Quality Improvement Research Project: Food Pantry at Ladue Distrtict

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**Executive Summary**

The Old Bonhomme Elementary School in the Ladue district provides food items to students in need but does not have a food pantry in the community. I proposed having an official, regulated food pantry to compensate for the increased demand for food items due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Food pantries in other locations have shown to decrease the risk of chronic disease and help improve food safety in the communities. Videos were provided to the team that will be implementing the food pantries to educate them on the regulations and standards that need to be fulfilled. We provided a detailed description of how the food needs to be stored, distributed, and managed and what positions need to be filled to manage the food pantry. The method of how to sign up for food recalls was also explained to the team in order to make the food is safe for the community. Data was collected over five days on the number of people who came in to collect food items, but there was no data to compare this too since the project was not implemented due to the facility not being in service. There were indications that a food pantry would be helpful for the community, but until the system was implemented, there is little to affirm its success.

**Introduction**

During the COVID -19 epidemic, many people lost their jobs and could use some financial support. I was at an event at Old Bonhomme Elementary School, where they have been serving meals for the kids in the community. These meals provide support for families in the community. In addition to these meals, there are collections for cans of food items, children’s’ books, and personal items that were donated to help those who are in need. The donation of food items is increasing because people are trying to support others in the community. The canned and boxed food and personal materials are already available to whoever needed them, so I proposed to make it into the food pantry. It is a great idea to establish food pantries now because the food panties will provide support to people in the community, especially during this difficult time. Establishing an official food pantry with health department regulations will be safer and will serve more people in need.

There was no food pantry previously in this location because it is an upper-class neighborhood, and the residents of this neighborhood believe that there are no needy people. The Old Bonhomme Elementary School showed that there are some people who are in need of this support. The need is not as high as other neighborhoods, but there is still some need. The need has increased during the COVID-19, and people are asking for help. There are also available resources and people who are needed to help. All that is needed is an organized system to distribute the resources. A proper food pantry could provide that organized and can connect people with each other. People who need to help can trust this food pantry for resources, and people who donate can give foods and goods to the pantry, knowing that the food will go to who needs it.

**Literature Review**

In the U.S., 49.1 million Americans lack access to affordable and nutritious food. There is a growing demand for food pantries and emergency programs. Food pantries and other emergency food programs provides food for millions of low-income Americans. Food pantry can provide food security in the community for the low-income population. It also can help prevent chronic diseases. Chronic disease percentages are high in the low-income population (Baker et al., 2019). There are many households who are experiencing food insecurity but do not qualify for federal assistance programs. These households depend on food pantries and other emergency programs (Baker et al., 2019). There are many negative impacts of food insecurity on health, such as nutrition deficiencies, low birth weight, premature birth, and chronic stress (Safe and Health Food Pantries Project, 2018). The low-income population has food that tends to not be nutritionally dense and is usually high in fat**.** Food pantries in Wisconsin meet the nutritional needs of over 64 percent of the population since 2007. Food pantry plays a big role in supporting health and well-being by providing a healthy, affordable, and better-quality food (Safe and Health Food Pantries Project, 2018).

Food that is provided in the food pantries needs to be healthy, which is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which recommends consumption of less sodium and calories from solid fats, added sugars, and refined grains. A healthy diet according to the USDA consists of a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and nuts and seeds (Safe and Health Food Pantries Project, 2018). Nutritional education needs to be provided if required by the community. Emergency program regulation is used to ensure food safety. Following these regulations will help in preventing foodborne illness and chronic diseases (Food pantry policy, 2015)

Videos were used to provide information to the future team managing the food pantry about how to start a food pantry, food illness prevention, procedure for food recall, temperature checklists, and volunteer involvement. The food pantries require a director who needs to work as an administrator, manager, and fund manager. (Furgison, Stanford, Garcia, & Angelique O'Rourke, 2017). Different kinds of food have different requirements in these regulations. For example, canned and nonperishable food need rooms that have shelving at a specific temperature and other regulations. On the other hand, food that needs refrigerators and freezers have different requirements, such as temperature control and receiving procedures (Furgison, Stanford, Garcia, & Angelique O'Rourke, 2017).

There are many regulations in addition to the previous ones that have been added due to COVID-19. Some of these regulations include requiring all workers to wear masks and establishing a safe distance between workers while they are working. Services need to be a curbside pickup, so people who are picking up need to call and ask for what they need. The provider would get the food ready for pick up, and people are not allowed in the facility (Subscription Management Center, 2020).

