

CASE EXAMPLE

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

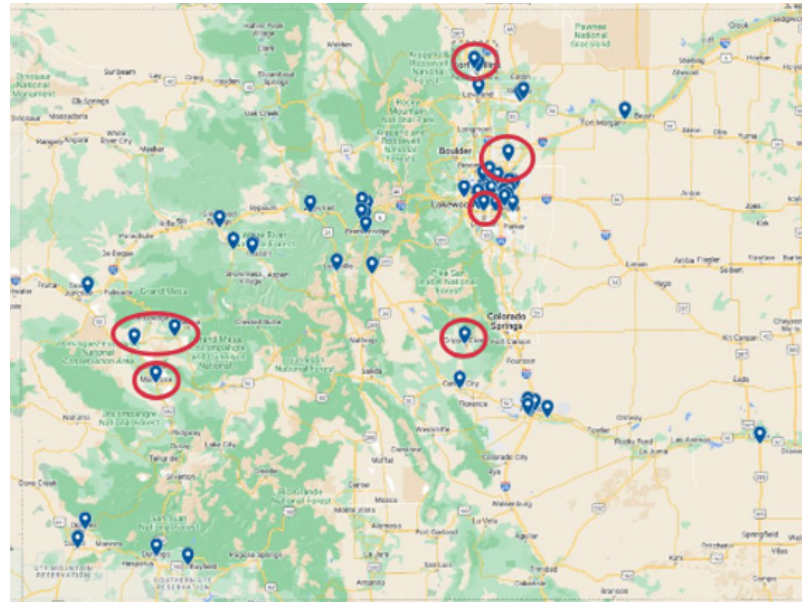
Background

Youth Healthcare Alliance (YHA) is the state-wide membership organization for Colorado’s school-based health centers (SBHCs). YHA supports approximately 70 existing and emerging school-based health centers in Colorado. Partnership development support is one of the many ways that Youth Healthcare Alliance supports SBHCs. In Colorado, organizations that receive funding from the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE)’s school-based health center program are required to complete a needs assessment.

YHA provides technical assistance and implementation support for these required needs assessments. YHA also supports this process for organizations outside of CDPHE’s planning grant funding cycle, as it is standard practice for community engagement in exploring and planning for a new school-based health center. The community engagement process consists of working with a specific geographic community to assess the needs and assets through secondary data review, as well as a qualitative process that includes key informant interviews, community focus groups and parent/staff/student surveys in the schools. Community members are involved in the process through their engagement in a Community Advisory Committee.

Additionally, YHA’s provision of technical assistance in needs assessment activities positioned them to successfully support specific partnership development for food security efforts. YHA received grant funding from a partnership between the School-Based Health Alliance (SBHA) and Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry campaign to support 10 Colorado school-based health centers (SBHCs) to incorporate food security efforts into their practice. The locations of the SBHCs include: Fort Collins,

Delta, Lakewood, Cripple Creek, Commerce City, Montrose and Westminster—representing both urban and rural communities.



The SBHC’s primary goal was to increase screenings for food insecurity and follow up on positive screens with referrals to food resources. Objectives included:

- Testing and implementing strategies for integrating food and nutrition program assistance (e.g., referrals to SNAP and WIC) into SBHC services.
- Developing an understanding of how food security integration models can be supported at the state level.
- Identifying and sharing best practices for other state-level organizations to train and support their SBHCs in addressing food insecurity.
- Identifying replicable food assistance activities across a state network of SBHCs, while prioritizing local community needs and incorporating youth voice and engagement.



State Level Partnership Development—Getting Started

To meet the goals and objectives of the project, YHA determined a need to identify potential partners state-wide that could: provide support in the form of local and state resources; offer expertise in food security topics; and make connections to others doing the same kind of work in the geographic area where the grantees were located. Food security is a relatively new concept for SBHCs and there are limited resources available. By engaging a variety of partners, YHA sought to fill in the information gap and provide tangible resources for the SBHC grantees. They adapted a [survey](#) from the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance asking potential partners to identify topics related to food security in which they felt they had information, expertise, resources or connections. The survey was sent to some existing key contacts for completion with a request to forward the survey to others doing food security work. Initially, six organizations responded to the survey and YHA set up follow-up meetings to determine what level of engagement the organizations wanted to have in the project.

Partner Roles and Activities

Many of the six initial contacts who were engaged at the beginning of the project ended up providing connections to other organizations. YHA kept

following up with these organizations until they found the most appropriate and receptive partners for the project and to meet grantee needs. The partners supported the project by sharing information and resources identified from SBHC grantees through one-on-one meetings and evaluation forms. Partner organizations also presented at Learning Network meetings to grantees directly. These quarterly 1.5-hour sessions with all grantees addressed grant-related questions or needs, showcased partner organization resources, and provided the opportunity for open Q & A. The following partner organizations presented at the Learning Network:

- Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment
 - Update on the [Hunger Vital Sign](#) food insecurity screening tool
- Hunger Free Colorado
 - [SNAP PEAS Program](#) (Partners Engaging in Application Services)
- Kroger Health
 - [Nutrition security](#)
- [Food Bank of the Rockies](#)
 - Food access
- [Healthy Eating Active Living \(HEAL\) Unit](#) at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
 - Advocacy and systems change

The presentations were very well received, and YHA followed up with some additional resources that grantees appreciated. YHA implemented a pre- and post-knowledge survey for each presentation, and the results were positive. Some partners continue to share resources with YHA, which are forwarded to grantees and broadly to SBHCs across Colorado. YHA also compiled a list of all resources shared by partner organizations and created a [document](#) with links to these resources. YHA received positive feedback from grantees and will continue to update and make it available to SBHCs across the state.

Partnership Successes

There was interest in this topic, and YHA had existing connections with a variety of organizations doing diverse types of direct services, policy and advocacy work. In some cases, having a previous working relationship with staff, like in the case of Hunger Free Colorado and the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), really helped facilitate partnerships for this project. The Healthy Eating and Active Living Unit (HEAL) at CDPHE has provided some great connections and YHA maintains good communication, which are two of the drivers for success. In order to foster good communication and collaboration with local and state-level partners, it is also important to have a defined role whenever possible.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

It was difficult to connect directly with the state SNAP office, as the office was overwhelmed at the time of this project. As a result, YHA began working with Hunger Free Colorado, which is the state contractor conducting SNAP outreach and enrollment assistance across the state. Since Hunger Free Colorado was more accessible, they became the primary SNAP partner for the project. However, YHA realized the importance of having the state SNAP office at the table and plans to connect with them in the near future. YHA also plans to continue communication with all partners and to distribute food security resources and information to the SBHC network via newsletters and listservs.

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