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Nutrition policies, best practices and guidelines in homeless family facilities
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Many studies have documented nutrition problems among homeless and disadvantaged children and families. Shelter policies and practices related to food and nutrition play an important role in determining access to nutrition resources and services. The Homeless Family Shelters Nutrition Initiative was undertaken to provide the federal Bureau of Primary Health Care, its Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) programs, family shelter providers and other stakeholders with tools to help improve nutrition policies and practices in homeless family facilities. As part of this project, HCH programs, family shelters and state homeless coordinators were surveyed regarding shelter policies and practices affecting nutrition. Survey questions assessed the status of nutrition resources including cooking facilities and meal provision, and the extent to which shelter regulations for food storage and requirements to vacate the facility during the day impact nutrition. We received 280 completed surveys from shelter sites, 68 from HCH grantees, and 69 from state homeless coordinators. We requested health care providers and state homeless coordinators to recommend shelters that offer innovative nutrition policies and practices. Representatives from these shelters were interviewed by phone. Among the practices highlighted are: creating an attractive communal dining environment at the shelter, providing high quality, flexible meals and snacks, and allowing refrigerators in family's rooms. This report will present homeless family facility nutrition guidelines developed through survey results, phone interviews and literature searches, as well as input from a wide range of 'experts'.

Learning Objectives: At the conclusion of the session, each participant will be able to: Describe current nutrition practices and policies in homeless shelters and associated problems. Summarize the homeless family facility nutrition guidelines.

Keywords: Nutrition, Homelessness

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