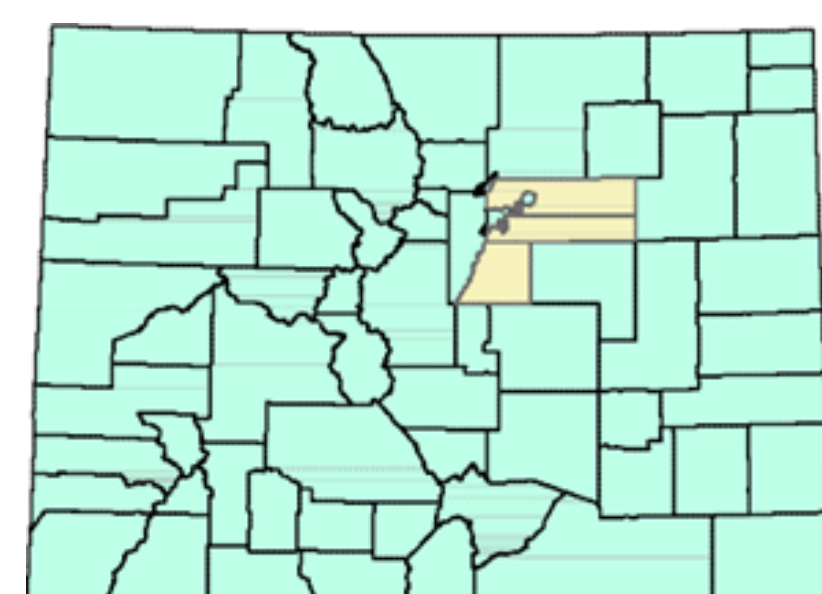


INTRODUCTION

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) serves 3 counties on the eastern side of the Denver Colorado metropolitan area. There are wide variations in health equity between those counties.



TCHD focused efforts on the City of Thornton, CO in Adams County with a population of 124,707, an area showing the highest needs related to limited food access.

In Thornton:

- 25.81% of people have limited access to food – a higher percentage than the surrounding Adams County area and the State of Colorado.
- Food deserts are noted by census in the southeast and southwest sections of the city where over 50% of those with limited access to food are living.

Within the WIC clinic serving the target area

- 44% are on Medicaid
- 16.67% use SNAP
- 2.09% use TANF

Three food banks in the Thornton area work to meet the needs of approximately 1,500 of those in most need per week and receive referrals from Hunger Free Colorado and other nearby agencies.

The City of Thornton government has declared their interest in policy and resource enhancements for improved access to healthy foods. Adams County Head Start, Adams County Housing, a community garden co-operative, and local farmers all show willingness to collaborate on increasing access to healthy food choices in this community.

Together we work to provide increased access to environments with healthy food and beverage options for the citizens through food banks and pantries who function "as the arms that reach out to that community directly"
- Feeding America -

PROJECT OVERVIEW

- The over-arching goal is improving access to healthy foods and preventing chronic disease in the City of Thornton, CO. Guidance and feedback is provided by the coalition, Bringing Health 2 U, consisting of community organizations and members, health care providers, and businesses. A toolkit called the Healthy Food Bank Toolkit has been developed for guidance to increase healthy food and beverage options in food banks in the Thornton community.



Bringing Health 2 U Coalition

ACTIVITIES

The Healthy Food Bank Tool Kit is intended to help food banks:

- Assess strategies already in place that promote distribution and consumption of healthy foods including fruits and vegetables in their food bank.
- Conduct a shelf survey to determine healthy foods that are currently being offered and discover gaps.
- Provide training to food bank staff on stocking a healthy food bank, labeling healthier choice foods, making healthier foods more available, promoting MyPlate, and planning a healthy food drive.
- Promote and refer to other food resources in the area such as SNAP and WIC.
- Provide lists that will help staff offer appropriate foods to people with chronic diseases, certain dietary beliefs, and those who are homeless.



