

# Advancing Equity through a Health System-Food Bank Partnership in Rochester

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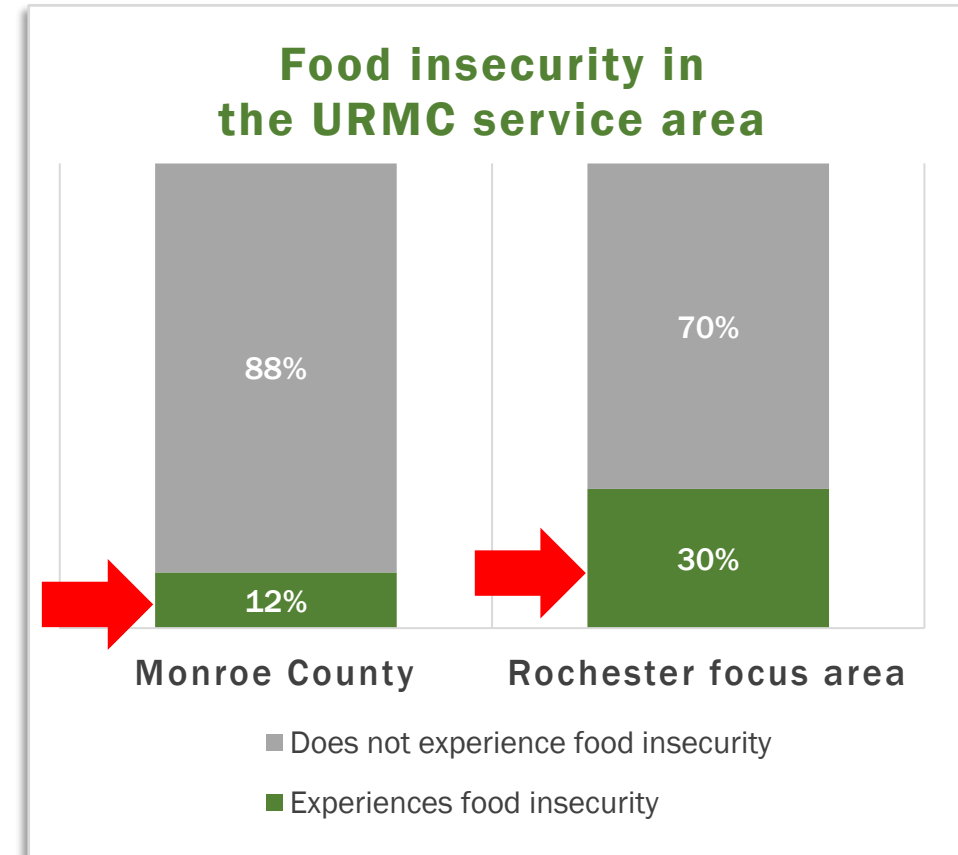
# Our health system: A brief overview

**University of Rochester Medical Center (UR Medicine)** is an academic medical center with six hospitals, serving the Rochester, Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions. Our flagship hospital is Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester.



# Food insecurity and health inequity in Rochester

- UPMC serves Rochester's Focus Area, which has a primarily Black and Hispanic population.
- Food insecurity affects 12% of people in Monroe County.
- 30% of people in the Focus Area experience food insecurity.
- The Focus Area has a higher mortality rate due to diet-related diseases (i.e., heart disease, diabetes).
- **Food insecurity is a major contributor to these disparities.**





## About Foodlink

Foodlink is a Rochester-based regional food bank dedicated to ending hunger and building healthier communities. They are helping the community by:

- serving as the hub of the emergency food system across 10 counties;
- offering programming focused on food access, food literacy and career empowerment; and
- running a robust Curbside Market bringing healthy food to those in Rochester who would otherwise have no access.



# Our partnership to address food insecurity and health equity

- UPMC became a member of Foodlink in 2021 and launched a small hospital-based food pantry pilot program.
- We developed workflows and implemented EHR modifications.
- In early 2023, UPMC joined HANYS' AHEI program.
- **Our goal:** expand food pantry operations and learn how we can improve to better meet our patients' needs.



# Project overview

## Food pantry expansion

- Expand the food pantry at URMC Main Campus across all care settings (inpatient, ambulatory, emergency).
- High-needs ambulatory sites (9 and growing!)

## Food pantry consumer survey

Understand patient experience with the food pantry.

- Are we meeting patients' needs?
- Is there anything we need to change?

Understand patient experience with food security.

- How are patients accessing the emergency food system?
- What are patients' barriers to food security?

### UR Medicine Food Pantry Consumer Survey

These questions ask about your recent experience with the food pantry at Strong Memorial Hospital.

1. How easy or difficult was it to bring your food bags home with you?
2. Were you able to prepare meals that your household liked with the food you received?
3. Did the food you received feed your household for at least three days?
4. Is there anything else good or bad that you want to share about our food pantry?
5. How can we improve our food pantry?
6. If we could include fresh fruits and vegetables in our food pantry, what fruits and vegetables would you like to get?

These questions ask about your personal situation with food security. Food security means that you always have enough healthy food to feed your household, and you don't have to worry about having enough food.

