

Public Health and Well-Being Project Grants for Medical Students New Haven County Medical Association Foundation

Title: Grant Proposal for Neighborhood Health Project (NHP) Community Health Pantry Initiative

Name of Applicant (First/Last): **Ryan Sutherland, MPH, MPhil**

Medical School: **Yale School of Medicine**

Projected Graduation Date (Month/Year): **May 2026**

Advisor Name: **Jeffrey Bender, MD**

Advisor Title/Role: **Robert I. Levy Professor of Medicine (Cardiovascular Medicine) and Professor of Immunobiology, NHP Advisor**

Section 1: Eligibility

Please check the boxes below to confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements for this grant application:

X I confirm that I am currently enrolled at either the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University or the Yale School of Medicine.

X I understand that grant recipients will be required to present the final results of their project at the annual NHCMA winter meeting in 2025 (date TBA).

Section 2: Introduction and Purpose

1) What is the specific public health issue or challenge your project/research aims to address in the Greater New Haven area?

NHP's Community Health Pantry Initiative seeks to address two key intersecting public health challenges in the Greater New Haven area, centering on destigmatization: lack of access to hygiene and menstrual health products, and the opioid overdose crisis. Vulnerable populations—particularly those who are homeless, living in poverty, or part of marginalized groups—face significant barriers in accessing basic hygiene supplies. Menstrual and diaper poverty forces individuals to choose between hygiene products and other essentials, leading to health risks and social stigma. Additionally, diaper poverty puts undue stress on low-income families, affecting the health and well-being of infants and children. Simultaneously, New Haven has been grappling with a growing opioid crisis, which disproportionately affects underserved communities. The stigma and cost surrounding substance use often deters individuals from seeking help or accessing life-saving interventions like Narcan, which reverses opioid overdoses.

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By establishing community health pantries that provide free menstrual products, diapers, Narcan, emergency contraception, condoms, and health and wellness resources, our project addresses both of these urgent public health challenges in a destigmatizing way. We aim to reduce the shame and stigma surrounding both menstrual health and opioid addiction, ensuring that individuals have easy access to these and other essential resources. These pantries will serve as a vital lifeline for people who are too often excluded from mainstream healthcare and support services, ultimately improving community health outcomes and promoting dignity, the core of Neighborhood Health Project's mission.

2) How does your project align with the mission of the NHCMA Foundation: to promote health and well-being in Greater New Haven area?

NHP's Community Health Pantry Initiative aligns with the mission of the NHCMA Foundation to promote health and well-being in the Greater New Haven area by addressing both immediate and long-term healthcare needs. By providing essential hygiene products, menstrual supplies, and Narcan to vulnerable populations, our project directly improves the health and dignity of citizens who often face significant barriers to accessing care. These pantries empower individuals by bringing critical resources directly into the community, helping to prevent health crises before they require more intensive medical intervention.

In addition, our initiative educates the public by destigmatizing access to menstrual health products and overdose-reversing medications like Narcan, associating NHP as a trusted partner not only in addressing the opioid epidemic but in providing vital and often costly resources for free to the community like diapers and menstrual hygiene products.

Our mission aligns with NHCMA's commitment to educating the public about key health matters. Through community outreach and partnerships, we aim to foster awareness around these often overlooked aspects of healthcare, while also providing the medical community with an opportunity to engage in preventive care outside of clinical settings. As the popularity of these pantries grow, we hope to include informational pamphlets in them about local primary care clinics, disease prevention, and community resources for health and wellness. Our project not only serves the health needs of New Haven County residents but also strengthens the connection between healthcare providers and the communities they serve, supporting the future of equitable healthcare.

3) How will your project directly benefit the residents of the Greater New Haven area?

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NHP's Community Health Pantry Initiative will directly benefit residents of the Greater New Haven area by providing free and accessible hygiene and health products, including menstrual supplies, Narcan, and other essential items. Vulnerable populations, particularly those experiencing homelessness, economic hardship, or healthcare barriers, will have access to essential products without needing to adhere to clinic hours. By placing the pantries directly in the community and making them mobile, the initiative ensures that individuals facing transportation issues or scheduling conflicts can still access critical health support.

