A San Francisco Program of Vouchers for Fruits and Vegetables: Program Overview

Our vision is that all low-income San Francisco residents, in all neighborhoods, will have access to fruits and vegetables at the market where they regularly shop.

Improve Healthy Food Access for Low-Income Residents of San Francisco
Poor dietary intake in low-income communities receives much national and local attention. Nutrition education is increasingly available in low-income communities, and there are large initiatives to bring full-service grocery stores into food deserts. These responses are critical. However, they do not address the fact that more than one-third of low-income residents of San Francisco cannot afford nutritious food. We are capitalizing on local interest and enthusiasm in reaching low-income households with nutritious food by creating a citywide system of vouchers redeemable at local vendors for fresh fruit and vegetables.

A Smart Approach
Vouchers support healthy eating behaviors among low-income residents of San Francisco. In addition, vouchers for fruits and vegetables support local food vendors, particularly those located in low-income communities. This support, and the resulting increase in turnover of perishable product, is critically important in allowing vendors to increase the variety and quality of produce they stock. By increasing neighborhood supply and quality of fruits and vegetables, vouchers therefore support not only the healthy eating habits of low-income consumers with vouchers, but also the healthy eating habits of consumers without vouchers who shop in the same stores.

EatSF Voucher Program to Begin in Early 2015
In the initial phase, 165 Tenderloin households will receive $20 per month in the form of EatSF fruit and vegetable vouchers from their health care providers. Vouchers will be redeemable at local corner stores and participating grocery stores. Initially, vouchers will be distributed to two of the most food insecure populations: low-income households (income < 185% FPL) with young children, and adults with diet-sensitive chronic disease. With additional funding, the program will expand to additional neighborhoods in San Francisco and additional at-risk participants. By 2019, the program will expand to reach the entire city. EatSF has been established in support of San Francisco’s citywide goal of being hunger-free by 2020.

Goals
- Participants will increase their dietary intake of fruits and vegetables, and ultimately realize improved health.
- Community food vendors will increase availability of fruits and vegetables in response to increased demand.

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