7. What keeps you from having food security?
8. What services/programs do you know about in the community that can help you with food security?
9. What keeps you from using community services/programs that can help you with food security?
10. What government benefits do you know about that can help you with food security?
11. What keeps you from using government benefits that can help you with food security?
12. Do you know if you are currently eligible for SNAP (aka food stamps) or WIC benefits?
13. Have you visited other food pantries in Rochester in the last 6 months?
14. Have you visited any community meal programs or soup kitchens in the last 6 months? How often?
15. Have you used Foodlink's Curbside Market in the last 6 months?

Your Information:

16. What is your name?
17. What is your date of birth?
18. What address should we mail your gift card to?

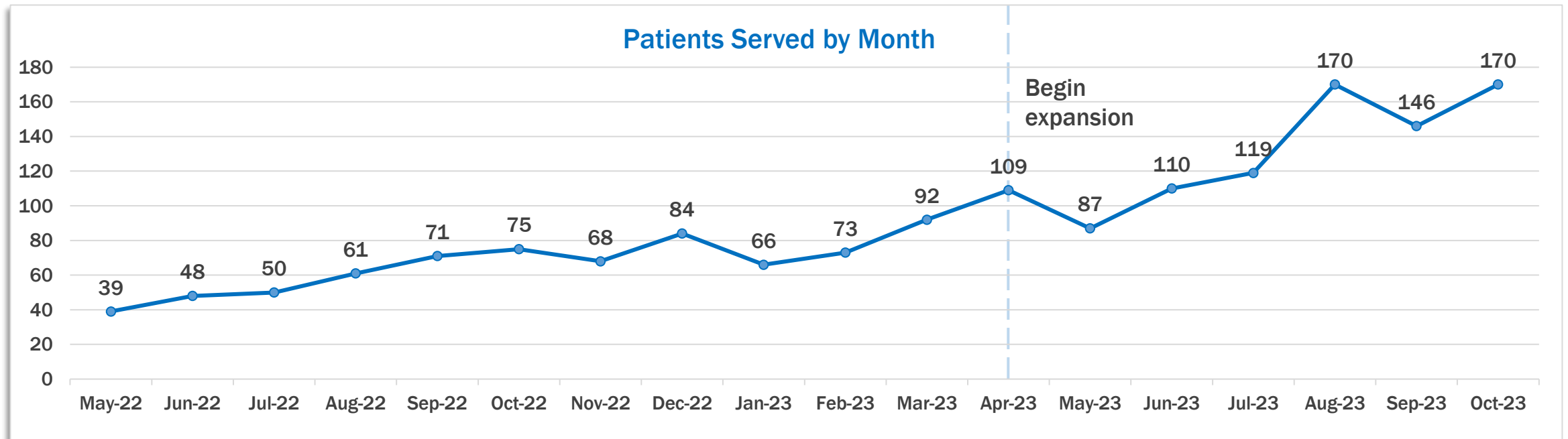
# Results: food pantry expansion

## Baseline:

- The UR Medicine food pantry served 458 patients from October 2022 – April 2023.

## Improvements:

- We served 911 patients from April–October 2023, a **98.9% increase in the total number of patients served.**
- We estimate that we have provided ~9,110 pounds of food since April (approximately 10 pounds per patient).



# Survey results

## Population served

- 70% of patients served by the food pantry live in Rochester Focus Area zip codes.
- 59% of beneficiaries are Black/African American, and 27% are Hispanic.

## Patient experience with the food pantry

Most patients reported that:

- Food lasted at least three days.
- They were able to prepare meals their households liked.
- They had no problem getting their food home with them.

## Recommendations for improvement:

- Include fresh foods and more protein.



# Survey results

## Top barriers reported include:

- Not enough money, limited income.
- Food expenses have increased.
- Cost of other products/bills have increased.
- SNAP runs out before the end of the month.
- Transportation challenges.
- Not eligible for benefits.

**Most patients are enrolled in SNAP or have applied.**

**Most patients access other emergency food sites at least somewhat regularly.**



# Success stories

Quotes from patients visiting the food pantry:

- “It is a blessing to the people, and we're thankful you guys are there.”
- “Food pantry was very well, service was excellent”
- “This is a big help! Thank you.”
- “I think you guys have this down to a science, thanks.”
- “Everything was excellent, and you guys do a great job.”

“I learned a lot from this experience, especially about our community's challenges with food security and the benefits and limitations of government and community food safety programs. The participants told me how grateful they are for the UPMC food pantry, especially how accessible it is[...] They tell their friends and community about the UR Medicine food pantry, and they are thankful this resource exists.”

- A medical student working with patients at the food pantry

## Next steps

- Food pantry operation and expansion has been successful in meeting emergency food needs of many patients.
- Currently implementing a grant-funded initiative to add fresh produce to our main campus pantry.
- No easy way to address food insecurity more broadly.
  - Exploring more opportunities for Food as Medicine programming.
  - Continue working with community partners like Foodlink to address systemic barriers.
  - Continue work under our ***Equity & Anti-Racism Action Plan.***





**ADVANCING HEALTHCARE**  
**EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSION**

# Questions?

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