The availability of Narcan in these pantries is particularly impactful, as it allows the community to respond to opioid overdoses while reducing the stigma associated with obtaining this life-saving medication. Some individuals may feel uncomfortable accessing Narcan in a clinic setting due to the stigma surrounding drug use; the semi-anonymous nature of the pantries helps mitigate this concern.

Additionally, NHP's Saturday clinic (57 Olive), while important, can be difficult for some community members to reach due to timing, transportation, or work schedules. The pantries address this issue by being accessible at any time, ensuring that individuals are not restricted by clinic hours. They also serve as a safe, non-clinical space for individuals who may be uncomfortable in traditional healthcare environments.

Overall, this initiative brings essential health resources into the community, ensuring that time, transportation, and stigma are no longer barriers to well-being. These mobile pantries will help improve the health, dignity, and safety of vulnerable populations in Greater New Haven, contributing to a stronger and more inclusive community.

Section 3: Proposal Guidelines

- 4. Provide a detailed description of your project/research, including objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes.***

Project Title:

NHP Community Health Pantry Initiative

Project Director:

Ryan Sutherland, MPH, MPhil
Director of Community Outreach, NHP

Introduction:

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The Community Health Pantry Initiative aims to provide accessible hygiene and menstrual health products to underserved communities in New Haven, Connecticut. NHP's Community Health Pantry Initiative aims to address critical gaps in access to essential hygiene products, menstrual health supplies, and overdose-reversing medications like Narcan for vulnerable populations in Greater New Haven. By establishing mobile, community-based health pantries, this project will empower individuals who face barriers to traditional healthcare due to transportation, financial hardship, or stigma.

By collaborating with local partners, such as the New Haven Pride Center, the Learning Corridor/UrbanScapes Native Plant Nursery, and the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, the project will set up community health pantries that will distribute these essential items, tailored to community need. The pantries will be located in high-traffic, low-resource areas to serve populations experiencing homelessness, economic hardship, or health disparities.

Menstrual and diaper poverty in our community is creating significant hardship for individuals and families, particularly those experiencing homelessness or financial insecurity. Many are forced to choose between basic necessities like food and hygiene products, leaving them without access to essential items like menstrual products and diapers. This lack of access can lead to missed work or school, health issues, and a profound sense of shame. In addition to providing menstrual products and diapers, our community health pantries will also include Narcan to help prevent opioid overdose deaths. By offering Narcan, we aim to destigmatize access to lifesaving interventions and provide support to those struggling with substance use. In addition, we plan to fill our pantries with health pamphlets, condoms, socks, soaps, hand/feet warmers, sunscreen, lotion, and other items that community liaisons inform us can be of use in their communities. These pantries will serve as a judgment-free resource, enhancing public health and offering dignity to all who use them.

Project Goals:

1. **Improve Access to Hygiene Products/Narcan:** Provide free, essential hygiene products and Narcan to individuals in underserved areas, with a focus on menstrual health, overdose awareness, sexual wellbeing, cleanliness, and personal dignity. Provide Narcan (naloxone) in community spaces to reduce opioid overdose deaths and destigmatize its use.
2. **Reduce Health Inequities:** Ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly those who are unhoused or experiencing financial difficulties, have access to basic health products. Reduce barriers to healthcare access, such as limited transportation and clinic hours, by making the pantries mobile and widely available. Promote community health and dignity by providing semi-anonymous access to essential supplies without the stigma associated with clinical environments.
3. **Build Sustainable Partnerships:** Strengthen community engagement by partnering with local organizations to provide ongoing, tailored support to the pantries.

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4. **Promote Eco-friendly Solutions:** Where possible, incorporate sustainable packaging and eco-friendly products to minimize environmental impact.