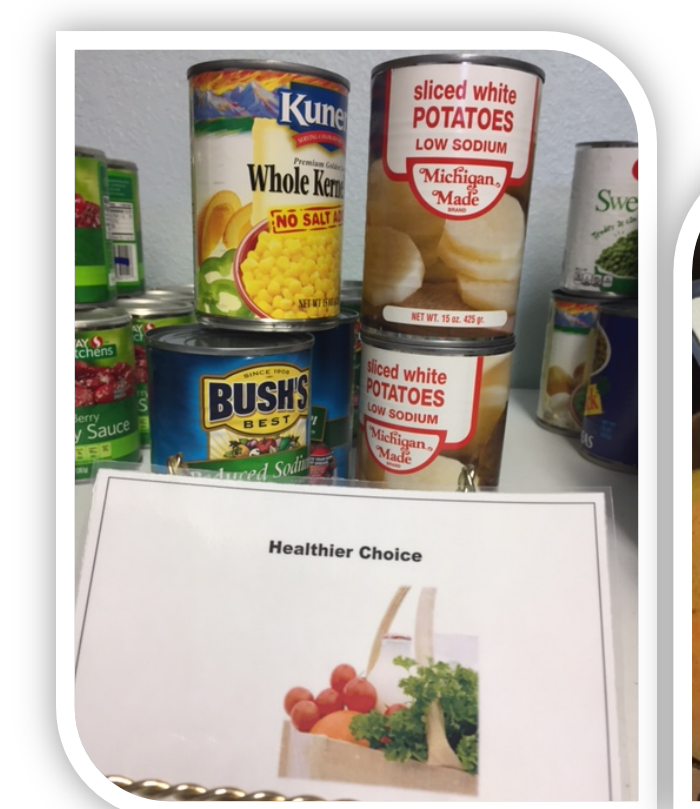
Healthy Food Bank Tool Kit with Food Bank Assessment Tool and Shelf Survey

OUTCOMES

- Individual assessments found that two community food banks had strategies already in place to provide healthy foods to their participants such as a good variety of fresh produce, low sodium canned vegetables and no sugar added canned fruit, special diet requests taken into consideration, whole grain and dry bean options available, food resources being promoted, and refrigeration and freezers in use.
- The assessment determined that training staff about the tool kit could benefit the food banks by providing food lists and education for people with:

Chronic Disease • Diabetes • Heart Disease • High Blood Pressure	Specific Family Needs • Homeless • Dental Sensitivity	Requests for Nutrition Education • My Plate	Requests for Food Referrals • WIC • SNAP
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- The tool kit also provides the food bank staff with ideas on how to hold a healthy food drive, how to stock even more healthy food on their shelves, and provides signs that make it easier for recipients to choose the healthier food choices.

