The Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Goal:
Promote the elimination of food deserts in North Carolina through the creation of a state-level Healthy Corner Store Initiative, which would lead to an increase in the amount of healthy food being offered in existing small retail stores in low and moderate income communities.

What is a Healthy Corner Store Initiative?
A Healthy Corner Store Initiative would assess communities for access to healthy foods, engage interested small retail store owners to offer healthier options, and then provide participating retailers with marketing and technical assistance (signage, cooking demonstrations, etc.) to help them promote the healthy foods they stock. The program would work to connect these store owners with North Carolina farmers and fishermen, potentially benefiting local agribusiness by expanding their market opportunities. The Initiative would coordinate with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to ensure underserved communities can maximize their utilization of these programs in the healthy corner store locations.

A North Carolina Healthy Corner Store Initiative would include the following components:

- The establishment of a Healthy Corner Store Fund to provide funding for county-based programs to assist existing small retail stores in increasing the availability and sales of fresh and nutritious food in low or moderate income areas.

- Through the Fund, local health departments would provide refrigeration, shelving, and displays to store owners, as well as small mini-grants to offset initial costs necessary to stock healthy foods and fresh produce.

- To maximize community support for purchasing the healthier fresh food, participating store owners would be provided technical assistance, education, advice, or other assistance regarding food safety and handling, business operations, help connecting to NC farmers and local resources, as well as marketing and promotion (including materials and supplies for nutrition education and healthy food promotion).

- The Healthy Corner Store Fund could be administered by the NC Department of Agriculture, in partnership with other agencies and local health departments and/or non-profit organizations with demonstrated expertise in increasing access to healthy food. The administering agency will set and enforce the goals and standards required by the grant or loan. It is recommended that at least 10 percent of the Fund be reserved for the Department of Agriculture’s administrative and operational costs, unless those costs are provided for from other budgets or in-kind resources.

- An evaluation component would be included to measure the health and economic impact of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

For more information, go to www.ncallianceforhealth.org or contact Starrlett Johnson at starr@ncallianceforhealth.org or 919.463.8329

The North Carolina Alliance for Health is a project of the North Carolina Pediatric Society.