Non-profits have to meet regulations and requirements at both the state and federal levels. The most commonly created is a 501(c)(3) organization, which is defined by the IRS as “charitable”. Most non-profit organizations in the U.S. fall into the category of a 501(c)(3) organization, which exempts them from federal income taxes. (It is important to note that employees of these organizations are still required to pay income taxes.) In addition to filing for tax exemption, the organization needs to be registered. The specifics of this process will vary from state to state. Every state has a State Charitable Official from the national association that you can contact for more detailed information.

**Material and methods**

Food pantries have regulations that need to be followed. The organization is responsible for storing food in a manner that will keep it safe for your clients to eat. The regulation changes according to the type of food that will need to be served. Dry, canned food needs to be stored in a safe, clean place at a certain temperature. According to the FDA and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation ServSafe program the food storage space should fallow the standers. According the requirement the room was clean with no broken windows, cracks in walls, ceilings, floor to prevent pest contamination. Other important requirement is to store food way from chemicals, cleaning supplies, clothing, or personal items. Food need to be stored on shelves on the floor. The room need to be smell cleans no mold with safe room temperature. Spoilage is another area of concern, as some product received by food pantries will be either outdated or close to it. While you should examine all goods carefully before they are offered to clients, a product is past its code date does not necessarily mean that it is unsafe to eat.

All the requirement information was gathered and shared with the people will be responsible of the food pantry. The food products were selected to be within the expiration date. Another requirement for food safety is signing up for food recalls. There is a link for food items recalls. It is recommended that the person who responsible for the food pantry to sign up there with their email so the organization will receive information when a food recall. (Subscription Management Center, 2020). The FDA regulations and some of the requirements were provided to follow the guidelines for food pantry. An approval for a location to place the pantry in the building is what is left to start the food pantry.

The number of items that was given to the people were counted every day. The number of items was given were collected. The number of families they picked up food were also counted. Al these data was collected during food distribution to understand the amount of need in the community. Some data was collected to have better understanding of the amount of food needed to stored, and the number of family to expect.

**Results**

Food was given to people even before establishing the food pantry. Parents would pick up food items from the cart on the time of serving breakfast and lunch meals. The items were canned food, cereal, pasta, and other perishable food items. I recorded a week of food distribution. Different days had various results on the number of items they took from the cart.

The items were picked up form families were caned and boxed food. On the first day, six families picked up about 5-8 food items. On the second day, four families picked up about 4-7food items. On day three, families picked up 5-7 items. It was raining on the fourth day, so they did not want to leave their car to pick up items. On the fifth day, five families picked up 6-8 food items. Some kids were picking up personal items such as tooth brush, shampoo, home mad masks, and books daily. There was also a box filled with more than 20 food perishable items inside that were donated. Some of the food items inside these boxed juice, tuna, cracker, apple sauce, nuts, and canola bars. The facility received 150 boxes. Fifteen to twenty boxes would be picked up daily.

**Discussion and Reflection**

The results from the collected data about the food pantry were suboptimal, so it did not give me the information to see if a food pantry would be useful. I also did not have substantial results to compare to because the project was not implemented during my rotation.

The project was not implemented due to the facility not functioning normally due to COVID-19. Arrangements needed to be made with the committee of the school to get their approval of the place. The manager knew that the food pantry was needed and will be implemented. The implementation of the program was delayed because of the need for approval from other officials. A non-profit organization already existed at the school, so this food pantry can be opened under their organization umbrella. That saved so much time on applying and going through the non-profit organization process. One of the benefits a food pantry has going under the umbrella of non -profit organization is that it can be taxed exempt. Another benefit for food pantry being under a non-profit organization is they can get plenty of volunteers. Since it is at a school, there is a lot of students that need service hours. Many of the students can be volunteers and have their hours approved. That way, it can be beneficial for both the student and the food pantry.

**Conclusion and Reflection**

A food pantry is needed in this location because it can provide help to many people who are in need. This is an appropriate time to start one, the manager believed. Even though it was not implemented during my rotation, this project will be implemented soon to provide help to many people in the community. Most of the issues, including regulation and polices, were covered in this project to make it successfully implemented. More data would be useful to help assess the problems the community needs to be addressed in terms of the food pantry. It would have been implemented and running if the facility were in service. This project taught me how to identify services that are needed in certain facilities and how to research and implement those services even if my knowledge is limited. With a lot of research and finding reliable sources, I can make the project follow proper regulations and standards.

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