Project Objectives:

1. Set up three health pantries in targeted New Haven locations by the end of the first quarter (Example locations: 1) Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, 2) The Learning Corridor, 3) the New Haven Pride Center).
2. Serve 500 community members in the first year by providing access to essential health and hygiene items.
3. Establish a restocking and volunteer management system with local partners and Yale-affiliated student organizations to maintain operations for 12 months.

Methodology:

1. **Needs Assessment:** Partner with local organizations (e.g., Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, New Haven Pride Center, Learning Corridor UrbanScapes Native Plant Nursery) to assess where the need for these pantries is greatest. Input from community members will shape locations and product offerings.
2. **Outreach and Education:** Collaborate with local healthcare providers and outreach workers to educate the community about the pantries, safe use of Narcan, and resources for additional health support. Distribute materials that connect individuals to health services, substance abuse treatment, and more.
3. **Data Collection and Monitoring:** Track usage patterns and solicit community feedback to optimize locations, inventory, and accessibility. Gain a better understanding of community needs through pantry use patterns.
4. **Evaluation:** Success will be measured by the number of individuals served, the frequency of pantry use, and qualitative feedback from the community. Surveys and usage logs will help monitor the effectiveness of the pantries, while regular check-ins with partners will ensure that the initiative continues to meet community needs.

Expected Outcomes:

1. **Increased Resource Access:** Serve at least 500 individuals in the first year by providing free health and hygiene products (measured by proxy according to distribution of hygiene kits, etc.).
2. **Reduction in Overdose Deaths/Improved Overdose Awareness:** By distributing Narcan, the project aims to contribute to a measurable reduction in opioid overdose incidents within the community and improved overdose awareness.
3. **Community Empowerment and Health Equity:** Foster a sense of empowerment and dignity by ensuring everyone in New Haven, particularly those in marginalized communities, can access essential health products without stigma or logistical barriers.
4. **Sustainability:** Establish a scalable and replicable model of community health pantries that can continue to serve the area long-term through ongoing partnerships

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and community engagement. Inspiring other organizations to sponsor their own community health pantries/contribute to ours to continue to expand outreach efforts.

5. Outline an itemized budget, detailing how the grant funds will be used. Please also include mention of any additional outside funding pertaining to your proposed project, if any.

Budget:

Category	Item	Cost (USD)
Pantry Installation	3 pantries**	\$1,200
Initial Supplies***	Menstrual products (e.g., tampons, pads)	\$300
	Hygiene products (soap, toothpaste, etc.)	\$300
	Socks and undergarments	\$300
Outreach & Education	Flyers, posters, and educational materials	\$200
Contingency	Emergency or additional product needs	\$200
Total Budget		\$2,500

*NHP is *not* receiving outside funding for this project

**Identified vendor:

<https://impactracks.com/?srsltid=AfmBOoqjlkFMN4skaQHWpD5PpOUXtcLtTSxb5MnHXAawIRyoCGacN-qY>

***These costs cover purchase of these items, but will also offset costs for S&H for wholesale/donor organizations that wish to send these items to us for free but desire contribution towards S&H, allowing our funding to go even further than direct purchases (e.g. Soap Donation Center, etc.)

Sustainability:

The long-term sustainability of the Community Health Pantries will rely on partnerships with local businesses, donations from community members, and the support of existing organizations like Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. By fostering a volunteer base and engaging local residents in the upkeep and restocking of the pantries, the initiative aims to become a lasting resource for the New Haven community.

6. Please provide an outline of your project/research’s Timeline. The proposed goal of the project should be completed within one year of funding disbursement.

