



Food Insecurity Screening and Referral Toolkit for Louisiana Providers

As a healthcare provider, you are a lifeline to your patients for their health. Many times, the predominant factors influencing a patient's health are connected to a lack of available resources and supports in their homes, neighborhoods and communities. All too often, inadequate access to basic needs, like food, is a significant barrier to health.

That's why Louisiana Healthcare Connections is working with food banks across our state to improve food access and offer you tools to help you identify patients in need and easily connect them to local resources.

WHEN HUNGER AFFECTS HEALTH, HERE'S WHERE TO START.



Food Insecurity is a statewide problem.

Hunger affects every parish in Louisiana. Feeding Louisiana cites the following sobering statistics:



- **One in six** Louisiana households struggle to put food on the table.
- **One in four** of Louisiana's older adults are at risk of hunger.
- **One in four** of Louisiana's children are living in households that are food insecure.
- **One in twenty** Louisiana households report skipping meals because they can't afford food.

Addressing food insecurity and other social determinants of health will require a collaborative approach between state health policy makers, healthcare providers, community-based organizations and health plans.



USE THE HUNGER VITAL SIGN™ FOOD INSECURITY SCREENING

How do you identify patients experiencing food insecurity? The **Hunger Vital Sign™** is a two-question food insecurity screening tool validated by Children's HealthWatch and based on the U.S. Household Food Security Scale. The screening provides an objective way to measure patients' concerns about food and their access to food.

To screen patients using the Hunger Vital Sign™, just ask them the following questions:

▶ ***“Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.”***

Was that **often** true, **sometimes** true or **never** true for you/your household?

▶ ***“Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more.”***

Was that **often** true, **sometimes** true or **never** true for you/your household?

If a patient responds “often true” or “sometimes true” to either or both questions, **go to Step Two.**



WRITE A “PRESCRIPTION” FOR FOOD

Patients with Medicaid may qualify for food assistance from their local food pantries or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Use the enclosed tear pads to direct your patients to their local food bank. Food banks may provide your patients with emergency food or direct them to their nearest food pantry. They can also provide education about SNAP and help them apply. Tear pads can also be displayed in your waiting room or exam room to encourage self-referrals.



DOCUMENT AND FOLLOW UP AT THE NEXT VISIT

Once you have determined that your patient is experiencing food insecurity, add the hunger-specific Z code to their claim.

Z59.4 Lack of adequate food and safe drinking water

Including this code alerts Louisiana Healthcare Connections that this member would benefit from targeted outreach by our team of clinical social workers and certified community health coaches. Please encourage your patients to take advantage of these resources.

Finally, be sure to follow up with your patient to determine if referrals to food security supports have been successful.

We hope these resources will be helpful in your continued efforts to reduce barriers to health for your patients. We value your partnership in transforming Louisiana's health, one person at a time.

As a valued provider in our network, these tear pads are available at no cost to you. To request additional tear pads for your practice, please contact your dedicated Provider Consultant, or call Provider Services at 1-866-595-8133. Printable PDFs are also available on our website, www.LouisianaHealthConnect.com.



1-866-595-8133 (Hearing Loss: 711)
Monday–Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

LouisianaHealthConnect.com