

Abstract Title

Build a better foodbank or poverty reduction? Why dietitians should care
J. Black and G. Hammond. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Abstract

Purpose: To share the experiences of dietitians and lessons learned working collaboratively with food bank organizations to evaluate and address food insecurity, nutritional inequalities, and barriers to wellness.

Process: This presentation offers insights from the scholarly literature, policy reports, and dietitians' experiences working as strategic partners with food banks to support improved access to nutritious foods and health promotion services for low-income Canadians. We will also reflect on the limitations of food bank-based approaches for addressing nutritional inequalities.

Systematic Approach: After drawing on secondary sources to examine the history and context of food bank use in Canada, insights will be shared from an on-going research project using a mixed-methods approach to examine the spectrum of food bank users' experiences in Vancouver, BC. This research forms an integral part of a community-based project envisioning a redesign of the food bank model to contribute to broader community food security outcomes.

Conclusions: Despite well-documented limitations of food banks as a response to food insecurity, dietitians can contribute to emerging strategies for improving the impact of food bank-based approaches.

Recommendations: Continued training and professional development is needed to equip dietitians with the competencies needed to work with individuals, community-based organizations, governments, and health authorities to improve dietary quality and health outcomes for Canadians living in poverty, including those who draw on food banks.

Significance to the field of dietetics: Perspectives of dietitians are valuable for informing ongoing debates, research, education and grassroots actions to address poverty and food insecurity in communities across Canada.