



*Creating a hunger-free community*

# **Worcester County Forum on Hunger: *A Call to Action***

## ***SNAP Outreach and Application Assistance Model Program***

**Katherine Shocas**

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**UMass Memorial Health Care**

# A Partner in the Vision - How UMass Memorial Health Care is Helping Patients Apply for SNAP and WIC

**Katherine Shocas, Director of Special Projects**  
**Worcester County Forum on Hunger**  
**June 14, 2011**



## UMass Memorial Health Care

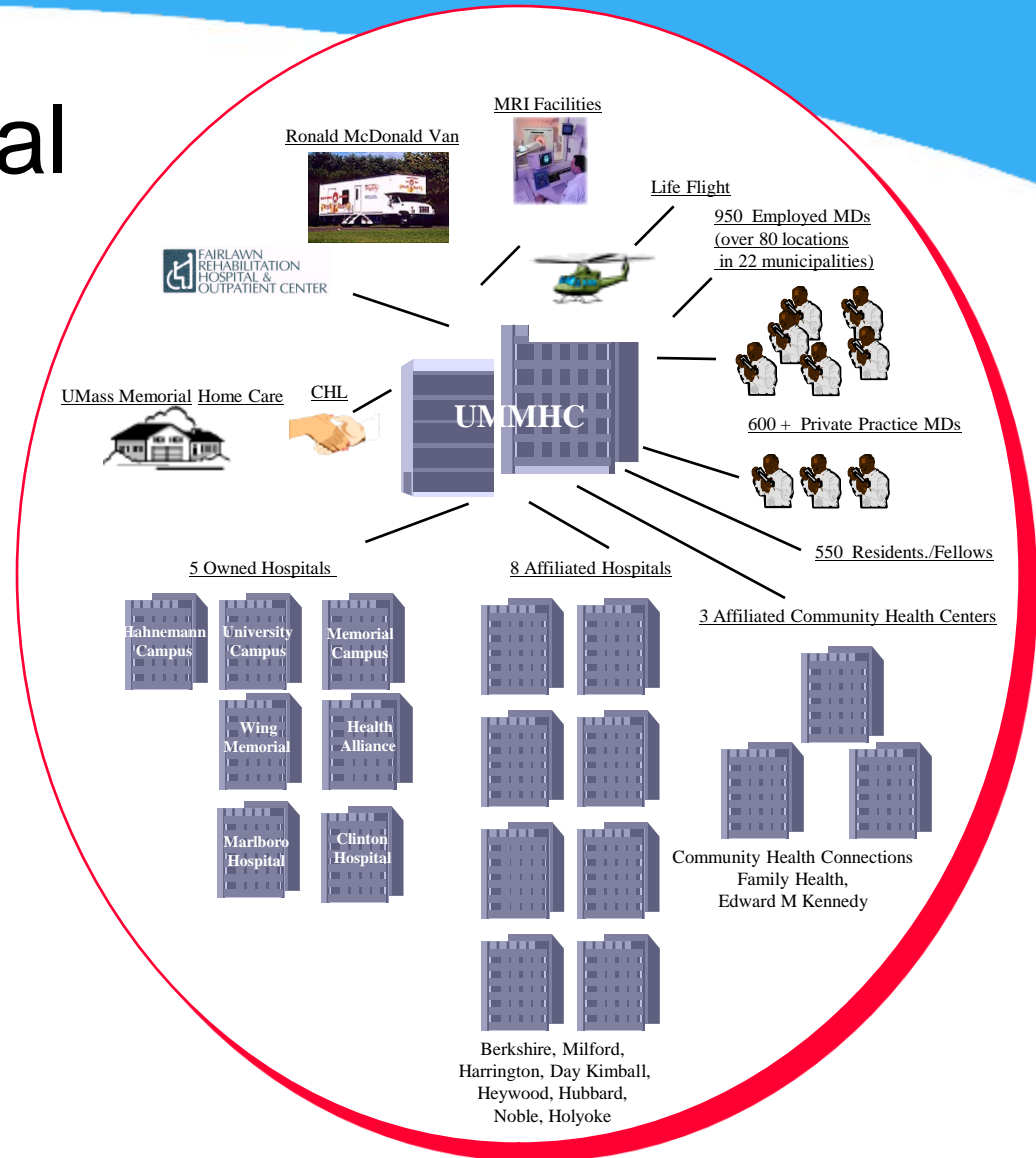
1,101 licensed inpatient beds  
58,994 hospital admissions  
264,487 emergency room visits  
1,393,457 outpatient visits

13,760 employees

Area's only –  
Level I Adult and Pediatric  
Trauma Center  
Level III Neonatal ICU

Busiest Single Helicopter  
Service in the Country

Clinical Partner of  
UMass Medical School



# UMass Memorial Health Care

- Clinton Hospital, Clinton
- HealthAlliance Hospital, Leominster and Fitchburg
- Marlborough Hospital, Marlborough
- UMass Memorial Medical Center, Worcester
- Wing Memorial Hospital, Palmer
- Community Healthlink
- UMass Memorial Medical Group



“Why can’t our doctors and nurses screen patients for hunger?”

