



### INTRODUCTION

- ★ Bridgewell is a non-profit headquartered in Peabody, Massachusetts, offering a broad range of community services, including behavioral health treatment, recovery supports disability services, and housing programs.
- ★ Staff members in the programs often assist individuals with daily living activities such as grocery shopping, meal planning, and budgeting. Many individuals supported by Bridgewell have access to **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**.

### INTERNSHIP PROJECT OBJECTIVE

- ★ Assess administrative staff knowledge of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits as they relate to food access and nutrition
- ★ Identify gaps in staff awareness regarding SNAP-eligible foods, budgeting strategies, and common barriers clients face when accessing food
- ★ Implement an educational intervention through a staff assessment and the development of a SNAP Support Toolkit
- ★ Improve staff capacity to support food access indirectly by increasing awareness, confidence, and practical understanding of SNAP-related challenges

### RELATED LITERATURE

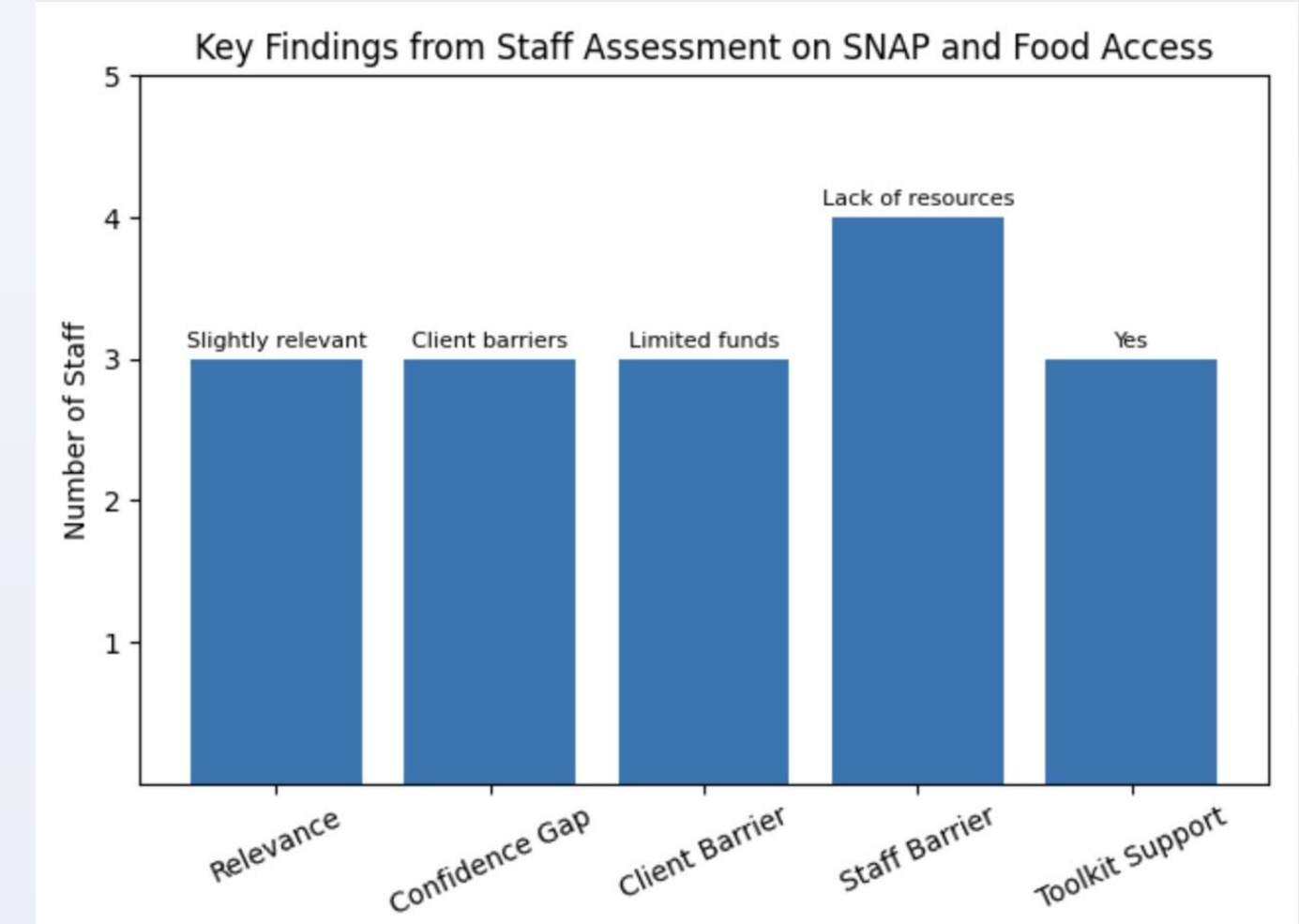
- ★ Food insecurity remains a significant public health issue in the United States, particularly among low-income populations who rely on assistance programs such as SNAP to meet their nutritional needs. Research shows that SNAP plays a critical role in reducing food insecurity and improving access to food (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2023).
- ★ Despite the availability of SNAP benefits, many individuals still experience challenges in utilizing these resources effectively due to limited nutrition knowledge, budgeting skills, and environmental barriers such as transportation and food accessibility (Leung et al., 2020).
- ★ Studies have also shown that education and support from service providers can improve outcomes related to food security by increasing awareness of healthy, affordable food choices and encouraging better budgeting practices (Dollahite et al., 2014).

