



ANCHOR

ACCELERATING NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH REINFORCING PARTNERSHIPS

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INTEGRATION



The American Heart Association’s Accelerating National Community Health Outcomes through Reinforcing (ANCHOR) Partnerships program works to support healthy living in communities around the country. In the Hampton Roads metropolitan region of Virginia, that means making sure everyone has reliable access to nutritious, affordable food. The American Heart Association’s ANCHOR team has helped enhance and accelerate the work of regional businesses and organizations trying to increase access to healthy food options throughout the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Newport News, Virginia. The American Heart Association has worked with partners on initiatives to help underserved neighborhoods, particularly those located in neighborhoods with limited access to stores that sell healthy food. As a result, it has built a sustainable platform for change so that healthy, affordable food is available to all.

The Challenge

More than 29 percent of Virginia’s adult population is obese. Obesity can have an economic impact on a community by contributing to higher medical costs and reducing workforce productivity through increased absenteeism. Increasing access to nutritious and affordable food is a key step to enabling people to maintain a healthy weight. Yet, for many families in the southeastern part of Virginia, finding affordable, nutritious food is a challenge. Many residents of the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Newport News live in what the federal government describes as “food deserts,” or neighborhoods that lack easy access to healthy, affordable groceries. People who live in food deserts have much higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related health problems.



“My work with families using SNAP has been enhanced and expanded by partnering with ANCHOR’s Healthy Food Hampton Roads. SNAP education will continue beyond the grant, but the partnership helped accelerate the outcomes.”

– Ellen Pudney, SNAP-Education agent for Virginia Cooperative Extension

The Solution

Through Healthy Food Hampton Roads, the American Heart Association created new partnerships and strengthened old ones, contributing to the development of a local coalition comprised of food banks, farmers, hospitals, government agencies, nonprofits and health advocacy groups. Healthy Food Hampton Roads identified areas with limited access to nutritious, affordable food, and worked with partners to bring fresh produce to underserved communities. The American Heart Association's ANCHOR team helped establish a regional food policy council to address the area's needs with a single, unified voice. Additionally, the ANCHOR team focused bringing key partners and collaborators together to increase the number of farm stands and farmers' markets accepting Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and encouraged incentive programs that double the purchasing power for fruits and vegetables.

Sustaining Success

The American Heart Association has established a foundation of food access partners and collaborations, Healthy Food Hampton Roads, that is now formed into a regional coalition of community businesses, organizations and individuals. As the federal grant enabling the ANCHOR Partnership program efforts winds down, the Healthy Food Hampton Roads partners will continue their work with local food suppliers and retail businesses to improve their selection of healthy food offerings. They will continue to explore ways to ensure struggling families have better access to affordable food and beverages, and encourage more farm stands and farmers' markets to accept payments from the SNAP program.

Policy, System and Environmental Change

The commitment that Healthy Food Hampton Roads collaborating partners has shown to improving healthy, affordable food access has resulted in numerous changes. Among them are:

- The nutrition policy committee of the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore recommended that its board adopt a policy to gradually eliminate sugary beverages and candy from corporate donors.
- The newly-established Greater Hampton Roads Food Policy Council developed guidance to foster regional coordination to improve the local food system.
- Healthy Chesapeake's Healthy Eating work team has put short and long-term programs and strategies into motion for healthy eating, including providing support for community gardens and regular education meetings.

Results

The work of Healthy Food Hampton Roads has had an impact on more than 1.8 million people in the metropolitan region. As a key partner with the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, the American Heart Association's ANCHOR team supported the adoption of a nutrition guidelines policy that evaluates the compliance of sodium, sugar and fat content to ensure it meets the nutrition guidelines prior to the food being included in the Foodbank's backpack program. This has also helped contribute to stocking healthier-pantries for residents using the foodbank in their local community. The American Heart Association's ANCHOR Partnership program led the formation of the Greater Hampton Roads Food Policy Council. The Food Policy Council membership consists of farmers, food banks, the public health department, nonprofits, medical systems and local universities. The Food Policy Council strives to understand existing food challenges, particularly those related to food distribution, access, waste and insecurity. The AHA's ANCHOR staff has chaired the Healthy Eating work team for the organization, Healthy Chesapeake; worked with a nonprofit coalition to encourage more farmers market to accept SNAP payments; and helped boost the number of sites offering students free weekday meals during the summer.

Get Involved

Join the Greater Hampton Roads Food Policy Council or one of the many organizations that make up the collaborative to help improve healthy, affordable food access.