CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY
School of Medicine

Master of Public Health Program

Using Communication Strategies to Strengthen Community Engagement and Promote Smoking Cessation

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Healthy Neighborhoods
Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University

Background

CONNECT-Pantries is an NIH-funded project exploring ways to streamline access to smoking cessation resources at food pantries by connecting patrons with the Ohio Tobacco Quitline. The project is led by the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods in collaboration with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

Population Served

This project aims to expand access to smoking cessation resources for pantry patrons, workers, and volunteers. It will first be piloted in Cuyahoga County, with the potential to expand to other locations.

Learning Objectives

1. Apply health communication principles to create accessible tobacco cessation materials for patrons and pantry staff.
2. Analyze how food access policies, including SNAP eligibility and administration, affect food pantries and patron needs to inform the CONNECT Pantries intervention.
3. Design and implement outreach and data collection at food pantries and evaluate how effectively they link patrons to tobacco cessation services.

Summarized Reference Sheet for Recruitment



Why Adopt This Program?

The Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) is conducting a research project in partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

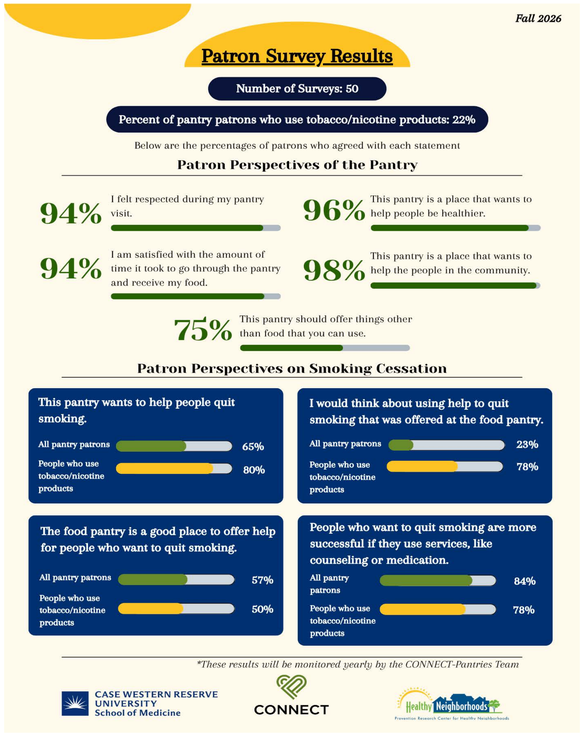
- **The goal of our program.** Tobacco negatively impacts people's health, and it is challenging to quit. We want to provide a resource for food pantries to help their neighbors who want to quit smoking.

Our project aims to connect food pantry patrons to the Ohio Tobacco Quit Line, a FREE smoking cessation resource frequently recommended by doctors.

- **Why we work with food pantries.** Food pantries serve community members who may be interested in quitting tobacco. Patrons may not routinely have access to health care services and are not aware of resources to help them quit.
- **How we designed the program.** The referral-based program was designed by researchers, pantry staff members, pantry volunteers, and pantry patrons, so it reflects the realities of how pantries operate. To minimize additional burden to day-to-day operations, this program is tailored to fit your pantry's existing workflow.
- **What food pantries receive.** Food pantries that choose to adopt the program and participate in the research will receive a three-year stipend.

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One Page Pantry Survey Data Compilation



Fall 2026

Patron Survey Results

Number of Surveys: 50

Percent of pantry patrons who use tobacco/nicotine products: 22%

Below are the percentages of patrons who agreed with each statement

Patron Perspectives of the Pantry

- 94% I felt respected during my pantry visit.
- 96% This pantry is a place that wants to help people be healthier.
- 94% I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to go through the pantry and receive my food.
- 98% This pantry is a place that wants to help the people in the community.
- 75% This pantry should offer things other than food that you can use.

Patron Perspectives on Smoking Cessation

	All pantry patrons	People who use tobacco/nicotine products
This pantry wants to help people quit smoking.	65%	80%
I would think about using help to quit smoking that was offered at the food pantry.	23%	78%
The food pantry is a good place to offer help for people who want to quit smoking.	57%	50%
People who want to quit smoking are more successful if they use services, like counseling or medication.	84%	78%

*These results will be monitored yearly by the CONNECT-Pantries Team

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Activities and Deliverables

1. Prepared project documents and materials for internal and external communications, including flyers, phone outreach, and website content.
2. Developed training materials for pantry staff and volunteers.
3. Conducted fieldwork at partner food pantry sites throughout Cuyahoga County.
4. Researched food access policies, including SNAP, and their impact on pantry operations and patron needs.

Public Health Implications

Connect Pantries has significant public health potential by linking community members to smoking cessation resources and supporting better health outcomes.

Lessons Learned

- Strengthened communication through community engagement.
- Developed skills in survey administration, data entry, and documentation.
- Created communication materials and edited website content for community audiences.

Link to CONNECT-Pantries Website