

# Come to the table



Today, there is a growing understanding and commitment to address hunger and other social determinants of health by hospitals and health systems across the country. Since 2009, ProMedica has taken a lead in this area and is working at the local, regional, and national levels to ensure that basic nutritional needs in our communities are met. Through our *Come to the Table* program, ProMedica is working to make a lasting difference to support the overall health of our communities and improve the well-being of the people we serve.

## Hunger and Health

The link between hunger and poor health has been clearly acknowledged. Adults living in food insecure homes suffer dietary shortfalls that are often linked to chronic diseases and behavioral health conditions. Children and the elderly often suffer the greatest impact. Poor overall health, delayed development, and poorer quality of life are more likely among children in food insecure households. Among our seniors, poor nutrition increases disability, decreases resistance to infection, and extends hospital stays. Fighting hunger head-on can help avoid these negative health outcomes and improve the well-being of our communities.

## The Costs of Hunger

The economic impacts of hunger are far reaching. According to a report from the Center for American Progress, the overall cost of hunger to our nation amounts to at least \$167.5 billion due to lost economic productivity, addressing poor educational outcomes resulting from hunger, charity support, and avoidable healthcare costs. In fact, the healthcare costs related to hunger nationwide are estimated to be \$130.5 billion a year. In addition, the report states that the annual cost of hunger to every U.S. citizen was estimated at \$542, and would amount to roughly \$42,400 per citizen over a lifetime if the number of food insecure Americans remains unchanged.

## An Opportunity for Healthcare

Addressing hunger as a health issue makes good financial sense to hospitals and health systems. Hospitals will increasingly be paid based on outcomes instead of volume of care. Meanwhile, declining reimbursement rates from government and private insurance plans and other changes in the healthcare industry are prompting hospitals to take a closer look at how they operate. Avoiding negative health consequences through prevention is key under this new dynamic. Addressing hunger in our communities presents an opportunity for hospitals to achieve savings by reducing readmissions and improving patient outcomes.

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**Sources:**

National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, *The Journal of Nutrition*, Mathematica Policy Research Reports, Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Center for American Progress

## A Model for Fighting Hunger

The significant health threats resulting from hunger are preventable, and ProMedica is working within and outside of our walls to develop strategies that will have a positive impact:



### **Food Reclamation**

ProMedica operates a food reclamation program, through which we employ part-time individuals who are trained to repackage un-served food at our local casino for pick up and distribution to homeless shelters, communal feeding sites and food pantries. Several ProMedica hospital sites are also repackaging un-served food from their cafeterias.

### **Comprehensive Food Security Screening**

ProMedica has recently developed a program that screens our inpatients for food insecurity. Through this program, identified patients are provided with an emergency supply of food as well as information about additional community resources upon discharge from the hospital. ProMedica's own employees donated more than \$65,000 to establish funds for this program as part of our annual charitable giving campaign.

### **Food Pharmacies**

ProMedica will be opening two food pharmacies at separate medical office buildings that provide services for a high number of under-served individuals and families. These food pharmacies will enable physicians to write prescriptions for healthy food that can be filled on-site, thereby helping challenged individuals and families with access to nutritious foods.

### **Ebeid Institute for Population Health**

With the support of a committed philanthropic donor, ProMedica will be opening the Ebeid Institute for Population Health in a central city location in Toledo, Ohio. The Institute will consist of a fresh food market and other wrap-around services including community navigation, job training and health services.

### **Healthy Conversation Maps**

ProMedica's employees are teaching thousands of children and their parents about good nutrition through our educational conversation map toolkits, developed as an interactive means to encourage adopting healthy lifestyle choices.

### **Food Drives**

Locally, ProMedica holds bi-annual employee food drives to help stock local food banks. ProMedica also collaborates with other partners in the community on food drive efforts, and has created a school food drive competition to help engage students in donating food to the agencies of their choice.

### **ProMedica Advocacy Fund**

ProMedica is also addressing the health impacts of hunger through funding awarded annually to local groups through ProMedica's Advocacy Fund. Support through the Advocacy Fund provides resources for projects such as weekend and summer meal initiatives, home delivered meal programs for seniors, soup kitchens, nutritious alternatives for food pantry items, food bank facility upgrades, and many other local programs.

### **Building Collaborative Relationships**

By collaborating to ensure that basic needs and a solid foundation for living are in place, the health of individuals can increase, and population health costs can be better managed. ProMedica's strong community partnerships at the local, state, and federal levels have been central in developing collaborative opportunities to work together toward an overall healthier community.



[promedica.org/advocacy](http://promedica.org/advocacy)

### **For more information,**

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