



Diabetes Initiative Case Study Redwood Empire Food Bank



Food Bank: Redwood Empire Food Bank
Program Name: Diabetes Wellness Program
Staff: Morgan Smith, RN, PHN, CNS, CDE, Project Lead
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Service Area: Sonoma County, California
Sonoma County has approximately 495,000 people living within 1,700 square miles; 11.5% of residents of Sonoma County live at or below the federal poverty line, 13.4% are food insecure, and 6.6% live with diabetes. The Redwood Empire Food Bank (REFB) serves Sonoma County and an additional 4 counties in California. Twenty-five percent of clients are Hispanic or Latino.

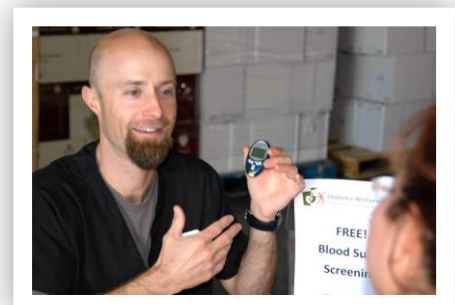
The Redwood Empire Food Bank is a “small-medium” sized food bank in the Feeding America Network, serving 78,000 clients per month via its own programming and through one hundred seventy five partner agencies. In 2013, the food bank distributed 13.8 million pounds of food, including more than 7 million pounds of fresh produce.

Program Overview

REFB’s program, the Diabetes Wellness Program (DWP), is one of the three pilot food bank projects in the Feeding America Diabetes Initiative, supported by the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. Morgan Smith, a public health nurse and certified diabetes educator, manages the project which is designed to address the dual problems of type 2 diabetes and food insecurity in hard-to-reach clients in rural California. The DWP specifically focuses on a) identifying clients living with food insecurity and diabetes, b) providing access to food and education to improve diabetes self-management, and c) creating partnerships with local healthcare organizations for bidirectional referrals to assure that individuals have the food access and medical care that they need.

Health Screening: Diabetes screening takes place at the REFB food distributions, meeting clients *where they are* with access to information about their health. Over the last two and a half years, food bank staff have screened more than 2,300 food pantry clients for diabetes risk and enrolled more than 700 eligible clients into the project.

Healthy Food Boxes: Each month, clients receive a free food box with healthy foods and fresh produce, recipes,



cooking tips, and diabetes self-management education materials. The pre-packed food boxes include items appropriate for a healthy diet for diabetes management, including whole grains, lean meats, beans, low-sodium vegetables, no-sugar added fruits, shelf-stable low-fat milk, and are supplemented with fresh produce, whole-grain breads, fresh dairy products, and frozen meats.



Nutrition and Health Education: The project includes diabetes self-management education programming delivered via 1-on-1 and group formats to support clients in building diabetes knowledge and self-care skills. A nutrition-focused group class takes place in the food bank's commercial kitchen, where project participants build skills and prepare healthy recipes using food items from the diabetes wellness food box.

Partnerships: Collaborations with local health care organizations are an important component of the project, assuring that the food bank is part of a bidirectional referral system. REFB developed partnership agreements with 13 local healthcare organizations and manages referrals with 18 community clinic sites. Project participants without primary health care - or who access care infrequently - are referred to clinics to establish care within a medical home. Community clinics also screen their diabetes patients for food insecurity and refer those who need food assistance - more than 420 patients over the last 2 years - to the food bank Diabetes Wellness Program.

Unique Aspects of the REFB Program: DWP Van

In order to reach the large number of low-income community members who are without a medical home and/or live in rural areas, the REFB purchased and outfitted a mobile food pantry van to visit sites throughout the county, providing nutritious food and education, screening clients for diabetes, and connecting clients who need medical care with healthcare providers.



Redwood Empire Food Bank Diabetes Wellness Program At-a-Glance

- Over 2,300 blood sugar screenings & 800+ screening HbA1c tests
- 700+ clients enrolled
- Over 8,100 Diabetes Wellness Food Boxes distributed - more than 325,000 pounds of healthy food!
- 450+ clinic referrals
- Nutrition, Health, and Diabetes Self-Management education provided via written materials, one-on-one education, and group classes