Connecticut Mental Health Center’s Food, Nutrition and Food Insecurity Initiative

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The Connecticut Mental Health Center
CMHC

- Founded in 1966
- Collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Yale University
- Joint Commission accredited
- CMS psychiatric hospital
- 5000 individuals a year
- 260 state employees
- 300 Yale employees
CMHC

• Approximately 5000 people served in FY16
• 42 inpatient beds consisting of a 20 bed locked unit, a 12 bed clinical research unit and a 10 bed transitional unit.
• FY 2017 Funding consists of $64.3 million from the State and $26 million from Federal and private sources in support of research and training, administered by Yale.
CMHC Missions

• Clinical
• Research
• Education
• Community partnership
Food and Nutrition Program
Prior to Transformation

• No institutional kitchen on site. Only a sub-optimal kitchen to support a cafeteria for employees, outpatients and visitors.
• Since 1966, a contract with Yale-New Haven Hospital for inpatient meals and dietitian services.
• No community partnerships and no connection with regional or national organizations focused on food, nutrition or food insecurity.
Unhealthy food served in the cafeteria
Vending Machines
CMHC Inpatient Food from Yale New Haven Hospital
Transporting Inpatient Meals to CMHC

CMHC Freight Elevator

Electric Cart

Tunnel from YNHH to CMHC
Catalysts for Change

• Dissatisfaction with cafeteria
  -- Money loser
  -- Low quality food and customer service
  -- No management experience
  -- Too many vending machines
• Dissatisfaction with inpatient food and nutrition service
  -- Violating the Hippocratic Oath
Next Step---Get Help

• Admitting ignorance
  – MD training
    • No management training
    • No nutritional training

• Taking advantage of local landscape
  – Rudd Center on Food Policy & Obesity
  – Marydale DeBor
  – Private donors
  – Supporting foundation
    • CMHC foundation
The Leadership Team

Michael Sernyak, MD  
Chief Executive Officer of CMHC

Robert A. Cole, MHSA  
Chief Operating Officer of CMHC

Kyle Pedersen, MAR  
Director of CMHC Foundation

Marydale Debor, JD  
Director of CMHC Food Transformation Project
The Nutrition Team

Chef Anne Gallagher

Francine Blinten, MS
Nutritionist
Our Farmer and Unexpected Horticultural Therapist

Jacqueline Maisonpierre, BSc
Holistic Health

• Bring FQHC on site
• Promote physical activity
  – Gym
  – Showers
  – Cycling
• Farmers’ Market
  – CitySeed
Strategic Vision

• Food plays a key role in treatment/prevention
  – Cafeteria
  – Inpatient food services

• Consultant developed plan
  – Restructure nutrition/food services
  – Involve therapeutic, research, occupational and recreational therapy programs
Key Elements of Master Plan

• **Quick wins**
  – Good, free water
  – Remove (some) vending machines

• **Declare the goal centerwide**
  – Institutional food policy
  – RFP for a vendor to consolidate and manage both the retail and inpatient food services
  – Community garden

• **Patient advisory board**

• **Partner**
  – CMHC Foundation
  – CitySeed

• **Join organizations**
  – Healthier Hospitals initiative ([www.healthierhospitals.org](http://www.healthierhospitals.org))
  – The Root Cause Coalition ([www.rootcausecoalition.org](http://www.rootcausecoalition.org))
Strength of Collaborations

- **Green Village Initiative**—develop courtyard garden for growing herbs and selected vegetables
- **New Haven Farms**—oversight and care of courtyard garden
- **Fair Haven Community Health Center** (FQHC) and **New Haven Farms** on their Farm-Based Wellness Program
- **New Haven Land Trust** to establish nearby community garden
- **CitySeed** for on-site summertime Farmers’ Market
- Bring outside consultant on board as a member of CMHC management staff to oversee and orchestrate transformation/transition
Pilot Clinical and Rehabilitation Programs- 2014

• **Individual nutritional counseling**
  – Referrals from primary care
  – Screen for food insecurity/access
  – Assess cooking/shopping skills

• **Better Eaters Club 1.0 & 2.0 (weekly/6weeks each)**
  – Group
  – Healthy diet on a limited budget
  – Team taught; 2nd round included peer-alumni
CMHC’s Hill North Community Garden

A collaboration of CMHC, the New Haven Land Trust, Advanced Nursing & Rehab Center and neighbors in the Hill North community.
Our community partner, New Haven Farms
Our community partner, CitySeed
Vendor Procurement

- Competitive vendor selection- using institutional food policy to steer RFP through state contracting regulations (September 2014 - April 2015)
- Team of clinical leaders, business office staff, plant ops to review bids
- Contract negotiation and execution (May-June, 2015)
New Retail Cafe
Transition

• July 1, 2015 vendor on site--retail café; inpatient August 1
• Challenges and mid course corrections
• Patients adaptation to “new foods” (Quinoa??)—one sought legal redress for “health foods only”
  – Orienting vendor staff to unique features of psychiatric hospital and its culturally diverse, very poor patients; maintaining departmental engagement in support of vendor
  – Budget limitations
  – Enforcing institutional food policy (YES, we are serious!)
Connecticut Mental Health Center Food Transformation Initiative

- Culinary Garden-on site
- Community Garden
- Public Education & Special Events
- Monthly “BEC” community meetings-peer led
- Better Eaters-Club Group sessions
- Wellness Center- (nutrition counseling)
- Food Insecurity Screening & Individual diet plans
- Emergency Food Bags, Acute Care
- Monthly Subsidized meals Café Vouchers for acute situations
- Weekly Farmers Market
- SNAP WIC coupons
- CitySeed
- CMHC funded coupons

Healthy Food HUB Dining services for inpatients: retail café outpatients, staff, and visitors.
Lessons learned

• Partnering
  – Leverage available resources and knowledge
  – Vulnerability
    • Farmers’ market
    • First food vendor

• Bandwidth/Opportunity costs
  – Takes tremendous focus
  – Principal interest of CEO and COO
  – Still hired a consultant

• Dynamic mission
Dynamic Mission

- Patient feedback
  - Food too expensive
  - How to cook on SNAP
  - Customer service
- Maturation of mission
  - Allocation of capital
  - Role of farmers’ markets
  - Food insecurity
- Poverty
  - Programs to address

- Education
  - Residents and fellows
  - Demonstration kitchen
Contributors

• Green Village Initiative (www.gogvi.org)
• Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc. (www.otsukaus.com)
• CT DMHAS (www.ct.gov/dmhas) – Jones Trust
• Individual donors through the CMHC Foundation

Collaborators

• CMHC Foundation (www.cmhcfoundation.org)
• CitySeed, Inc. (www.cityseed.org)
• New Haven Land Trust (www.newhavenlandtrust.org)
• New Haven Farms (www.newhavenfarms.org)
• New Haven Food Policy Council (www.feednewhaven.org)
• Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health (medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/prch)
• The Consultation Center (www.theconsultationcenter.org)
• Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (www.care.yale.edu)
References


