

BUILDING EVALUATION CAPACITY

Evaluation Report August 2016 – February 2017

Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc.

Food Pantry - KEY FINDINGS, USE

Cora Mercer, Executive Director

Evelyn Hernandez, Executive Assistant

Ralph Knighton, Board Chair

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Mission Statement: The purpose of Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc. is to provide an educational, cultural, social and recreational "safe haven" of opportunity for the diverse, ethnic populations of Hartford, Connecticut and its surrounding towns and communities. Through collaboration and cooperation, Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc. shall strive to provide quality experiences and activities for youth, adults, and the elderly of Hartford, Connecticut and its surrounding towns and communities.

Overview: Hartford Neighborhood Centers, provides a food pantry including personal and household items. In order to qualify for our program, in most cases, someone in the household must show proof of income under the federal poverty level guides.

The families that are served by Hartford Neighborhood Center food pantry program face a crisis in their lives due to a variety of income producing circumstances. Hartford Neighborhood helps clients meet their families' most basic needs – food on the table. Our clients can visit the agency once a month for assistance with food needs.

Despite the existence of federally funded programs, like the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) that can help provide food, many people who feel insecure about food don't qualify. Based on national averages, about 29 percent of food insecure individuals are above 185 percent of the poverty line and are typically ineligible for most food assistance programs, an indication that being hungry doesn't mean being poor. In Connecticut, a family of 4 earning approximately \$42,000 does not qualify.

HNC Food Pantry: The HNC Food Pantry serves local individuals and families who are food insecure providing frozen, refrigerated, fresh and canned items, as well as some personal products. To access food, clients visit HNCI on Monday through Thursdays; complete a Pantry Survey and then shop. Only one visit per month is allowed and clients can take home up to two bags of food items. The HNC Pantry has grown over 100% in the past 3 years now assisting over 1500 duplicated clients every year. We have expanded our food items to meet the ethnic food needs in this diverse community. The Food Pantry helps clients meet their families' most basic needs – food on their tables.

B. ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This evaluation was designed to enable Hartford Neighborhood Centers Food Pantry to determine and document the program's progress, success and ongoing challenges. The information collected allows Hartford Neighborhood Centers to better communicate the program's value to others, which is critical for public relations, staff morale, and attracting and retaining support from current and potential funders.

1. Questions: Three key evaluation questions were identified and two were addressed by this study.

- A. Who is using the service and to what extent is the HNC Food Pantry helping clients?
- B. Is the Pantry sustainable? Can the agency continue to support the needs of the community?
- C. Do we contribute to self-sufficiency, i.e., are we really making a difference or just being a food Band-Aid?

2. Data Collection Methods

The families that are helped by Hartford Neighborhood Centers Food programs face a crisis in their lives due to a variety of circumstances such as un- or under-employment, illness and loss of family income. HNC staff members gathered data about client utilization through its Food Pantry survey (see appendix) for seven months covering 245 client visits. This included information about who was served, where they came from, and why they needed services. They also reviewed their records of the amount of food distributed during this same period and in addition, Program Manager Evelyn Hernandez conducted interviews with clients to determine levels of satisfaction and continued need.

Answers to evaluation question A regarding food pantry use are included in this this summary.

KEY FINDINGS – Pantry Use

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the HCNI food pantry served many clients and provided substantial amounts of food. Specifically:

- A total of 12,460 lbs. of food were distributed during the study period.
- More than 1000 lbs. of food were distributed each month, with the holiday months showing the most activity (average = 2077).
- A total of 245 client visits were recorded and most of them (79%) were for returning clients who visited the Pantry in one or more months during the study period.
- Reasons for Pantry use varied, but over half the clients (57%) indicated they needed help because they were unemployed.

Table 2 shows descriptive information for the 245 food distributions (duplicated clients) that occurred during the study period. This information was obtained through the Pantry Survey that was administered as clients came to use services. As shown in the table:

- A total of 82% of the clients (head of household) were women.
- The pantry served a diverse group of clients: 79% identified as Latino, 15% identified as African-American, 5% identified as Caucasian, and <1% identified as “other.”
- Only 18% of the clients were individuals. The rest were in families with two or more members including 40% who were 2 persons, 25% that had 3 or 4 members, and 18% that had 5 or more members.

Client Feedback

Almost all of the people who provided feedback that they most appreciated help with food. Many also said their anxiety was reduced. All respondents said they were grateful for the assistance.

Table 1: Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Food Pantry Utilization, Clients Served and Reasons for Use, by month August 2016 thru February 2017

	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	TOTAL
Pounds of Food $\bar{X} = 2077$		1403	2707	3139	2800	855	1556	12,460
Clients Served	39	41	60	16	25	28	36	245
New Clients	21%	17%	13%	50%	12%	21%	31%	21%
Returning Clients	79%	83%	87%	50%	88%	79%	69%	79%
Reasons for Use								
Unemployment	67%	51%	50%	69%	56%	75%	47%	57%
Other	33%	49%	50%	31%	44%	25%	53%	43%

