

Develop a campaign to get agencies to help with online food assistance Sign-up

May 13, 2011

What is the outcome of this proposal that will help advance the Healthy Polk priority?

- Many eligible who aren't getting food assistance (estimated 20% or more of eligible do not receive)

Does this proposal already have an organizational home?

- Yes, DHS => DMARC contract, expires 9/30/11
- Currently seven sign-up sites (listed at movethefood.org)
- Takes about 20 minutes to sign someone up
- Food Bank Alliance of Iowa/ISU Extension-older adults (also have sign-up programs)
- Will do trainings, or go to homes

What challenges do they face?

- Staff to train in how to use the online program
- Space to host someone to visit
- Language
- Clients have limited time in food pantries to do the sign-up
- Need to develop further networks of hosts for sign-ups

How can the rest of us help? What do you need?

- Possible Sites: Listed below
- PCHD
- PHC (Primary Health Care)
- Hawkeye Outreach
- Home care agencies
- Churches
- ISED (Iowans for Social and Economic Development)

Update
September 9, 2011
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- This project, funded by Department of Human Services and United Way, signed up 150 people during a one-year period for food assistance
- Seven Centers—3 food pantries and 4 non-pantry locations—were developed where people could receive assistance to sign up online
- One mobile sign-up site
- The online assistance is quick to do, and applicants hear back quickly, and usually don't need to go to General Assistance to be approved
- Funding for a second year of this project is likely, and will likely be used to hire a "Outreach Assistant" at DMARC to continue and expand this work
- Coordination is taking place with Food Bank of Iowa and Iowa State University Food Assistance sign-up initiatives

Ideas from food stakeholders about how this project could be expanded/improved

- Add this service to the mobile food pantry
- Advertise this to recipients of Meals on Wheels
- Advertise at schools (especially ESL classes)
- Encourage more vendors to accept EBT cards
- Request to grocery stores to promote the sign-up
- Language issues: partner with Lutheran Services, use online translation tools or Language Line
- Agencies could add a question about food assistance to intake questionnaire

Challenges and needs

- Promotion of this service
- Additional locations
- Sustainability – other agencies that will host a kiosk and support clients who sign up
- Need to frame this service as empowering and benefiting the entire community, and not just low income people who are food insecure
- Ability to take this sign up into homes

Commitments made

- Meals on Wheels plans to add a question about food assistance to their intake