Rhode Island State Overview

Rhode Islanders maintain a strong state identity and a lasting connection with their heritage in the fishing community. Therefore supporting their local economy and food producers resonates well with Rhode Island health care representatives. However, as one of the more economically depressed New England states, health care budgets are particularly tight. Rhode Island health care food service is majority managed by Sodexo, with one managed by Aramark, two by Morrison, and two self-operated. This condition has informed our strategy in Rhode Island, as we work less often with food service directors and have engaged administrators through the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) and through the Rhode Island Health Care Local Foods Challenge. We also work with Sodexo national and regional directors to affect change at the state level. We interact with facility food service directors when key technical assistance opportunities arise.

Our work in Rhode Island has been primarily focused on managing the Rhode Island Health Care Food Challenge, a 1-year project that concluded in September, 2016. The goal of the Challenge was to inspire health care facilities to purchase local foods by engaging them in a competition for a monetary prize and notoriety. Six hospitals participated. Challenge participants earned points by procuring local foods and sharing information about local foods in their facilities and communities. As a result of this project, we established a new, productive relationship with CharterCare.

**Key Activities in 2017**

Rhode Island is the first state in the country to employ a statewide Director of Food Strategy. The Director has established a cross-sector farm to institution work group for the state. HCWH will participate in this work group to bring healthcare to the broader food systems conversation and bring new opportunities to healthcare.

Work with HARI to host a statewide meeting of partners and healthcare leaders to identify meaningful strategies to enhance healthcare engagement in development of the food system.

Continue to partner with Farm Fresh Rhode Island to support culinary demonstrations focused on local foods for health care facilities.

Align with Rhode Island Food Policy Council’s efforts to include the health care perspective in their workgroups, meetings, and other activities.

**Key Dates for 2017**

January 17: Rhode Island Food Systems Summit
January & February: 2017 HFHC survey
March: Nutrition Month, featuring the blended burger
April 5-7: Regional Farm to Institution Summit in Leominster, MA
July- September: Farm field trip
September: Launch Nourished by New England local food program
October 24: Food Day
November: Hospital Association of Rhode Island Annual Conference
November 13-19: Get Smart Week

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