### MATERIALS & METHODS

- ★ Developed and distributed a staff assessment survey to administrative and office-based staff to evaluate knowledge and perceptions of SNAP benefits and food access.
- ★ Survey included 6 multiple-choice questions focusing on:
  - Relevance of food access to staff roles
  - Areas of low confidence (SNAP eligibility, budgeting, nutrition, client barriers)
  - Perceived client barriers to using SNAP
  - Organizational limitations affecting staff support
  - Preferred types of staff support
- ★ Collected responses from a sample of 7 staff members.
- ★ Organized and analyzed survey data using:
  - Frequency counts
  - Percentage distributions
- ★ Created visual representations of data using:
  - Bar graphs
  - Pie charts
- ★ Identified key knowledge gaps and staff needs based on survey results.
- ★ Developed a SNAP Support Toolkit as an educational intervention to address identified gaps, focusing on:
  - SNAP food eligibility
  - Budget-friendly meal planning
  - Real-world food access challenges

### RESULTS

- ★ Most staff reported food access as only slightly relevant to their role, with fewer identifying it as very relevant, suggesting a gap in perceived responsibility.
- ★ Staff showed the lowest confidence in understanding client barriers and SNAP eligibility; limited funds, transportation issues, and lack of resources were identified as the main challenges, and staff expressed a need for practical supports such as a Quick SNAP Guide and Resource List, with overall support for developing a SNAP toolkit.



### CONCLUSIONS

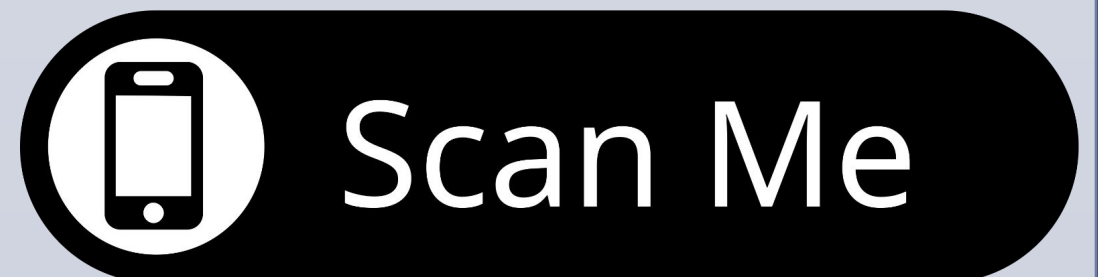
- ★ Staff demonstrated limited confidence in understanding client barriers related to food access, and findings showed that food insecurity is influenced by multiple factors such as limited funds, transportation challenges, and lack of resources.
- ★ The SNAP Support Toolkit addressed these gaps by providing practical guidance, and improving staff awareness may strengthen their ability to support clients and promote better food security outcomes.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my site supervisor, Brad Bitler for overseeing my internship and supporting this project. I am especially grateful to Magalie Pamphile for her guidance, training, and day-to-day support throughout my experience. I also appreciate the Bridgewell staff who participated in the survey and contributed to the development of this project.



### REFERENCES



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

SNAP & FOOD ACCESS STAFF ASSESSMENT

- How relevant is food access (SNAP, budgeting, nutrition) to your role?
  - Not relevant
  - Slightly relevant
  - Moderately relevant
  - Very relevant
- Which area do you feel LEAST confident in?
  - SNAP eligibility rules
  - Budget-friendly meal planning
  - Identifying affordable healthy foods
  - Understanding client barriers
- What do you think is the biggest barrier clients face with SNAP?
  - Limited funds
  - Lack of nutrition knowledge
  - Transportation/access to stores
  - Time/other responsibilities
- What limits staff from supporting clients with food access?
  - Lack of training
  - Time constraints
  - Role limitations
  - Lack of resources
- What type of support would be MOST helpful for staff?
  - Quick SNAP guide
  - Budget meal planning tips
  - Training sessions
  - Resource list for clients
- Would it be beneficial to create a SNAP toolkit for new staff to use during orientation to help them better understand food access and benefits?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Maybe