

Improving the Food and Nutrition Services Program Voucher System

Heritage Health and Housing

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Introduction

The Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Program at Heritage Health and Housing has been struggling to meet projected contract numbers for the service category of the Supplemental Food Voucher. The program found that:

- Percentage ratings on the Master Itemization Report (MIR) fluctuate, continually showing year-to-date performance below the 95% goal.
- Consumers often neglect to bring back their voucher receipts.
- Fiscal department sometimes delays in providing the funding to purchase the voucher.
- Limited staff are available to complete data entry, resulting in late data input.

Upon enrollment, consumers are instructed about the rules of the voucher program. Below are the instructions that are given when they receive a voucher.

- Receipts must be returned as soon as possible after distribution.
- No unhealthy food items can be purchased using the vouchers.
- If unhealthy foods are purchased, this is regarded as a violation that comes with a penalty.

Project Aim

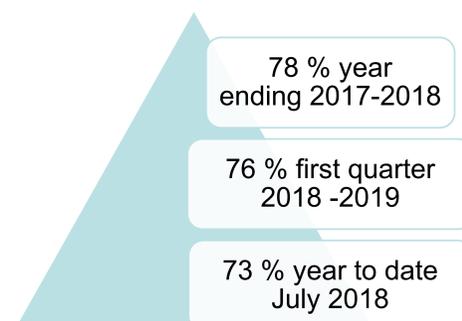
To improve the annual year-to-date numbers on the MIR to meet at least 95% of expectation for supplemental food vouchers.

Methods

Staff brainstormed ideas on ways to make improvements to the emergency voucher program. The results generated were:

1. Program Director will send memo to the fiscal department at least 2 months in advance for the appropriate funding to purchase emergency vouchers.
2. Nutritionists will hold groups quarterly to discuss healthy foods versus unhealthy foods.
3. Program Director will discuss voucher system at Community Meetings.
4. Staff will enlist help from stipend workers to improve data entry timeliness.
5. Dietitian will counsel consumers who are in violation regarding alternate foods that they can purchase.
6. A consumer who is in violation of the rules must meet with the Registered Dietitian to review the list of allowed items before he/she becomes eligible for another voucher.

Figure 1



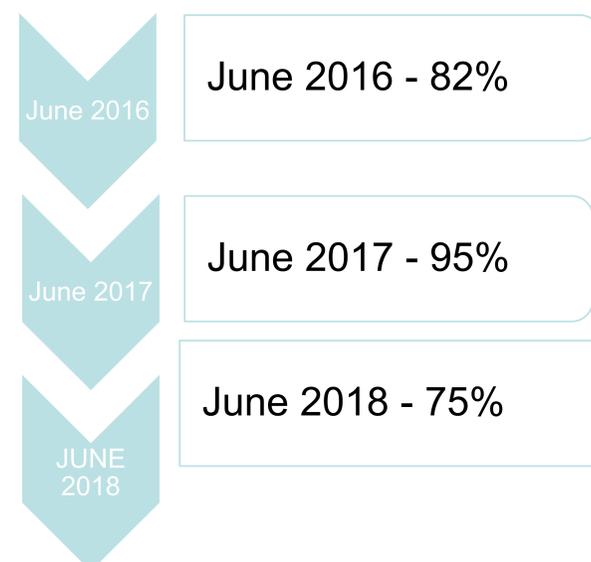
Results

We expected the new strategies to ideally provide the following results:

- Fiscal department will have checks available on time for purchase of vouchers.
- Administrative Assistant will order vouchers on a timely basis.
- Supermarket staff will have vouchers ready for pick-up without delay after order is placed.
- Staff, enlisting the help of stipend workers, will ensure proper data entry.
- Staff will ensure that consumers provide receipts in a timely basis.

However, as Figure 2 shows, performance continues to fluctuate and additional efforts are needed for consistent improvement.

Figure 2



Conclusions

It was the expectation that implementing these new methods would lead to the improvement of the FNS voucher system.

Our prediction was that the percentage rating would increase from 78% (as seen at the end of the previous contract year) to > 95% YTD on the MIR or by the end of the current contract year.

To date, the numbers continue to fluctuate as seen in Figures 1 and 2, we believe due to the following issues:

- The program still experiences staff shortages
- There continue to be delays from the fiscal department in providing funds to purchase vouchers

Staff are continuing to identify ways to ensure that by the end of the current contract year, the year-to-date performance will improve:

- A new form is being utilized to make it easier for signatures and data entry
- A simple notation on receipts next to consumers signature keeps tab of receipts that have been returned.

These efforts have led to significant improvements, as each month we now receive ~70% of receipts from clients.

