

Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story



A Dignified Approach at Trend Community Pantry

Background

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health partnered with Antelope Valley Partners for Health (AVPH) to implement the Nutrition Pantry Program (NPP). AVPH serves the community of Antelope Valley in northern Los Angeles County, including the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. AVPH aims to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in Antelope Valley by providing access to health care, community needs assessments, mental health care in schools, dental health for children, nutrition and physical activity programs, case management for pregnant women, and implementing a coordinated community framework to lead the area in local health policy. The NPP, designed by Leah's Pantry, is intended for food pantry sites. By providing technical assistance and trainings, resources, and implementation roadmaps, each implementing site can receive public recognition through bronze, silver and gold certification. The NPP focuses on guiding sites to develop site-specific changes to a client-centered, health-focused distribution through six focus areas that include pantry environment, nutrition education, inventory, cultural and dietary accommodations, community connections, and pantry policies & procedures. AVPH worked with Trend Community Pantry (Trend), a community home in a residential neighborhood in the city of Lancaster, providing support in implementing the NPP framework. Trend also provides free services such as an after-school program and other resources such as school supplies and a community garden to residents in the Antelope Valley. After learning that most participants at Trend lacked basic knowledge surrounding nutrition, AVPH began hosting nutrition education workshops before their distribution. This addresses one of the six focus areas of NPP, nutrition education.

Body

THE NEED: Challenge

Community homes like Trend are selectively scattered through the city of Lancaster in areas with households who identify as low-income, mostly immigrants or areas with high

crime. While Trend was established before the pandemic to address nutrition security, it was evident that pantry participants had unmet needs. After using the client survey tools from Leah's Pantry, findings showed clients were in need of materials written in their preferred languages, nutrition education, ways to prepare unfamiliar items from the food distribution, and access to items that fit their dietary needs. A client needs assessment was then completed to help guide the work through the development of a workplan that addressed the six focus areas of the NPP.

THE WORK: Solution

After the CalFresh Healthy Living team at AVPH began to work collaboratively with Deborah Unruh, NPP Ambassador at Trend, and using the finalized NPP workplan as a guide to drive the change at the food distribution, implementation of NPP began. Concentrating on one focus area at a time, Mrs. Unruh was determined to transform her food pantry into a client-centered, health-focused model. AVPH supported the implementation of the NPP by providing tables, canopies, shelving units and tablecloths to improve the distribution environment, bilingual nutrition education materials and classes to promote good health, and bilingual signage that labeled items that were low-sodium and low-sugar. Trend quickly became certified and is now a Silver Certified Pantry.



THE IMPACT: Results

Follow-up assessments have been a tremendous indication of the progress that Trend has made. Significant improvements in the following focus areas have been made; nutrition education, environment, dietary & cultural accommodation, inventory and purchasing and community connections. AVPH staff has completed 3 nutrition education series', utilizing the OC Nutrition 5 Series and Food Smarts for Adults, to date that included 6 classes per series reaching over 160 pantry clients with an interest to continue classes. Clients have expressed verbal appreciation of the changes that have been adopted and appreciate the sense of community this food pantry provides.

Sustaining Success:

Mrs. Unruh is determined to continue to implement the NPP beyond graduating the program to allow her clients to continue to feel dignified each time they visit the distribution. She plans to continue to utilize the posters, recipe cards, and recipe books



provided by the CalFresh Healthy Living program for nutrition education promotion. Additionally, with the established partnerships made with other local food pantries through the Antelope Valley Food Hub, inventory will continue to provide a variety of fresh and appropriate foods to pantry clients.

Favorite Quote

"Las clases fueron muy beneficiosa para mí. Especialmente al poder compartir y hablar con otros, pueden aprender unos de otros sobre diferentes formas de hacer cambios saludables."
- Trend Community Pantry class participant

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