



Food Pharmacy: An In-clinic Food Pantry Program

A Prescription for Nutrition

At the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank (the Food Bank), we believe that **food is medicine**. Nutritious food can help prevent and manage diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. We know that chronically ill patients living on a low income face many barriers to healthy eating. For instance, they

may not have the time or transportation to secure the food they need, or they may be unable to afford nutritious foods in addition to healthcare expenses and other routine costs

Driven by this knowledge and by our commitment to serving our community, the Food Bank partners with health care organizations to meet patients where they are and provide the high-quality food they deserve. Because we never want patients to choose between good food and medical care, we created an in-clinic food pantry program called Food Pharmacy in 2019. While they are receiving medical care, patients who are food insecure also receive foods that meet their unique nutritional needs. In addition to food, patients receive nutrition education and referrals to other community food assistance resources.

Are you interested in bringing a Food Pharmacy to your hospital/clinic?

Food Pharmacy partnership begins with a conversation between the hospital/clinic and Food Bank to assess alignment with goals and patient needs.

What the Food Bank provides:

- Support in assessing program fit for your clinical setting, including patient population, staff workflow, and space needs.
- Training for staff including 1) the connection between hunger and health; 2) food insecurity screening; and 3) program design.
- A staff contact to support food ordering, delivery/pick up, and program implementation and improvement.
- Access to our online inventory of foods including fresh produce as well as shelf-stable items, with an emphasis on low-sodium, no-added-sugar, and whole-grain items.
- The potential for program funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers and community health clinics.
- A framework for monthly program data collection and impact measurement.



What the Hospital/Clinic provides:

- Staff to work with the Food Bank on program design, implementation (including screening, referral, food provision, and data collection), and evaluation.
- Space to receive, store, pack, and distribute food to patients.
- Data on de-identified patient demographics and monthly program participation.
- Funding for food and delivery (this applies to hospitals only).

Questions you'll want to consider:

- What does your clinic/hospital hope to achieve via Food Pharmacy partnership?
- Would this program be beneficial to your patients? What makes you think so?
- What population(s) would this program serve?
 - Does the priority population have specific dietary needs?
- Which staff have you/would you seek to engage for Food Pharmacy partnership set-up, implementation, and data/impact measurement?
- What space(s) would be used to receive, store, pack, and distribute food?
- Would you seek to source shelf-stable items and/or fresh produce from the Food Bank?
 - If fresh produce or other perishables (dairy, frozen meat), do you have space for a refrigerator and/or freezer?
- What funding streams would you explore/utilize? (This applies to hospitals only.)
- What challenges do you foresee with program set up and implementation?
- If a Food Pharmacy is not feasible, is your clinic/hospital interested in screening patients for food insecurity and referring them to local food pantries and/or to SNAP/WIC?

Please discuss the questions above with a diverse team of clinic/hospital staff. Contact Maria Bowman with questions or to inquire about next steps.

Maria Bowman, MPH - Director of Health Initiatives

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

mbowman@brafb.org

540-688-3368