



# The implementation of food insecurity screening at a college health center using quality improvement methods

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## BACKGROUND

- USDA defines food insecurity as having a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is experienced by individuals both above and below the poverty line.
- In Philadelphia in 2019, the rate of food insecurity was 14.4%. The projected food insecurity rate for 2021 was expected to increase to 17.0%<sup>1</sup>
- Before the pandemic, 30% of college student experienced some food insecurity. In 2020, the Hope Survey found that 38% of students in two-year colleges and 29% of students at 4 year college experienced food insecurity<sup>2</sup>
- Studies have shown that food insecure students are more likely to have lower GPAs than their food secure peers
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act in 2021 increased SNAP eligibility to include students who have an expected family contribution of \$0 or for those that are eligible for work study

## OBJECTIVES

- Increase screening for food insecurity as an "additional vital sign" for all college students utilizing the Student Health during office visits, both telemedicine and in-person.
- To provide real time education and resources to students who screen positive for food insecurity.
- To increase utilization of university resources including on campus food pantry

## Hunger Vital Sign<sup>3</sup>

- Within the past 12 months, we worried our food would run out before we got money to buy more.
  - ☐ Often true
  - ☐ Sometimes true
  - ☐ Never true
- Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.
  - ☐ Often true
  - ☐ Sometimes true
  - ☐ Never true

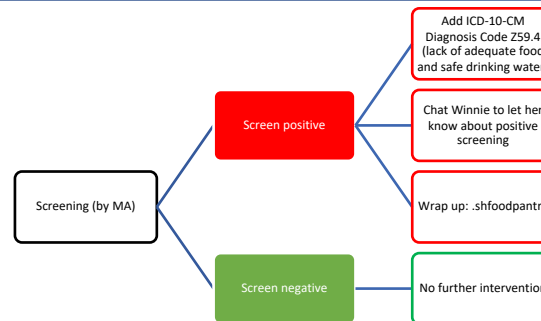
A patient/family screen positive for food insecurity if the response is "often true" or "sometimes true" for either or both questions.

Tool has >97% sensitivity and >74% specificity for food insecurity

## METHODS

- Starting in June 2021, the Drexel Student Health Clinic started screening students for food insecurity using the 2 question "Hunger Vital Sign."
- Medical Assistants attended an in-service on utilization of screening tool and new clinical workflow into the electronic medical record.
- A clinical protocol was created for a clinical wide response.
- If a patient screened positive; a secure message was sent to the nurse to engage with patient at time of appointment and offer additional support and counseling.
- Providers were given information during appointments to address further with patients.
- Available resources included an on campus food pantry accessible with a college ID 24hr a day, 7 days a week; a meal swipe donation program available through the student affairs office, nearby community food pantries and gift cards given point of care

## Procedure



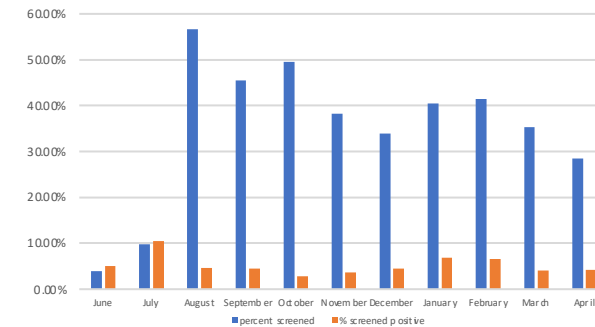
## Resources given with After Visit Summary

The following information was given to all patients who screened positive:

Drexel has several resources to help if you are worried about food.

- Mario's Market**- a food pantry located within the Student Center for Diversity and inclusion. All you need is your ID to swipe into the market.
- Student Mail Swipe Donation**- Meal assistance can be accessed through the Drexel Campus Accommodations website.
- Need helping with something else, email [feedadragon@drexel.edu](mailto:feedadragon@drexel.edu)
- Additional food pantry information was provided.
- Through a generous grant by Giant Foods, \$10 gift cards were available to patients who screened positive who returned for nurse follow up

## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION

- Education, training and incorporation of screening in clinical workflow allowed for us to reach our targets of 30 % of our population completing the screening.
- Prior to June 2021, students were not screened for food insecurity. After the in-service for staff regarding appropriate screening, the rate of food insecurity screening increased to as high as 56%.
- During this period, a total of 2550 patients were screened with 115 students screening positive for food insecurity from June 2021 to April 2022.
- Since the screening was initiated, 9 students have had a follow up appointment with the nurse and received grocery store gift cards.
- A better understanding of barriers to utilization of available resources in our population is needed as well as identification of their impact on their academic and medical health.

## CONCLUSIONS / FUTURE DIRECTION

- The goal of screening 30% of all patients was met by August 2021 through the implementation of the clinical workflow. Next steps will include increased follow up by the nursing staff for patients who screen positive.
- Through a Drexel Medical Student research project, a questionnaire is being created to look at the screening impact on 1) medical health, 2) academics, 3) the amount of time spent securing food, 4) knowledge of resources available on campus, including the utilization of the on-campus pantry, the student affairs dining donations and the use of the gift cards.
- We plan to advocate at both the local and federal levels for permanent expansion of SNAP that was provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act

## REFERENCES

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