

Vancouver Food Strategy Group 6 Project Proposal

Introduction

Background

Davis and Tarasuk (1994) defined food insecurity as "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so". "The Richmond Food Bank Society" (n.d.) works to address the local issue of food insecurity by being a hub of food charity. This society was founded in 1983 and it served about 20 families at the time. Today the Richmond Food Bank (RFB) feeds about 1500 a week and is a registered charity. The RFB is not funded by the government, but runs on donations and volunteers. For every 1\$ the food bank spends, about 6\$ go towards distributing food to clients (Food Bank Facts, 2017). Kelly, Q. K. (n.d.). describes food utilization as proper food storage, processing, health, and sanitation in its relation to proper nutrition. To improve food utilization "The Richmond Food Bank Society" (n.d.) has recently changed the way they distribute food. Previously, they distributed food by providing clients with a basket of food that volunteers had picked out. In order to make the RFB seem more like a grocery store, the food bank altered this system. This was done so that clients have more of a choice in determining which food products they would like to consume as they get to pick items from the different food stations.

Aim

The aim of our project is to increase food utilization for RFB clients.

Demographic/client background

The food bank previously created a survey where they had a small sample size of 38 people to know more about their clients and their satisfaction with the food bank and their products and services.

Some of the notable information from the survey:

- Variety/choice of food-3.6/5
 - o Some clients suggested more fresh produce, more variety for protein, and more brown rice
- Quality of food-3.5/5
 - o Clients expressed concern with expiry dates of food
- Challenges
 - o Clients expressed dissatisfaction with the long lineup for the food bank (especially during bad weather, but also because they were visible to the public). They also mentioned that transporting food/accessing the food bank presented difficulties and also suggested they extend their hours of operation.
- Grocery Store/Food Bank frequency
 - o Most clients go to the grocery store once a week (protein, fresh produce)
 - o Most clients go to the food bank once a week (starchy foods, canned goods)
- Demographic/ethnicity/special needs
 - o About 50% of clients speak another language other than English, one client follows a Halal diet, and some reported illnesses (diabetes, celiac disease, chronic alcoholism, colostomy), food allergies, some pregnant women and several families with children

Significance

According to Barrett (2010), one is food secure if they have ‘...access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences...’. This is important as one

of the main goals of any food bank is to address food security. Through a systematic review of client surveys completed across North America, Australia, and the Netherlands, food banks that are most successful at accomplishing this goal provide culturally appropriate food (Bazerghi, McKay, & Dunn, 2016). Nestle (2014) describes culturally appropriate food as “safe, nutritious, diverse and culturally acceptable”.

Our group believes that providing culturally appropriate food, or food that corresponds with the client's preferences and needs, is key to a successful food bank service because you cannot alleviate food insecurity by providing foods that the clients do not know how to incorporate into their diet. This is why we would like to conduct client interviews at the RFB focusing on both the clientele demographic and their utilization of the food provided. This can improve food security by bridging the communication gap between the RFB and its clientele. A better understanding of which foods are preferred by the client base will allow the RFB to determine which foods they should be investing their money in when purchasing.

Through analysis of the information gathered through the interviews, our group will be able to communicate ideas to the RFB to improve the cultural appropriateness of their service. While compiling our ideas, we will use asset-based community development (ABCD) approaches. ABCD focuses on active listening, and contributions from existing members of the community (Mathie, & Cunningham, 2010). We will carefully analyze our interviews and consider which assets and resources already present in the area would be beneficial for the RFB to draw from, hopefully resulting in sustainable growth of the RFB and allowing them to build more relationships within their community.

At the moment, the RFB has very limited information regarding their demographic and utilization as their last client survey, conducted in 2010, included more general questions that concentrated on overall client experience.

Objectives

- Conduct interviews with clients of the RFB and overall utilization of the food provided

Inquiry Questions

- Could food security be improved by making the food bank more accessible to minorities? I.E. those with disabilities, food allergies, or language barriers)
- How adequately do the services of the food bank meet the unique demographic needs of the people who use the RFB on a regular basis?
- How do clients utilize the food they currently receive?

Methods

1. Group members will meet to discuss and formulate a short set of interview questions that focus on food utilization and demographic barriers

2. Group members will travel to the RFB and conduct food utilization interviews with clients who volunteer to participate. To thank RFB clients for their participation, group members will offer home-made cookies or muffins to those who take part in a short interview. This process will help gather demographic information and answer questions of food utilization.

3. Group members will conduct interviews on two separate distribution days to increase the sample size. Group members will try to obtain 15 to 20 interviews on each of the two distribution days.

4. Interviews may be conducted with the help of other food bank volunteers who could act as translators, as a large portion of the clientele speak mandarin or Cantonese.

5. Data will be organized on an excel sheet format that has been used by the RFB in the past. This data will be analyzed by the group and RFB. From this analysis group members will write a summary about it.

Ethical considerations

- All participants who agree to be interviewed will be kept anonymous throughout data analysis and in any documents released to the public.
- All participants will be asked to sign a consent form stating their willingness to be interviewed.
- Group members will complete Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans to conduct ethical research.
- Group members will make observations of the food bank and their volunteers to determine the extent of the RFB's accommodation of minorities.

References

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