Figure 1: Food Distribution, in pounds August 2016 – February 2017

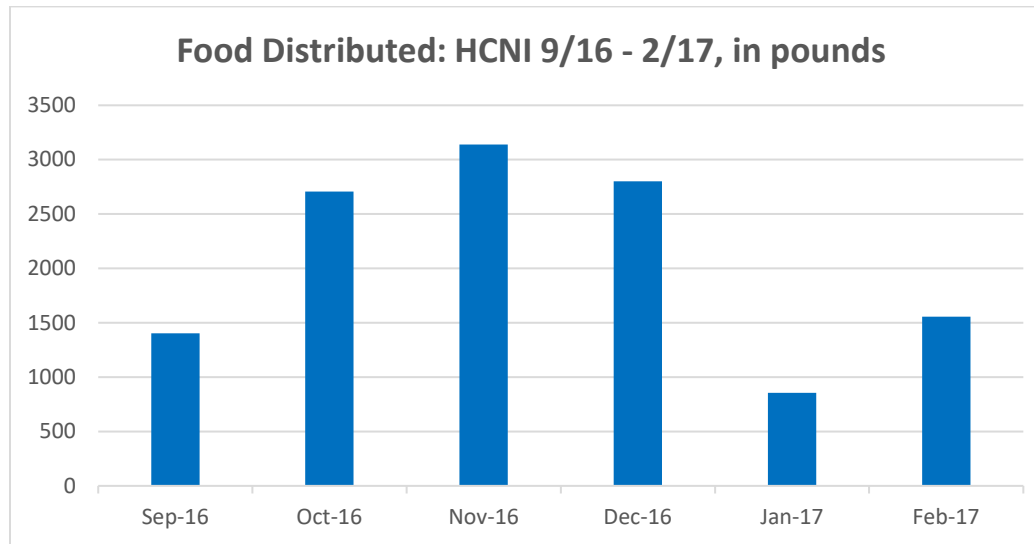


Table2: Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Background Characteristics of Food Pantry Clients, August 2016 – February 2017

	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	TOTAL
Pounds of Food		1403	2707	3139	2800	855	1556	12460
Clients Served	39	41	60	16	25	28	36	245
Female	82%	85%	87%	75%	84%	82%	69%	82%
Male	18%	15%	13%	25%	16%	18%	31%	18%
Family Size								
1 Person	38%	15%	17%	25%	8%	7%	14%	18%
2 Persons	33%	49%	40%	25%	48%	36%	42%	40%
3 – 4 Persons	15%	12%	32%	38%	16%	43%	28%	25%
5 or more Persons	13%	24%	12%	13%	36%	14%	17%	18%

Table3: Hartford Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Employment Status, Income Source and Geolocation of Food Pantry Clients, Aug. 2016 – Feb. 2017

	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	TOTAL
Pounds of Food		1403	2707	3139	2800	855	1556	12460
Clients Served	39	41	60	16	25	28	36	245
Employment Status								
Employed	10%	20%	30%	13%	12%	7%	22%	18%
Disabled	23%	29%	20%	19%	32%	18%	31%	24%
Unemployed	67%	51%	50%	69%	56%	75%	47%	57%
Source of Income								
SSI/SS	21%	29%	20%	19%	32%	21%	47%	27%
SNAP	51%	37%	70%	63%	88%	54%	69%	61%
Employment	10%	20%	30%	13%	20%	7%	22%	18%
Other	18%	17%	0%	6%	12%	14%	28%	13%
Zip Codes								
06105	15%	15%	17%	0%	0%	18%	19%	14%
06106	49%	61%	58%	69%	88%	50%	53%	59%
06112	13%	15%	13%	0%	0%	7%	6%	9%
06114	13%	0%	5%	25%	12%	4%	8%	8%
06120	10%	10%	7%	6%	0%	21%	14%	10%

- Table 3 shows that only a small proportion of our clients are employed (18%), about one-quarter were disabled and the majority as shown also in Table 1 were unemployed (57%).
- Table 3 also shows that most of our clients are getting some kind of supplemental support such as SNAP (61%) or social security income, and it shows that our clients came from a broad area surrounding HCNI, but mostly from the 06106 area (see map, Figure 1).

III. CONCLUSIONS

In answer to Question A of our evaluation study we showed that we are serving multiple clients from our target zone who need our services. Though they were satisfied with and appreciated our services, all clients wished they could receive more food to stretch their income. To address this we need to do the following.

Increase the Direct Donation Program:

Hartford Neighborhood Centers, is working with Foodshare's Direct Donation Program in order to obtain additional food. Food donations are picked up by staff at various local companies especially during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. These donations are incredibly important to our program and provide our clients with meat, bakery items and produce that, in some cases, would have been thrown away.

We plan to increase this program and train our volunteers to help pick up the donations. Foodshare trainers can come to Hartford Neighborhood Centers to train our volunteers who can then pick up food on behalf of Foodshare and bring it directly to the agency food pantry.

Food Pantry currently receives free food or foods with a handling charge from Foodshare. Food Pantry will continue to expand this program and agency has bought with the help of Foodshare 2 additional refrigerators and 2 freezers. An insurance agency spent over \$6,000.00 to increase the agency storage space.

If people are food insecure, they can often place a priority on obtaining as much food as possible for the cheapest price. So-called "value meals" at fast food restaurants seem like a good option because they offer larger portions for a few more cents. Food insecurity tends to result in buying cheap, processed foods richer in calories than nutrients. That's why Hartford Neighborhood Centers offers healthy food choices even in tough economic times by working with the Foodshare Windsor, CT, civic organizations and corporations.

Additional Action Steps for the Program

- Strengthen the relationship with the area organizations
 - Continue with SNAP presentation
 - Search for funders interested in providing funds to continue its operation.
- Increase access to Direct Donations
- Continue to collect data monthly and report on the relevant data included in this report

HARTFORD NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS, INC.

Food Share/Pantry Survey

Please Print

Date/Fecha: _____

New Client: ___ Client Nuevo

Name/Nombre: _____

Address/Direccion: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age/Edad: _____

Fecha de Nacimiento

Ethnic Background/Etnico: African American Latino Caucasian Asian
Other (please circle)

Number of Children Numero de Ninos _____

Employed/Empleado: Yes/Si No FT or PT Hours Employed/Horas de Empleo:

Reason for food/Razón por la comida: _____

Are you allergic to any food? Yes No If yes which ones? _____

Es alérgico algún alimento? Si No ¿A cuales? _____

Special Note/Nota Especial