



REACHING TOGETHER

REACH (RACIAL ETHNIC APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY HEALTH)
GRANT NEWSLETTER

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A Message from the REACH Program Director

Hello and Happy belated New Year greetings from the REACH team at RAO Community Health! We hope that everyone reading this newsletter is in good health and remaining in the best spirits. We are now in full swing of our third grant year, and have been making great progress despite the current public health challenge that we are facing. Currently, we are working on several promising projects throughout the grant strategies that we are very excited about. We look forward to continuing the great work that we have planned for this year, and are enthused to share some of these updates with you!

Best Regards,

Creating a Specialty Box Program to Combat Food Insecurity and Promote Healthy Eating Amid COVID-19

RAO Community Health's work had to pivot throughout 2020, as the demand for nutritious food became more prevalent due to COVID-19. While partnering with Loaves and Fishes, we were able to support and offer a pilot specialty box program, specifically for clients who have been diagnosed with Diabetes Mellitus or heart disease.

Similar to the 7-day box that Loaves and Fishes introduced in response to COVID-19, a specialty box also provides 7 days' worth of nonperishable nutritious groceries. The program is supported and prepared under the supervision of a Registered Dietitian (RD). The RD is responsible for determining which foods are most appropriate for clients who have these conditions and are dealing with food insecurity. RAO Community Health contracted an additional RD/IBCLC (International Board of Lactation Consultant) to help develop and design a maternity specialty box, set to be launched later this year.

Examples of items within the specialty boxes include:

- Whole grain pasta and rice, oats – no added flavor/sugar
- High fiber cereals
- Canned fruits and vegetables or beans/legumes - no salt or sugar added
- Canned Tuna/Salmon/Chicken - in water
- Dried fruit – no sugar added
- Nuts/Seeds or Nut butter
- Bonus item examples: salt-free condiments, plant oils, salt-free seasonings, natural sweeteners, high protein snacks, sugar-free snacks

How can clients participate in the program?

Clients qualify for the program through a referral agency. For the pilot program, Care Ring and C.W. Williams will be participating as our referral agencies until further notice. The referral agency must speak directly with the RD to determine client eligibility for supplements. Specialty boxes must be scheduled for pickup in advance and will only be

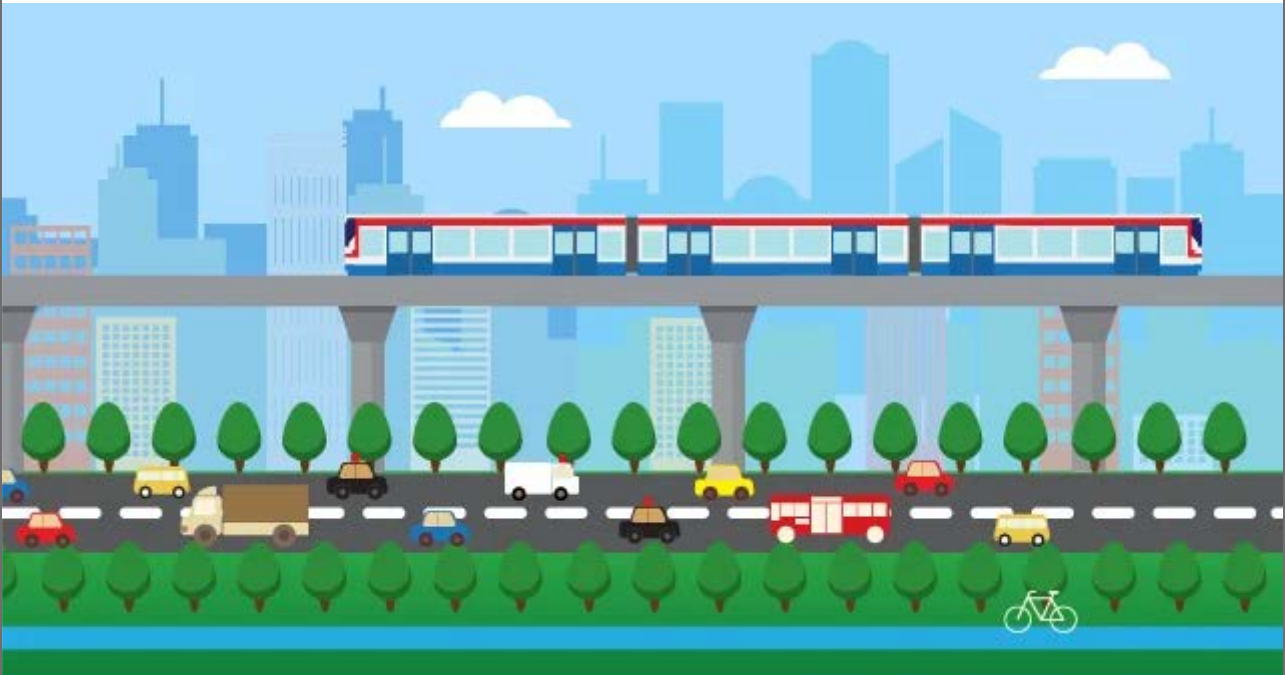
It is the responsibility of the referring medical agency to exercise professional expertise when making specialty box referrals for patients/clients.

