

SuperShelf

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Project Goals

Through partnerships, HealthPartners transforms food shelves into more welcoming and respectful environments for people to access healthy food, SuperShelf uses behavioral economics to respect individual preferences while also making the healthiest choice the easiest choice for people experiencing food insecurity while respecting personal preferences.

Project Description

HealthPartners is a founding partner of SuperShelf, an innovative project dedicated to transforming food shelves by offering a positive grocery store-like experience for clients to access healthy and appealing foods. SuperShelf works with food shelves using a multi-step systems change process to:

- Create a food shelf environment that's client-centered, promoting and respecting individual choice;
- Increase access to a variety of healthy, culturally appropriate foods;
- Apply behavioral economic principles to promote healthy food choices;
- Create an appealing environment by transforming the physical space;
- Meet specific SuperShelf standards, methods and values;

and

- Make the healthiest choice the easiest choice for all.

Through grants and partnerships, there are 24 certified Supershelves across Minnesota with 4 additional transformed and awaiting certification. See all the sites at www.supershelfmn.org.

HealthPartners has shown national leadership in creating healthier food shelves, and it has received two research grants to evaluate the impact on clients' diet and health. To date, we've received funding through The Duke-UNC USDA Center for Behavioral Economics and Healthy Food Choice Research (BECR) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). These grants allow us to establish best practices—confirmed through scientific evaluation—for Minnesota and beyond. The research is studying the public health impact of this important work. Initial results show that the program is sustainable and well-received by both clients and volunteers. In addition to being practical and scalable, it increases access to a variety of healthy and culturally appropriate foods. SuperShelf has also demonstrated the potential to increase the nutritional quality of foods available to and selected by food shelf customers.

Entities Involved

UMN Extension, UMN Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, The Food Group, Lakeview Hospital, Valley Outreach. In addition, MN Department of Human Services, MN Department of Health, Hunger Solutions, Second Harvest Heartland, Channel One Foodbank, Foundation for Essential Needs, Community Action Center of Northfield, and more than 35 other food shelves throughout MN.

How Health Plans Support the Project

The project started through HealthPartners Lakeview Hospital and Valley Outreach in Stillwater with a vision to improve access to healthy foods for clients. In the process, they helped to create an innovative approach that has spread to food shelves across Minnesota in partnership with the University of Minnesota and the Food Group.

Additional Information

<https://www.supershelfmn.org/>

SuperShelf Results have been published in the following peer-reviewed journals to date:

- “Assessing the Cost Sustainability of a Behavioral Economics Intervention to Increase Access to Healthy Food in Food Shelves: A Feasibility Analysis.” Julia Gustafson, Marna Canterbury, Thomas Kottke, Elizabeth Riley, Katherine Grannon, Caitlin Caspi. The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society. Volume 10, Issue 1, 2019 (45-55).
- “A Behavioral Economics Approach to Improving Healthy Food Selection Among Food Pantry Clients.” Caitlin E Caspi, Marna Canterbury, Samantha Carlson, Jamie Bain, Laura Bohlen, Katherine Grannon, Hikaru Peterson, and Thomas Kottke. Public Health Nutrition. 21 January 2019 (1-11).

Questions?

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