



Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program Readiness Checklist

What Is a “Fruit and Vegetable Prescription” Program?

A fruit and vegetable prescription program is a model that connects the medical system and the local food system by creating a relationship between clinic staff, patients, and local food vendors. Health care providers write “prescriptions” for their patients to eat more fruits and vegetables. These prescriptions connect patients with local fresh food sources such as farmers markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, and other local farm-to-consumer venues. Patients receive currency (such as coupons, tokens, or electronic credits) to spend like cash to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from participating vendors.



Comic by Dan Piraro. Used with permission.

Overview of Prescription for Health Model

In Washtenaw County Public Health’s Prescription for Health program, participants receive a “prescription” to bring to the farmers market to “fill” ten times. Participants receive \$10 in tokens at each market visit, for a total value of \$100. Participants also receive nutrition education, recipes, and social support from Community Health Workers at the market and over the phone.

Goals

- Increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among participants
- Foster healthy behavior change in program participants by providing nutrition education, referrals to community resources, and support from Community Health Workers
- Create strong partnerships between the local public health department, clinics, and farmers markets to increase awareness of the local food system, promote utilization of community resources, and support participant health improvement
- Support development of the local food system and economy

Impacts

Since 2011, patients’ self-reported consumption of fruits and vegetables has **increased by about one cup per day** from pre- to post-program, a statistically significant increase!

Patients showed an **increase in self-reported health**, with the average changing from “fair” pre-program to “good” post-program.

Among patients working to manage a chronic illness, the vast majority reported that participating in the program helped them **better manage their health conditions**.



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Readiness Checklist	Have in place	Need to do
<p>Step 1: Document need Determine the need and reason for implementing a fruit and vegetable prescription program. Use local Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Community Health Assessment, or other data to identify geographic areas and at-risk populations. Select the target population by using local data to identify areas where you can reach the most people in need.</p>		
<p>Step 2: Identify community assets and strengths Define existing assets in your community, including farmers markets and health clinics serving the target population. Determine which foundations, civic or economic development organizations, and agencies in your community have similar goals and may be possible partners.</p>		
<p>Step 3: Secure funding The local public health department and program partners should have experience procuring funding through grant writing and soliciting funding from community partners. Potential sources include local community foundations, health coalitions, civic organizations, and hospital community benefit departments.</p>		
<p>Step 4: Engage partners</p> <p>Local Public Health Department Responsible for overall program coordination; coordinating communications; leading program evaluation; and identifying funding. Generally requires a minimum of 0.5 Full Time Equivalent Health Educator or Registered Dietitian, an intern, and Community Health Workers to staff farmers markets and engage with participants.</p> <p>Clinics Responsible for marketing program to patients; educating clinic staff about the program and local food access; referring patients; and assisting in group enrollment sessions. The program functions best with a minimum of one champion at each clinic who is dedicated to the success of this program (physician, nurse, social worker; approximately five hours per week). The clinic should serve the target population and ideally be located in proximity to the farmers market.</p> <p>Farmers Markets Responsible for educating vendors about food assistance program guidelines and creating a system for currency redemption and vendor reimbursement. Ideally, participating farmers markets would be in or near the target population’s community. It is also helpful if the farmers markets are capable of producing an economic impact report, including the prescription program’s contribution to market vitality.</p>		
<p>Step 5: Establish common goals Partners must agree on common goals as the basis for the program. Each partner should sign a Shared Services Agreement, which outlines important roles and responsibilities.</p>		
<p>Step 6: Set timeline Establish the timeline based on farmers market season. Initial partner meetings should occur several months prior to the start of the program. Participant recruitment begins one to two months before the program. Enrollment sessions begin concurrently with the program.</p>		
<p>Step 7: Plan for evaluation The local public health department should have experience in implementing evaluation measures, including collecting and tracking pre- and post-program survey data using Excel or statistical analysis software like SPSS®.</p>		