



Food Resources for Residents: You are what you eat!

Food provides our energy, our social connections and is the source of nourishment for our bodies. Food can heal us or harm us, depending on our dietary choices. Unfortunately, many residents in affordable housing live in food deserts where healthy, fresh food isn't affordable or available. Food deserts are neighborhoods that have low access to grocery stores and transportation to fresh food. The health impacts of hunger are immense. According to Just Harvest, hunger triples obesity rates among women and doubles the chances of developing diabetes. Hungry children are three times more likely to be suspended from school and two times as likely to repeat a grade and need special education.

Farm to Table Buy Local

Farm to Table Buy Local is a non-profit organization based in Pittsburgh, PA in May, 2018. A significant component of the organization is to deliver Food Coordination programs in affordable housing communities throughout Pennsylvania. On-site Food Coordinators will provide on-going programming for both family communities and senior high-rise buildings.

The goals of the Food Coordination program are to:

- Increase the amount of fresh, healthy and local food consumed
- Assist residents to acquire and prepare fresh, healthy and local food

At the end of a 12-month period, we hope to have launched a self-sustaining Cooking Club for the residents in the building or community. The Food Coordination program can work with any affordable housing site that has a Community Room with tables and chairs for the residents to receive, prepare and/or share meals. All equipment will be obtained for both the Cooking Club and for individual residents who would like to participate.

Ongoing curriculum will be provided, including:

- Bulk/batch cooking to provide ongoing meals to community members;
- Food preservation and storage methods to enhance nutrition and storing healthy food to last all month long;
- How to organize community gardens

How to Implement on a Small Scale

Housing authorities and other residential affordable housing developers have a unique opportunity to improve access to fresh, healthy food for their residents. Community rooms are ideal spaces for food delivery, food storage and meal preparation (community meals and take out). Supportive Services or Tenant Councils can put together purchasing programs for on-site grocery delivery service.

You can help residents connect to food resources in many ways:

- Connect residents to County Aging office for Farmers Market Nutrition Vouchers.
- Find a local Farmers Market and ask a farm to stop at your site on their way to or from the Farmers Market.
- Help residents apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through the online COMPASS program or at your local County Assistance office.
- Receive donations from 412 Food Rescue, 724 Food Rescue, or your local food rescue organization.
- Contact your local Food Bank to receive donations.
- Add a "Free Food" book shelf to the Community Room for non-perishable food items to be available.
- Add a chest freezer to store large items for community meals organized at holidays, birthdays, etc.
- Start a voluntary Cooking Club on donation days for residents to assist in breaking down bulk items for single use.



By: Erin Hart, Director, American HealthCare Group

American HealthCare Group provides Supportive Services and Health/Wellness services to over 150 senior affordable housing communities and thousands of residents through Pennsylvania.