

Whitepaper: Advancing Population Health Through Nutrition Education

Executive Summary

Healthcare providers and health plans are increasingly tasked with addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH), particularly food insecurity and chronic disease prevention. In Monroe County, where poverty and diet-related illnesses are prevalent, nutrition education is a powerful tool for improving outcomes and reducing costs. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE Monroe) offers culturally responsive, evidence-based nutrition programs that meet patients where they are, at home, in clinics, and in the community. This whitepaper outlines how healthcare organizations can partner with CCE Monroe to enhance population health, fulfill community benefit requirements, and drive sustainable change.

The Challenge: Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Health Disparities

- 13% of Monroe County residents are food insecure, with higher rates among Black (28%) and Latino (31%) households.
- Obesity affects 32% of the population; diabetes and hypertension are widespread.
- SNAP-Ed funding cuts threaten access to free nutrition education, exacerbating health disparities.
- Patients often lack the skills and resources to make healthy dietary choices, especially in food deserts like Rochester ZIP codes 14605, 14614, and 14611.

CCE Monroe's Solution: Community-Embedded Nutrition Education

CCE Monroe delivers flexible, culturally relevant nutrition programs that support preventative care and chronic disease management.

Core Offerings for Healthcare Partners

- **Nutrition & Chronic Disease Prevention** - Targeted education for patients with or at risk for diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Focus on meal planning, label reading, and cooking on a budget.
- **Culturally Responsive Food Education** - Bilingual educators and adaptable content for diverse communities. Emphasis on practical, affordable, and culturally familiar foods.
- **Healthy Eating Incentive Programs** - Support for farmers markets, food prescription models, and SNAP benefit maximization. Integration with programs like Double Up Food Bucks and Fresh Connect.
- **Data & Evaluation** - Pre- and post-program assessments to measure impact. Ideal for Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) and Medicaid Managed Care outreach.

Proven Impact

CCE Monroe's programs have demonstrated:

- Improved dietary behavior
- Reduced BMI and chronic disease risk
- Increased food literacy and self-efficacy
- Lower reliance on emergency food and healthcare services

CCE Monroe is an ideal partner for addressing social determinants of health, especially food access and nutrition.

Why It Matters for Healthcare Providers & Plans

Cost Reduction

- Preventative education reduces ER visits and long-term treatment costs.
- Supports value-based care models and risk stratification strategies.

Community Benefit & Compliance

- Programs align with IRS community benefit standards and Medicaid outreach requirements.
- Robust reporting supports grant applications and CHNA documentation.

Patient Engagement & Trust

- Educators build relationships in the community, increasing program uptake and retention.
- Programs empower patients to take control of their health outside the clinic.

Call to Action: Partner with CCE Monroe

CCE Monroe is ready to collaborate with healthcare providers and plans to integrate nutrition education into care pathways, support population health initiatives, and deliver measurable outcomes that improve lives and reduce costs.

Contact

To explore partnership opportunities, visit monroe.cce.cornell.edu/nutrition or reach out to Andrea Lista, Executive Director @ 585-753-2559 or aml355@cornell.edu.

Conclusion

Nutrition education is a cornerstone of preventative care and health equity. By partnering with CCE Monroe, healthcare organizations can extend their reach, improve outcomes, and build healthier communities—one meal at a time.