

Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support
Healthy Food Shelves Initiative
May 1, 2012
9:00am - 11:00am

Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions: Representatives from 17 food shelf and hunger relief organizations participated in the meeting. If you know of a Minneapolis food shelf or other agency that should be invited to future meetings, please email their contact information to Kristen Klingler (Kristen.Klingler@minneapolismn.gov).

Spotlight on the Little Kitchen Food Shelf: Jennifer Schultz, from the [Little Kitchen Food Shelf](#), presented information on the organization's background and current operations. Little Kitchen participated in the [Garden Gleaning](#) pilot project in 2011 and will be part of the expanded 2012 program. In addition, they developed a partnership with [A Backyard Farm](#) to create 6 raised bed gardens and 2 trellises in their parking lot where they grow a variety of fresh produce items to distribute to their food shelf clients. The food shelf also receives donated produce from the Minnesota Project's [Fruits of the City](#) program and donations of culled produce delivered by [Sisters Camelot](#). If you have any questions about these existing efforts to increase healthy foods in the Little Kitchen food shelf, please contact Jennifer Schultz at jennifer@necommunity.net. Thank you to Little Kitchen and to Jennifer for hosting our meeting!

Forming a Minneapolis Food Shelf Network: In a survey of food shelf representatives, 90% indicated that they would join a Minneapolis Food Shelf Network, if one existed, to share information, pool resources, and take collective action on nutrition and hunger issues. The group discussed key components of the network including:

What is the **purpose** of the network?

- Address the unique needs of Minneapolis food shelf clients
- Facilitate sharing of resources, best practices, and accomplishments (initially focused on increasing healthy foods in food shelves, but can be expanded in the future)
- Provide networking opportunities with other food shelves and partners
- Develop consistent and unified messaging (to the public, to donors, to funders, etc)
- Connect food shelves' interests and efforts with [Homegrown Minneapolis](#) and other health department food initiatives
- Advocate for larger systems changes
- Collaborate on funding opportunities – joint applications and sharing of resources instead of competing against each other

What are its **goals** or **guiding principles**?

- Initially, the network will address two main goals: 1) connect food shelves with regular, high quality sources of healthy foods, especially gardens, farms, and farmers markets; and 2) educate clients, donors, and staff/volunteers to increase the supply and demand of healthy food items
- Develop and issue joint communications

- Improve the quality, diversity, healthiness, and variety of foods (including offering condition-specific items for those with specific health/food needs)
- Increase the ability to serve different cultural populations
- Address transportation issues common to food shelves (how to move food from point A to B; look into postal service shipping) and teach clients how to access other healthy food sources
- Explore healthy summer meal options for children
- Promote food justice; healthy food as a right
- Keep resources local (neighborhood solutions)
- Balance broader issues (like food justice) with immediate food shelf needs (day to day provision of services)

Who are its **members**?

- Open to all food shelves, meal programs, hunger advocacy groups, food banks, educational partners (Simply Good Eating, etc), and potential funders, with a focus on those in the Minneapolis geographic area (SHIP funding and resources must be used to help increase access to healthy foods in Minneapolis food shelves only).
- Find ways to keep high participation (ask about the issues that food shelves are facing that might keep them from attending meetings; explore alternate meeting formats like web conferences or an online bulletin board where information can be shared).

What is its **structure**?

- Topic-focused meetings
- Guest experts
- Monthly 2-hour meetings at rotating locations (host site will help organize and facilitate the meeting)
- Electronic communications between in-person meetings to keep the momentum going (e-newsletter, online bulletin board or website, discussion group on Healthy Eating MN web portal, etc)

How can we set it up to be **sustainable** after SHIP funding ends?

- Rotating leadership
- Established communication forum to keep everyone connected, even when they can't attend meetings
- Identify a point person to help coordinate logistics and communications after MDHFS staffing support ends

What are the **next steps**?

- Establish a name for the group (Minneapolis Healthy Food Shelf Network, etc)
- Solicit feedback and support from other food shelf representatives who were not able to attend the initial conversation
- Formalize ideas mentioned above and set up regular meeting schedule for 2012

Connecting food shelves to healthy food sources (gardens, farmers markets, and local growers):

The group discussed ways to connect food shelves with existing local, healthy food resources including:

1. Community gardens: MDHFS staff can help food shelves identify nearby community garden partners and develop procedures for getting/receiving donated produce throughout the growing season. There is also potential to use some of the SHIP funding to expand the Garden Gleaning Project to include a few more food shelves.
2. Corporate giving gardens: MDHFS staff can help food shelves identify nearby corporations or organizations with land that are interested in starting an employee-run garden and delivering produce to the food shelf on a regular basis during the growing season. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota may be able to offer limited technical assistance to corporations looking to start a garden and the [Local Food Resource Hubs Network](#) offers low-cost seeds, seedlings, tools, and educational opportunities to support these types of activities.
3. Food shelf gardens: MDHFS staff can help food shelves start gardens on-site by connecting them to guidance from [Gardening Matters](#) and resources from the Local Food Resource Hubs Network.
4. Farmers markets and farmers: MDHFS staff can help food shelves identify nearby farmers markets or farmers and develop procedures for getting/receiving donated produce throughout the growing season. It was suggested that the group develop recommendations for farmers market managers/vendors on how to best partner with food shelves to donate produce. MDHFS can also connect interested food shelves to the [Fruits of the City](#) initiative to receive free fruits harvested from backyard trees and local orchards. MDHFS can also explore helping food shelves facilitate [SNAP](#) sign ups and the distribution of [EBT/Market Bucks](#) materials at food shelves so that clients have another option for purchasing fresh, healthy foods with their food support dollars.
5. Retail stores: MDHFS staff can help food shelves connect with corner stores participating in the [Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store program](#) to set up relationships to receive small amounts of unused produce. Most food shelves seem to already be connected to produce rescue efforts with other big box retailers (Target, Rainbow, Cub, etc), so the group will not pursue this avenue as a first priority.

Meeting Reflection and Wrap-Up:

- Notes from today's meeting will be compiled and sent out to the group. Additional suggestions and comments will be incorporated as appropriate.
- Please make sure that MDHFS has your contact information on file if you wish to be included in the network directory (have print out of most recent version available).
- MDHFS intern will be setting up a time to visit each food shelf to conduct a baseline assessment of the amount of healthy food items available in your food shelf as well as current status of policies or practices that support healthy food purchasing and distribution.
- A third meeting will be held in mid-July to discuss follow up items for solution #1 as well as look at solution #2 (client/donor/staff education opportunities)