

HungerCare Coalition

To improve the physical, mental and emotional health outcomes of children by increasing access to healthy, nutritious food, through strategic partnerships with members of the health care community

Need and Opportunity: Second Harvest Foodbank serves more than 100,000 people who struggle with food insecurity, or hunger, each year, at least 40% of whom are children. Children in food-insecure households are more likely to have poor health, psychosocial and behavioral problems, worse developmental outcomes, impaired functioning and more chronic illness. However, when they exhibit associated symptoms, health care providers are highly unlikely to screen for hunger as an underlying cause or influencing factor, due to lack of education and understanding of the indicators and long-term implications of childhood hunger.

In response to this, Second Harvest developed a coalition of health care partners, including pediatricians and family medicine providers, who would be willing to explore how to identify patients who may be at risk of hunger and provide them with an effective intervention. Health care professionals, who carry credibility with families, will be able to talk about ensuring access to healthier, nutritious food within the context of the serious, long-term impact on the health of their children.

Coalition Short-term (1-3 year) Goals:

- Development and promotion of educational components targeting health care professionals, emphasizing indicators and long-term impact of hunger in children
- Creation and implementation of a clinic-based identification screen for pediatric patients (two validated hunger risk questions) as part of intake protocol
- Development and integration of appropriate intervention strategies (such as food assistance outreach and education) for their patients and families at risk of hunger
- Design and distribution of materials that target food insecure households and reduce stigma for use in clinics and other health care settings
- Development and implementation of high-quality measurement and analysis strategies to ensure thorough evaluation

Long-term Impact:

- Health care professionals will recognize the implications of childhood hunger on health and become advocates for broad use of screening tool
- Reduce the instance of hunger among children and families through education and access to community resources to meet their nutritional needs
- Empower parents and children to make the healthy food choices the easy choice

Current Participants: Representatives from Access Community Health, American Family Children's Hospital, Associated Physicians, Childhood Obesity Prevention Collaborative, Dean Health, Group Health Cooperative, Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison/Dane County Public Health, Meriter-Unity Point, UW Extension, St. Mary's Hospital, UW Health, WI Obesity Prevention Network

