

FIRSTLink

What is FIRSTLink? FIRST Link (Food Insecurity Resources Screenings Trainings) is a program that connects patients to free food resources in a healthcare setting.



Why in a healthcare setting? 74% of households who need food assistance choose between paying for food and medication.*



When patients cut back on food or medicine, this makes their health worse. In a recent study, the USDA found that people experiencing food insecurity are more likely to develop chronic conditions, such as diabetes or coronary heart disease.** When payers fight food insecurity, they save money. One payer in the US saw a 27% reduction in hospital admissions and 6.9% reduction in ED visits!***

HOW DOES FIRSTLink WORK?

1. Houston Food Bank trains clinic staff about food insecurity. Together, they work to develop a process to start screening clients for food insecurity.
2. Clinic staff screens patient for food insecurity. If patient does, clinic refers patient to an on-site HFB employee who:
 - a) Helps client apply for SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid/CHIP
 - b) Refers patient to nearby food pantries
3. Follow up with patient to see if he/she has received food resource assistance.

*Hunger in America 2014, Houston Food Bank Survey

** Christian A. Gregory, Alisha Coleman-Jensen. *Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults* (italicized), ERR-235. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2017.

***Thomas Beaton. "How Payers Can Address Food Insecurity among Plan Beneficiaries." *HealthPayer Intelligence*