Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Determining Food-insecure Families' Resource Access with Health System and Public Data

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Families' access to local food-insecurity (FI) resources differs. This study examines how health system and public data may be combined to identify limitations in community resources designed to address FI. We conducted a retrospective cohort study using electronic health record (EHR) data from nine practices that screened families for FI. Electronic health record data included demographic and clinical characteristics. Publicly available data included local socioeconomic and food resource information. We calculated the distance from each household to the nearest food pantry and determined the percentage of families who might have difficulty accessing resources. We demonstrate how health systems could merge these data sources to map where food-insecure families live, describe families' access to local resources, and identify regions where gaps in services exist. Health systems could use this approach to support households with FI and advocate for additional services in areas lacking resources in order to target population health efforts.

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