

Report to the Community

July-September 2023



FIGHTING FOOD INSECURITY TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH

From roof-top gardens to the innovative Food as Medicine Clinic, food insecurity is a major focus of our work at the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ It's one of the top risks affecting patients in our screenings for health-related social needs, or Social Drivers of Health (SDOH). About 20% of respondents worry their food will run out, and they won't have enough money to buy more.

We know that a lack of sufficient nutrition has a direct impact on health. People who experience food insecurity are more likely to develop chronic illness. Once a chronic disease is established, food insecurity makes managing the illness more difficult.

The Institute for H.O.P.E.™ is dedicated to addressing this need and helping to ensure our patients and neighbors have enough to eat and access to nutritious food options to support their health.

Through a partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, MetroHealth provides monthly produce distributions at Main Campus, Parma Medical Center and the Cancer Center. In 2022, our programs served 3,678 boxes of food – 90,217 meals worth– to 4,570 people in 1,576 households.

We are on track to exceed this in 2023, with the equivalent of more than 32,000 meals distributed in the third quarter and nearly 83,000 meals year to date.

The partnership also benefits the Food as Medicine Clinic, a ground-breaking program at MetroHealth. This program

provides a nutritious food package twice a month for patients experiencing food insecurity and diagnosed with a chronic illness affected by diet, such as hypertension and Type 2 Diabetes.

Patients can obtain a three-day supply of nutritious food for their household at no cost by visiting the clinic with a prescription from a provider. They also can receive nutrition education, recipes and other supportive services. The Clinic has two locations, one at MetroHealth's Main Campus and the other at the Ohio City Health Center.

MetroHealth is the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's largest source of referrals of people in need through Unite Ohio, an electronic resource referral platform that connects health care providers and social service organizations to support patients and track outcomes.

"Social Drivers of Health (SDOH), especially food insecurity, have a greater impact on health and wellness than medical care," said Kristen Matlack, Community Health Advocacy Initiative Manager for the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ "We are committed to doing what we can to provide assistance for those needs. The strength of our strong community partnerships with organizations like the Greater Cleveland Food Bank is essential to our success in helping our patients live healthier lives."

Learn how our work in this area has drawn national attention and led to groundbreaking initiatives in the Program Updates section.

FOOD INSECURITY: GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE

The Institute for H.O.P.E.™ is engaging high school students from Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) and Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools to help develop projects to address food insecurity in their community.

The Institute for H.O.P.E.™ School Health Program is engaging the Institute's food insecurity expertise for the initiative, which is funded through two grants totaling nearly \$50,000 from the state and national School-Based Health Alliance and Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry (NKH) Campaign.

The grants support Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) at three local high schools: CMSD's Garrett Morgan High School and Lincoln-West School of Global Studies and Cleveland Heights-University Heights High School. Students in grades 9 through 11 were invited to participate when the project began last year. More than 15 students from each school stepped up. As part of the YAC, they will meet regularly with the goals of:

- Learning about and providing feedback on the health and wraparound services provided by MetroHealth's School Health Program.
- Promoting School Health Program services to their peers.
- Designing and executing a food access project of their choice intended to improve food security and health outcomes for students and their families.
- Informing the future direction of School Health Program services, both clinical and in food access, that can be replicated throughout the district.

This is the second year MetroHealth has received a grant from NKH. The 2022 grant funded pilot projects throughout the nation, including MetroHealth's food access and nutrition education collaboration with CMSD's Summer Experience program. This project focused on filling health and education gaps students experience during the summer months.

LIFE-CHANGING CONNECTIONS

At MetroHealth, we continue to rely on the Unite Ohio platform to help our patients access critical services to meet their needs.



To date, more than 19,664 referrals have connected 10,388 Cuyahoga County residents with essential resources such as fresh food, digital access, utility assistance, transportation and more.

In the third quarter, almost half (46%) of all referrals from MetroHealth were for Food Assistance. These referrals cover a wide range of needs, including Emergency Food, Food Pantries, Prepared Meals and nutrition benefits such as SNAP and WIC.

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank (GCFB) is essential to this work. Dia Orlowsky, a dedicated GCFB staff member, promptly and effectively responds to these referrals, connecting patients to services and assisting with SNAP applications.

Learn more about Unite Ohio at uniteus.com/networks/ohio.

PROGRAM UPDATES

● This year, we shared nearly 350 pounds of fresh vegetables and herbs harvested from our HOPE & Healing Garden with MetroHealth patients. Seventy percent of households served by the program reported experiencing food insecurity. The program also hosted three harvest and educational events, providing free produce, healthy food tastings and educational handouts and recipes. The rooftop container garden was started in the fall of 2020 as a collaborative effort between the Institute for H.O.P.E.™, the Cancer Center, the Pediatrics Clinic and The Gathering Place. [Click here to learn more.](#)

● The MetroHealth System and Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAAA) have received a \$450,000 grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services to screen seniors for malnutrition and connect them to community resources. The three-year Innovation in Nutrition Programs and Services grant will fund hiring a full-time Institute for H.O.P.E.™ Community Health Worker and a WRAAA Resource Specialist. [Click here to learn more.](#)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH, RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Last quarter, we participated in 21 community-based events. We also showcased our work and presented our program findings at 13 regional and national conferences and webinars. Recent highlights include:

● [MetroHealth and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank collaborate to distribute food at Downtown Cleveland's Muni Lot](#) (August 10 and 24)

● [MetroHealth's Center for Arts in Health \(CAH\) and the Cleveland Clinic partner to bring NOAHCON23 to Cleveland](#) (September 19-21) Linda Jackson, CAH Director, served as co-Chair.

● [MetroHealth and Cleveland Metroparks host the Multicultural Children's Health Expo at the Cleveland Zoo](#) (July 24, August 14 and September 11)

● [Dr. Misak, Karen Cook and Kevin Chagin showcased our social needs work at the Vizient Health Equity Measurement Series.](#) (August 15 and September 5)