra was excited to share that there is now a designated social worker for the Emergency Department, who is also supporting inpatient services. According to Dominique (the social worker), patients are not often referred to her because they’re identified as food insecure; however, once she starts working with them, she often finds that food insecurity is an issue. Dominique helps connect these patients with Meals on Wheels and 3SquaresVT where possible.

Copley Hospital uses the PREPARE screening tool, which screens for a number of social determinants, including food security. However, Alexandra feels that the questions asked around food security are extreme, and she hopes to be able to “loosen” the questions to be more aligned with the Hunger Vital Signs tool.

Of the other practices that refer to Alexandra, she shared that practitioners at the adult primary care at Community Health Services of the Lamoille Valley and Stowe Family Practice are piloting screening for social determinants of health.

Suzanne Masland (Vermont Department of Health) – Suzanne views her role as the District Director as helping her staff and community understand the social determinants of health. She has been helping to develop an Accountable Community for Health group to look at the issues in healthcare that are primarily social.

The Department of Health operates the WIC program which provides food and nutrition education. Although the system has changed recently to a eWIC card (instead of the traditional box of foods delivered to homes), participants are still required to do 2 nutrition education learning sessions per year – these are important educational tools but do create a burden for participants, so Suzanne, Nancy Segreto, and many others have been investigating ways to make it easier. Suzanne is excited to be working with Appleseed Pediatrics to have a WIC clinic at the office space, and shared other examples of creative outreach being done to reach families.

Suzanne shared that WIC staff have been seeing a lot more “high risk” children. WIC currently doesn’t screen for food insecurity, but Suzanne thinks this might be possible if able to be done while still also meeting federal guidelines and requirements in the short time providers have with families.

Hunger Council members suggested outreach opportunities, as well as resources that could be connected with WIC families or others in need of nutrition education. The Council also strongly recommended using Vermont 2-1-1’s system to identify resources.

Cathy Nellis (Vermont 2-1-1 and Help Me Grow) – Cathy described the process used when someone calls in to 2-1-1. The call center staff have been trained to do an assessment of callers to make sure they’re being connected with the right resources for their immediate needs and to try to address some of the deeper issues. Cathy shared that calls or texts for help with basic needs and food are always at the top for numbers.

Cathy also described Help Me Grow, which is a statewide system including the Department of Health and pediatric offices that serves families with children 0 – 8 years old. 2-1-1 serves as the centralized call center, and has child health specialists to answer questions and connect

For more information:
Contact Alexandra Duquette at aduquette@chsi.org

For more information:
Contact Suzanne Masland at suzanne.masland@vermont.gov
with resources. Callers to help me grow are screened for food insecurity using the Hunger Vital Signs.
The Help Me Grow program also has a feedback loop with pediatrician offices. If a family grants permission, Help Me Grow can follow up with families after their visits to the pediatrician to make sure they’re being supported.

Nicole Grisgraber (Meals on Wheels of Lamoille County) – Nicole described the screening tool being used by the Central Vermont Council on Aging and other Area Agencies on Aging to categorize each client’s risk of food insecurity. In case of waitlists or having to reduce services, these results would be used to prioritize those at greatest risk.
While the national Meals on Wheels program serves people who are homebound and largely unable to feed themselves, Nicole shared that the Lamoille County MOW has decided to serve all older Vermonters who want to participate.

Scott Johnson and Susan Bartlett thanked the speakers for sharing their organization’s perspectives. Susan set a goal of having one local medical practitioner at every Hunger Council meeting going forward in order to make sure they’re being supported and aware of the resources available.

Wrap Up and Adjourn
The Hunger Council reviewed final action steps.

- Alexandra Duquette and others will investigate ways to incorporate food security screening (especially the Hunger Vital Signs) into screening tools.
- All will refer people seeking resources to Vermont 2-1-1.
- Contact Joyce Majors if interested in working on developing a food processing center in Lamoille County.

Scott and Susan thanked the group for meeting, and for a successful year of connecting people and resources. They encouraged Council members to share feedback on the meetings in the Tracking Outcomes survey, and goals for the coming year in the annual Summer Member Survey (coming soon). The next meeting will be in late August or September.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: late August / September 2018