Thus far, the specialty box program has reached 100+ clients with several returning. This has been a great start to the program and depicts a need

available at the Mobile Food Pharmacy locations. It is important to note that Loaves & Fishes do NOT require documentation of a medical diagnosis.

that is being met. We will continue to support this program and develop sustainable infrastructure that supports Loaves and Fishes' mission.

Sustain Charlotte Continues to Strive Through Community Building



Our partners at Sustain Charlotte have kicked off Year 3 with great progress within West Charlotte neighborhoods! Towards the end of 2020, they met with neighborhood leaders to discuss community physical activity and transportation goals for 2021. They are currently in the process of reviewing resident input from audits and story circles to begin creation of the transit guides. To further support these neighborhoods, they also joined a new “Community Benefits Coalition”, who had their first meeting last month. In the upcoming months, Sustain Charlotte will begin planning for the design and creation of a “Bicycle Playground”. In addition to organizing and hosting an active play-based, outdoor bicycle and pedestrian safety skills workshop for 100 children at the Youthquake summer camp. We look forward to seeing the progress and success of these activities! Click [here](#) to see more updates from [Sustain Charlotte](#).



App Chat

We are proud to announce that our C.A.R.E. (Charlotte Area Resource Explorer) app has been doing exceptionally well! We recently shared in an e-blast that the app is now ranked among the Top 200 in the iOS app store! Thank you to all who have downloaded, shared, and supported the app. While the resources listed in the app are specific to the greater Charlotte area, we have found that people across the nation are downloading and utilizing the other great features. We are beyond excited and look forward to continuing our work within the technology space with the upcoming rollout of the Android version. The Android version is anticipated to be completed and available for download by Spring 2021. Please continue to download and share this great resource amongst your family, friends, and other networks!

[Download C.A.R.E.](#)



Welcome Candace!

As our RAO team continues to grow, we are pleased to introduce our new Public Health Data Analyst, Candace Butler! Candace is a Charlotte native who spent the last five years gaining working knowledge of program evaluation as it relates to tracking outcome measures, data integrity, and training development. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a Bachelor's Degree in Public Health Education, and received her Master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a concentration in Public Health Research – completing her thesis on nutrition and adolescent health. In her free time, she enjoys reading, spending time with family, traveling and trying new restaurants. Welcome Candace!





RAO Community Health Administers Free Flu Vaccines to Underserved Communities

Flu season is here... and so is COVID-19. Amid the pandemic, RAO Community Health was awarded supplemental funding from the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) – Immunization Services Division (ISD) to increase vaccination opportunities by enhancing partnerships between vaccination providers and the community among minority populations.

In a major alliance to foster preventive care, RAO Community Health has worked with community and clinical partners in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County to provide free flu vaccines to low-income and uninsured minority communities. In partnership with organizations, RAO Community Health has vaccinated over 875 individuals with approximately 24% being African American. Key partnerships with Mecklenburg County Health Department, NC MedAssist, the Pi Phi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Cooperative Christian Ministry, Avita Pharmacy, Power 98, and other community collaboratives have really made this work impactful and led to an increase of flu vaccine accessibility to communities who normally would not have access to it.



For the duration of the grant, RAO Community Health plans to address vaccine hesitancy by increasing influential messengers and providing health education in the Black Community. It is crucial to continue this conversation among our friends, families, and most importantly our communities to see lasting change.

Combating COVID-19 in the African American Community Through Collaboration & Messaging

During the fall of 2020, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) — Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities awarded RAO Community Health with a COVID-19 grant to collaborate with community partners and organizations to provide support in accessing COVID-19 resources and services within the African American community. Throughout the duration of the grant, RAO worked directly to meet the needs of the African American community by:

- Disseminating NCDHHS COVID-19 materials related to: the 3Ws (wash, wear, & wait) testing, contact tracing, and social isolation/quarantining.
- Creating and disseminating culturally tailored and linguistically appropriate media messaging by creating a “Mask Up” campaign.
- Collaborating with community leaders and organizations by hosting 3 outreach events and distributing over 4,600 kits with masks, hand sanitizers, and educational materials.

We connected with some amazing community partners, and developed long lasting relationships. Please take a moment to check out some of the great work that we accomplished [here](#).

To find out more information about the REACH Grant, click [here](#).



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