Freshplace is a food pantry collaborative founded by Chrysalis Center, Foodshare, and the Junior League of Hartford, who have partnered with the University of Connecticut to evaluate the program. For the evaluation, we are conducting a randomized study to compare 100 Freshplace members with 100 people in a Comparison group who frequent traditional food pantries. We follow participants for 18 months, conducting surveys every 3 months. Data collection will be complete in December 2012.

Case Management
The major difference between Freshplace and other “traditional” food pantries is that Freshplace members meet with a Project Manager during their first visit, and then monthly, to discuss their set goals for becoming food secure and self sufficient. We have created more standardization in our case management procedures by using a new tracking form. At each visit, the Project Manager meets with members and they identify goals they want to work on. The Project Manager assesses (on a scale from 1-5) their readiness for reaching their goal, and then monitors progress at the next visit. We hope this form can serve as a model for use in other pantries using case management. The chart below ranks goal categories by percentage of members who said each was a goal they wanted to work on. The goals that were identified as being high priority showed the largest improvements over time.

![Goal Chart]

Food Security is access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.
Over four visits, there were significant changes in Freshplace members making progress toward their goals. When Freshplace members identified an area as being a high priority they wanted to work on, they made more progress than the areas that they ranked as a lower priority. For example, we did not see significant changes in transportation or child care because these were seen as lower priorities compared to other goals.

The following are examples of the types of services and programs received by Freshplace members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services / Programs Received</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received full-time employment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received part-time employment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in GED / computer classes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained housing support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received Energy Assistance</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received SNAP / food stamps</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked with medical provider</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self Sufficiency**

One of our major outcomes for the Freshplace program is to improve self sufficiency (ability of a family to make ends meet), which we measure using the Missouri Self Sufficiency screener (on a scale from 0 – 100). The screener measures changes in ten areas: employment, education, income, health insurance, housing, physical health, mental health, child care, transportation, and psychosocial stress. When we compare changes to self sufficiency scores over time, there are significant differences between Freshplace members and the comparison group (p<.01).

Through individualized case management and motivational interviewing, the Freshplace program increases self sufficiency scores among members significantly more than would happen in traditional food pantries or by chance.

One Freshplace member said “When I come I feel it is very helpful with updating my resume, using the computer to look for jobs, etc.” Another member said Freshplace is helpful because of the “Job opportunities, help with resume writing and looking for jobs.”
Food Security
Another key outcome for our Freshplace evaluation is measuring changes to food security (ability to access enough food for one’s family). The Food Security Module includes 18 questions that ask with increasing severity about a household’s ability to have enough food for their family. For example, “in the past 3 months did you ever worry that your food would run out before you got money to buy more?”, “were your children not eating enough because you just couldn’t afford enough food?”, and “did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?”. Significant improvements in food security were observed in Freshplace members over time.

![Average Change in Food Security Scores over Time](chart)
Results show that Freshplace members had fewer times when they skipped meals because there wasn’t enough money for food, or reduced the quality of their food, or worried about having enough food for their families over the past 3 months.

Client Choice and Dietary Quality
The Freshplace food pantry is designed as client-choice where members select their own food using a shopping cart, similar to shopping in a grocery store. The pantry includes primarily perishable items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat selections. As members are exposed to a wide variety of fresh produce, we see significant improvements in fruit and vegetable consumption compared to the control group, and these changes are maintained over one year.

![Fruit & Vegetable Consumption](chart)
Results show that Freshplace members had higher scores in fruit and vegetable consumption compared to the control group, with significant improvements maintained over one year.
Nutrition Education
In addition to providing fresh food, Freshplace offers other programs and services that help members learn skills to become more self-sufficient. One such program is Cooking Matters, a course designed by the national organization Share Our Strength, that helps families with limited resources learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients and prepare them in ways that are healthiest for their families. Course instructors teach cooking skills, practical nutrition information, and food budgeting strategies.

The Cooking Matters class and Shopping Matters class are part of the Freshplace program to help members improve their food shopping, cooking, and eating habits. During one class in 2010, 13 members (all women) participated in the Cooking Matters class for 6 weeks. At the end of the classes, 77% of participants said they were eating more fruits and vegetables, and 71% said they had improved their cooking skills. A total of 39 Freshplace members have participated in Cooking or Shopping Matters classes.

We would like to provide Cooking Matters as part of the standard curriculum of programs offered to all Freshplace members, which costs approximately $4,500 per 6 week class.

The progress we are seeing with Freshplace members is encouraging, and we hope the program can serve as a model for other food pantries. We learn lessons and adjust the program as we go. A woman from the Food Bank of Northern Nevada who heard about Freshplace said “We don’t have anything like Freshplace, that’s for sure. Your concept is innovative from our perspective.”

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