



NEWS RELEASE

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SURVEY GIVES VOICE TO FOOD SHELF CLIENTS

Behaviors, values and needs regarding healthy food are enlightening

Clients who use the VEAP (Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People) Food Pantry in Bloomington have shed some light on their habits and values related to healthy food, thanks to a survey conducted late in 2014 by Bloomington's Division of Public Health with funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Program, Minnesota Department of Health.

"The survey results are important because the Public Health Division is partnering with VEAP on a shared goal of making healthy eating easier," said Health Specialist, Joan Bulfer. The survey helped to assess food shelf clients' needs related to eating healthy in order to give direction to achieving this shared goal.

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Most food shelf clients have healthy eating behaviors

One of the important insights gained from this survey is that the majority of VEAP's food shelf clients have healthy eating behaviors. Nearly all clients eat food made at home most or every day, according to the survey. Also, at least half make meals from scratch most days or every day. Eating more homemade and fewer processed foods are two behaviors associated with healthy eating. Almost three-quarters of VEAP clients said that eating healthy is very important to them.

Cost of food interferes with desire to be healthy

The survey also revealed a mismatch between the value VEAP clients place on health and how they view their own health status. VEAP clients said healthy eating is important to them, yet only about

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one-quarter of VEAP clients consider themselves to be in good or excellent health. Two-thirds of the general population believes that they are in good or excellent health (Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment 2010).

About two-thirds of VEAP clients noted in the survey that “It costs too much to eat healthy.” Meats, fruits and vegetables are foods that VEAP clients said are hardest to purchase. Almost all of the food shelf clients worry about running out of food before they have money to buy more.

Survey stresses the need for healthy food donations

Another key finding from this survey is that VEAP clients need the food shelf as a source for healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables. Over half of surveyed food shelf clients said it is “somewhat hard” or “very hard” to get fruits and vegetables that do not come from VEAP. According to the survey, nearly two-thirds report eating less fruits and vegetables on weeks they don’t shop at VEAP.

Through the Statewide Health Improvement Program, VEAP and Bloomington’s Public Health Division have partnered to increase healthy food donations. The two organizations have done this by providing donation bins for VEAP at farmers markets, and encouraging backyard and community gardeners to donate some of their harvest. This summer the Public Health Division and VEAP are partnering with the Garden Gleaning Project, a program of the Minnesota Project, to help gardeners plant a portion of their harvest for the food shelf.

The message about healthy food donations is timely as March is VEAP’s food drive month. VEAP Advancement Director, Patty Schulz, said, “VEAP clients know what constitutes a healthy diet but are often unable to afford fresh fruits and vegetables. That is why VEAP is making it a priority to collect, purchase and distribute high quality, nutritious foods for our neighbors in need.”

“People can make a big difference in their community when they donate healthy food to VEAP’s Food Pantry,” said Joan Bulfer. “It’s how we make healthy eating easier for everyone, and that’s how we make a healthy community.”

Highlights of the 2014 VEAP Food Program Survey can be found under “Local public health reports” at www.bloomingtonmn.gov/cs/public-health.

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