

Title: Improving Patient Outcomes and Generating Sustainable Funding Through a Technology-Enabled Social Care Referral Network

Abstract

Background: In rural upstate New York, prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes (T2D) with co-existing food insecurity, is a major concern. The 360 Collaborative Network, a social care referral network, powered by Unite Us, which includes 650+ providers in the finger lakes region, designed a pilot program connecting food insecure T2D patients to food assistance through the platform.

Objective: This pilot aimed to:

- 1) Address patients' social needs.
- 2) Track and remit payment for CBO services.
- 3) Strengthen connections between health and social care providers.

Methods: This pilot was implemented from August 2023 - July 2024 with (1) a local FQHC and (2) a local food bank, with programmatic support from the 360 Collaborative Network and Finger Lakes Performing Provider System (FLPPS). A prospective cohort of 60 food insecure T2D patients received monthly food assistance over six months. Data collection included longitudinal patient surveys, program staff focus groups, and payments tracking.

Results: Participants were majority Female (51%), Black, non-Hispanic (51%), with a mean age of 50. Of the 46 patients with baseline and post assessments, 63% reported increased food security (USDA 6-item), 78% had increased daily fruit and vegetable intake, 48% reported fewer unhealthy days per month (HRQOL-4), 50% reported reductions in perceived stress (PSS-4), and 33% had improved HbA1c. A total of 72 patients were screened for eligibility (FQHC screening reimbursement totaling \$3,600). The food bank was reimbursed \$38,460 for cooking kits, program enrollment fees, and 540 food distributions.

Conclusion: As we incorporate social services into the medical model, we must focus on ensuring increased demand for social care is met with sustainable funding solutions. This includes strengthening multisector partnerships through formal referral networks that efficiently meet patients' needs and generate real-time social care data, as well as providing technical infrastructure to support low-burden CBO invoicing and reimbursement tracking.