

CHHS Food Security Workgroup Meeting – 11/06/17

Food Banks –

Attending:

Diane Zemke, CHHS Board

Anne Whigham, CHHS Board

Nikki Graham-Brown, CHHS Staff

Chuck Teagarden, Communities in Schools

Natalie Tauzin, Spokane Regional Health

April, Spokane Regional Health

Jason Clark, Second Harvest

Kathy Hedgecock, Second Harvest

Melissa Wickenberg, Women & Children's Free Restaurant

Cherie Moss, Our Place

Monique Kolonko, Catholic Charities

Connie Nelson, Shalom Ministries (by phone)

In WA, “food bank” applies to food distribution centers (i.e. 2nd Harvest and NW Harvest) as well as to food pantries (small food banks). For these notes we will use “food bank” for 2nd Harvest and NW Harvest and “food pantry” for the small food banks.

2nd Harvest belongs to Feeding America, which serves every county in the nation. It is one of two Feeding America entities in the state with the other serving the coast. NW Harvest is a statewide food bank. 2nd Harvest has distributed ~30 million pounds of food/year in E. WA. NW Harvest distributes about 1 million pounds in Spokane Co.

2nd Harvest, based on requests from food pantries, focuses on getting food. Their goal is to collect excess marketable food from private donors. Nearly 95% of their food comes from ~350 companies and farmers, with the WA State Dept. of Ag and the USDA providing some commodities.

There are layers of distribution. The food pantries are defined by service areas, an arrangement set up in the 1980s. The pantries are self-directed, aside from food safety requirements. Primarily neighborhood based. It's a very organic and fluid system. There are different ways to arrange the structure. The most common is to have a few very large food pantries with a benefit bank with more centralized offerings, so people can access food and services. In spite of the challenges, Spokane's system does pretty well.

2nd Harvest only requires a name and address to access food. The pantries have added-on documentation and it varies by site. So people can go to these and not have the right documentation.

Northwest Harvest also provides food to the same food pantries. Some reported that they cannot choose what they get from Northwest and are stuck with what they are given. A couple reported that they were getting a list from Northwest that gives them the option to choose from foods on the list. There has been a change in staff, which may have limited access to the list.

Natalie and April from SRHD presented data mapping of food bank and food pantry locations.

Some pantries are very small and don't have a lot of food. Our Place is serving 38% out of area, often "couch-surfing" homeless, which uses resources they could give out in W. Central.

Pantries are not open on Saturdays or evenings, which limits access. Daytime hours can be limited. Our Place tried a pilot project of being open Wed. evenings with positive results. They also tried Saturdays, with little attendance.

Protein foods of any type (such as meat, beans, lentils, peanut butter, and tuna fish) are always in short supply. They are generally distributed by the number of family members; whereas, other items such as pasta, beans, and corn are available in sufficient quantities. It's a distribution problem. Food packaging and transportation drive up costs.

Because 2nd Harvest focuses on finding more food, they don't have resources for capacity/system building. Their funds are focused on diesel fuel, warehousing, packaging and transportation.

2nd Harvest will sell food to pantries at cost. 2nd Harvest is also supporting school pantries. It costs \$15-30K to run a school pantry. They've spend \$900K running Bite2Go (see the notes on K-12 food).

Pantries can't share excess food among themselves due to federal regulations on food safety. There is no "upstream" inventory process to return items for redistribution, as it is cost prohibitive and difficult to track items for safety; however, they can refuse individual food categories (e.g. lentils) from 2nd Harvest. That is less possible with NW Harvest as the food comes bundled. Thus, pantries can acquire an excess and have difficulty moving it since they are not supposed to trade it.

The amount of food 2nd Harvest allocates to an individual pantry depends on: # of clients + size of pantry + # of days open + ability to store/refrigerate/freeze + transportation, etc. Part science and part art. Pantries also have relationships with groceries and other suppliers.

Resources need to be looked at for the most efficient, best capacity services (i.e. not sent from a neighborhood to 2nd Harvest and back to a neighborhood).

Gaps in current services:

- Food pantries aren't equal in the amount of food they have, the number of volunteers they have, their hours, or their requirements.
- Food pantries are small and can lack capacity to store food
- Protein is always in demand.
- No evening hours and hours can be short
- Lack of overall system communication and organization
- Need for more nutritious foods (vs. carbs)
- Homelessness is putting pressure on food pantries
- Homeless people need different frequency, quantity and packaging of food
- Clients lack transportation so access is limited.
- Bus routes aren't always near the food pantries which limits winter access. Buses can limit the number of bags on the bus.
- Clients can only attend a pantry 1x/mo.
- Pantries not evenly distributed based on high poverty areas
 - No pantry in downtown
 - Northeast Spokane is poorly served

- Some low income neighborhoods don't have a pantry or it's on the edge of the area
- Churches are closing, so their food pantries are no longer available
- Lack of education on menus and budgeting
- Cultural tendencies to not seek help

Strengths in current services:

- <http://spokanecares.org/food-hunger.php>
- Food is readily available
- Hundreds of volunteers
- Local pantries in every neighborhood
- Relationships with grocery stores (rescue)
- Referral systems are growing/resource books are available
- Mobile markets/after-hours programs
- Outreach in the pantries has grown
- Fresh produce availability
- School-based mobile services
- Community openness to finding new ways to help
- Churches adopt schools (provide food, presents and mentors)

*Next meeting is **Thursday, December 7th from 8:00-10:00am***