



The Hospital + Healthsystem  
Association of Pennsylvania

## **Hospitals, Health Care, and Food Insecurity**

### **Many people and families struggle with food insecurity**

- More than one in 10 Pennsylvanians are food insecure
- In Philadelphia, it's one in five adults and one in five children
- Results from Philadelphia-area hospitals' patient screenings show 24% are food insecure

### **People who experience food insecurity are sicker ...**

- Children are twice as likely to be in poor health
- Adults are about 40% more likely to have one or more chronic conditions—and more than three times as likely to skip needed medication due to cost
- Seniors are 40% more likely to report congestive heart failure; 53% more likely to report heart attacks

### **... And need more health care, resulting in more health care spending**

- Food insecure adults are about 50% more likely to go to the ER and to be hospitalized and, on average, have about \$1,900/year more in health care expenditures
- Food insecure adults with chronic diseases have more health care expenditures than food secure adults with the same diseases (with heart disease, \$5,100/year more; with diabetes, \$4,400 more; with hypertension, \$2,200 more)

### **Hospitals are working to break that cycle**

- Pennsylvania hospitals are prescribing healthy food, hosting farmer's markets and on-site food pantries, growing their own produce and sharing it with patients, and holding healthy cooking classes
- Hospitals in the Philadelphia area are working together and with community partners to screen patients for food insecurity and connect them to food assistance
- To date, 6,777 patients have been screened, with 24% screening positive and referred to community partners for help with food insecurity, including referrals for SNAP benefits

### **SNAP is an indispensable tool and wise investment**

- Average SNAP benefits during 2017 amount to about \$1,512/year per individual, \$3,048/year per household of three
- Food insecurity is reduced (by 1/5 overall, and 1/3 for children) when families get SNAP
- Compared to low-income adults without SNAP, those who participate in SNAP have \$1,400/year (25%) less in health care expenditures
- Low-income adults who are struggling with chronic disease and participate in SNAP have even greater reductions in health care expenditures (with coronary heart disease, about \$4,100/year less; with hypertension, nearly \$2,700/year less)



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