Timeline:

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Phase	Activity	Timeframe
Planning	Partner engagement and final location selection, pantries acquired and designed (collaboration with local artist to make pantries visually appealing), workflow for pantry volunteers outlined. Community liaisons identified, community input acquired. Include individuals with lived experience of homelessness in these discussions (e.g. Rosette Community Village, etc.)	October - December 2024
Implementation & Pilot	Install and pilot pantries, purchase/distribute supplies, review successes/failures for pilot, conduct needs assessment survey with community leaders/sponsors.	January - February 2025
Launch & Distribution	Begin community outreach, finalize location for pantries/install (possibility of mobile relocation)	March 2025
Monitoring & Restocking	Monthly restocking and assessment	April 2025 – October 2025
Evaluation & Reporting	Measure impact and report to funders, conduct project evaluation	Final: October 2025 (1-year)

Key Activities:

1. **Partner Collaboration:** Work with the New Haven Pride Center, Loaves & Fishes, and Learning Corridor/UrbanScapes to align pantry locations and volunteer commitments.
2. **Location Setup:** Select three high-need areas for pantry installations. Possible locations include community centers, shelters, and urban parks. Mobile location facilitates opportunity for us to relocate to other high-need, low-resource communities.
3. **Purchasing and Installation:** Order and install pantry structures in agreed-upon locations, ensuring easy accessibility.
4. **Outreach & Education:** Organize outreach events, offering education on health and wellness, menstrual health, and hygiene, and connecting with community leaders.
5. **Restocking & Monitoring:** Coordinate volunteers to restock pantries monthly. Coordinating an “adopt a pantry” initiative for local businesses to sponsor a pantry/restock. Coordinate seasonal supplies with donors (i.e. sunscreen in summer through the Yale Dermatology Department, warming glove/boot inserts in winter through local homelessness advocacy organizations like Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen (DESK)). Gather data on pantry usage to assess community impact.

7. Describe your plan for evaluating the project/research's impact on public health in the Greater New Haven area.

1. Quantitative Metrics:

- **Usage Tracking:** We will regularly monitor the frequency of pantry use by counting the number of products (e.g., menstrual supplies, hygiene items, Narcan) distributed. Volunteers will restock pantries bi-weekly and maintain logs to track the quantity of items taken. This data will provide insight into demand patterns and ensure adequate supply.
- **Narcan Distribution and Overdose Response:** We will track the number of Narcan kits distributed, collaborating with local health organizations and the Department of Public Health to advertise our pantries as part of the overdose prevention and response chain.
- **User Surveys:** We will implement anonymous user surveys twice per year, asking pantry users to provide feedback on their access to resources and how the initiative has impacted their health and well-being. Surveys will be available in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity.

2. Qualitative Metrics:

- **Focus Groups:** Through NHP's annual internship position, sponsored by the Yale School of Public Health's Office of Public Health Practice, we will conduct biannual focus groups with community members, volunteers, and partner organizations to gather feedback on the pantries' accessibility, utility, and perceived impact. This will allow us to understand any gaps in service or unmet needs and refine the initiative accordingly.
- **Community Health Outcomes:** We will work closely with local health centers to monitor broader health trends in the area, such as the incidence of opioid overdoses, menstrual health issues, and hygiene-related infections, and adjust our pantry offerings as needed. Data will be compared pre- and post-implementation of the pantries to evaluate any shifts in public health outcomes.

3. Partnerships and Stakeholder Input:

- **Collaborative Review:** Partner organizations (New Haven Pride Center, Loaves & Fishes, and others) will participate in quarterly review meetings to assess the initiative's progress and impact. Their on-the-ground perspective will provide critical insights into community needs and how well the pantries are addressing them.

By combining quantitative tracking, qualitative feedback, and collaborative evaluation, we aim to continuously improve the pantries and demonstrate measurable impact on public health in the Greater New Haven area.

Conclusion:

NHP's Community Health Pantry Initiative will address urgent needs for hygiene and menstrual health products among vulnerable populations in New Haven. Through strong

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community partnerships, eco-conscious practices, and a focus on health equity, this project will make a meaningful impact on the lives of hundreds of individuals and would benefit greatly from the support of the Public Health and Well-Being Project Grants for Medical Students through the New Haven County Medical Association Foundation. Thank you for your consideration.



Image 1: Possible design for NHP Community Health Pantry

Contact information:

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