Facilitating Healthy Changes at Food Pantries through the Development and Utilization of a Standardized Environment Assessment Tool

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**Background**

- 12.9% of Washington households are classified as food insecure
  - 1.7 Washingtonians rely on SNAP
  - 1.5 Washingtonians rely on their local food pantry
- Shift in the clientele served by food aid services since the 2008 recession
  - Short-term crisis → chronically food insecure
- Food aid services have the potential to impact the nutritional quality and the diets of their recipients
  - Additional research is needed to systematically evaluate the food pantry environment

**Purpose**

Support WSU Extension SNAP-Ed Program and the Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence Western Region (RENECE-W) to field test a scored pantry environmental assessment tool, and use this tool to implement environmental changes at a local food pantry.

**Methodology**

1. Analyze Pre-Healthy Food Pantry Assessment
2. Develop an implementation plan for environmental interventions
3. Implement proposed interventions
4. Conduct a Post-Healthy Food Pantry Assessment
5. Evaluate environmental changes and accuracy of tool

**Results**

- Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool captured the implemented environmental interventions
- The post-assessment score of the targeted food pantry increased 12 points from the pre-assessment:
  - (1) Walkability; (2) Food distribution to clients; (3) Canned and dried fruits, vegetables and lean proteins; (4) Low-fat dairy, eggs, and grains; (5) Policies
  - Despite an overall increase, the food pantry scored worse on:
    - (1) The variety of frozen lean protein offered; (2) Evidence of pests on the premises
  - The increase in points was not completely attributed to the interventions of this project

**Conclusion**

1. The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment is an effective tool to systematically evaluate the food pantry environment
2. The collaboration between food pantries and their stakeholders is integral to the development of specific and appropriate environmental interventions to facilitate healthy choices for food pantry clients

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