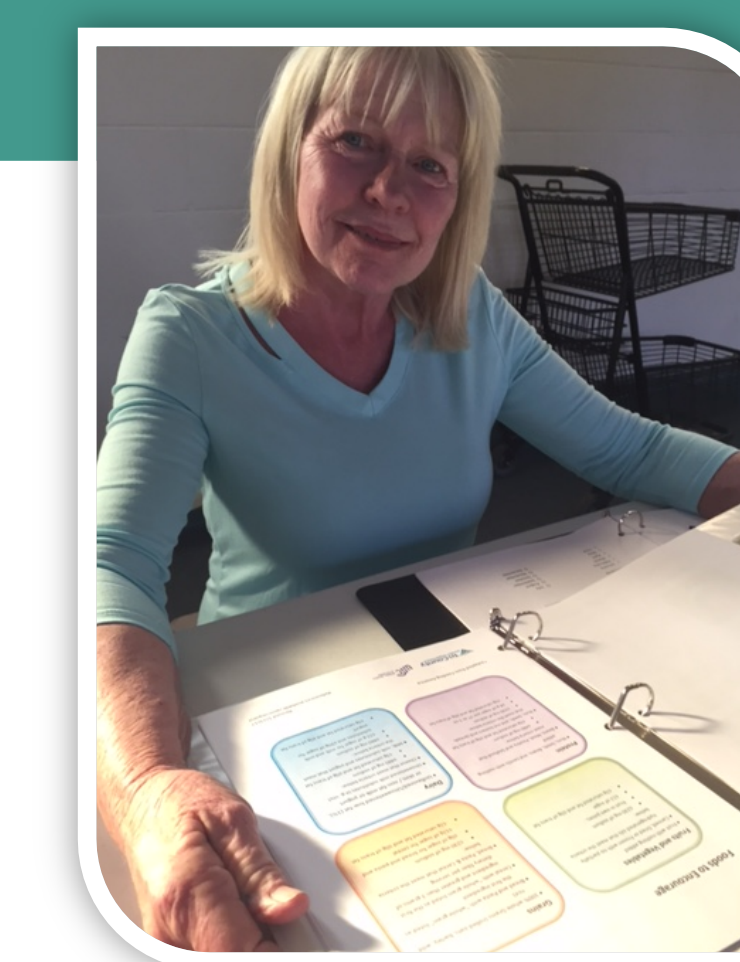


Making the healthy choice the easy choice with "Healthier Choice" signs.



Food collected during a healthy food drive for Amazing Grace Food Bank.

LESSONS LEARNED

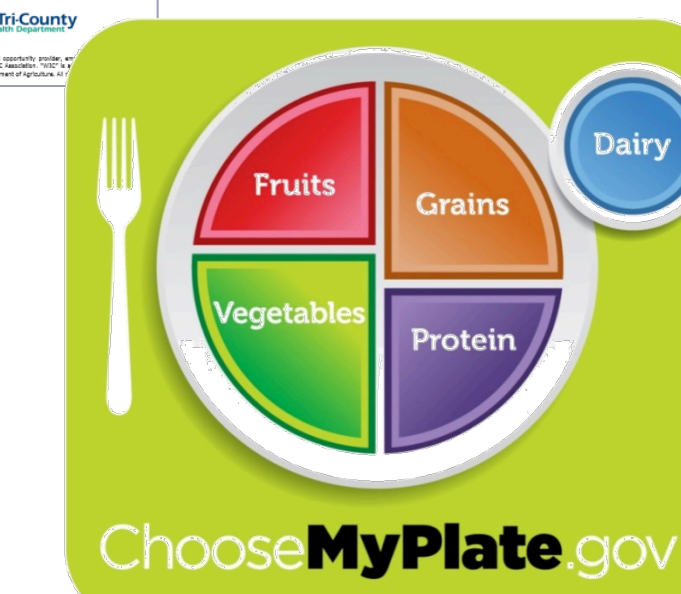


Left photo: Jinx at Amazing Grace Food Bank reviewing the tool kit.
Right photo: Promoting whole grain foods with "Healthier Choice" sign

- Some staff are apprehensive about asking for healthy food donations since they are so appreciative of all the donations they receive. It is important to explain that the program is not suggesting food banks turn donations away but rather give people who want to donate to the food bank a list of foods that are needed.
- There are different perceptions of what healthy foods are. Having a tool kit can help food bank staff be more consistent with foods they promote as healthy.
- Food bank staff are very busy so it is important to work around their schedule. It may take a few e-mails or phone calls to set up meeting times that work for all involved.

BEST PRACTICES

- Develop rapport with food bank staff by holding meetings to determine the needs at that particular food bank.
- Communicate with food bank staff to set up times that work best for them to do the food bank assessment and staff training.
- Provide lists that make it easier for staff to tailor foods for people with chronic diseases or who are homeless.
- Provide materials that are easy for staff to post such as MyPlate posters, WIC brochures, SNAP information and labels to indicate healthier food choices on shelves.



NEXT STEPS

- The Healthy Food Bank Tool Kit can be used by food banks interested in promoting healthy foods and increasing access to fruits and vegetables and other nutritious food for community members who utilize food banks.
- Once food banks have this tool kit, they can determine how to best use the assessment tool and supporting materials to meet the needs of their unique communities. Food bank staff can use this as a guide to help create an action plan to meet the health needs of their community with more specific food available for those with chronic diseases.
- To promote use of this tool kit in more food banks across the State of Colorado, it will be shared with local and state-wide partners. It can also be found at www.tchd.org.