Congressman  
James P. McGovern  
Massachusetts Hunger  
Summit 2008

## Many Ways Hospitals Can Help

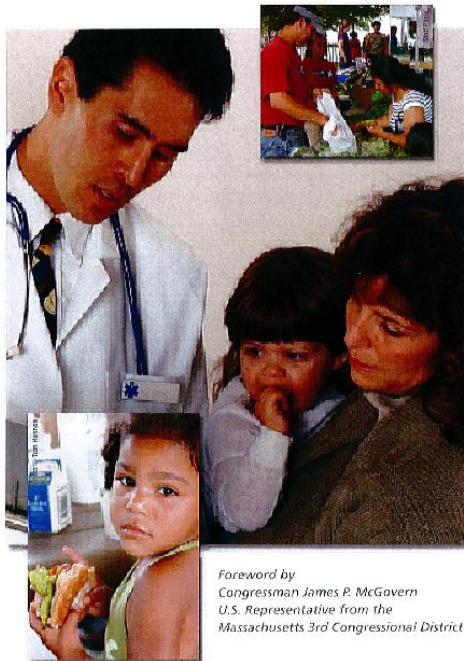
- Integrate hunger screening and services into clinical care
- Partner with the community
- Increase access to food assistance programs

See hospital guide online at [www.projectbread.org](http://www.projectbread.org)

## Partnership between Project Bread and UMass Memorial Health Care

*Hunger in the Community*

### Ways Hospitals Can Help



*Foreword by  
Congressman James P. McGovern  
U.S. Representative from the  
Massachusetts 3rd Congressional District*

### Massachusetts Hospital Association Support

- Endorsed project
- Mailed guide to MHA member hospitals
- Sponsored community benefit conference with hunger as a feature topic

Launched with support of federal and state leaders in late 2009



## Learned new concepts, new language

- Shifted definition of hunger from clinical description of signs and symptoms to food insecurity and the inability to afford healthy food
- Viewed hunger as health issue rather than a poverty issue

## Humanized hunger and made it emotionally compelling

- Brought senior hospital leaders to food banks and food pantries, community programs, gardens
- Told personal, first-hand stories
- Visited an area hospital hunger relief leader

## Used data to illustrate the problem

### Highest Concentrations of Hunger in Massachusetts



**71%** of Worcester Public School students eligible for free or reduced lunch

**10%** (1 in 10) of Worcester County residents using emergency food pantries

## Used solid evidence to make the case for hospital solutions

- Research on positive health effects of enrollment in federal programs - SNAP, WIC, school meals, senior meals
- Research on effectiveness of hunger screening questions to identify need

Addressed concerns about causing patient shame and stigma, and asking about problems that cannot be solved

- Assure asking and helping about hunger *reduces* stigma
- Give scripts and ways of reframing need
- Develop referral resources


# Talked about hunger in context of current health care system priorities and challenges


- Paradox of obesity and food insecurity
- Hunger and health disparities
- Health care reform, payment and service transformation, shift from treatment to prevention

# UMass Memorial integrates SNAP (food stamp) assistance into existing work with low income, uninsured patients

**Need health insurance?**

UMass Memorial can help you get free or low-cost health insurance.



 **UMassMemorial**

**Health Insurance for Your Kids**



Sign up your child TODAY through the financial counselors at UMass Memorial and receive a FREE GIFT CARD and other giveaways!

**With our help, it's fast and easy!**  
**Call 508-334-9300**

[www.umassmemorial.org/needinsurance](http://www.umassmemorial.org/needinsurance)

 **UMassMemorial**

Powered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Our patient financial counselors screen for eligibility and start applications for health insurance, SNAP, and WIC at our hospitals

- Emergency departments
- Inpatient rooms
- Outpatient clinics
- Patient financial counseling offices

Our patient financial counselors screen for eligibility and start applications for health insurance, SNAP, and WIC by telephone and by email

- Call 508-334-9300
- [needinsurance@umassmemorial.org](mailto:needinsurance@umassmemorial.org)

Our patient financial counselors screen for eligibility and start applications for health insurance, SNAP, and WIC in the community

Sample Outreach Schedule – June 2011

- 5 free clinics at churches and community sites
- Worcester County Courthouse
- Workforce Central Job Fair
- Ronald McDonald Care Mobile

## Counselors use the Virtual Gateway to file one single public benefit application to multiple programs

Welcome to the Online Application for Services - Windows Internet Explorer

https://service.hhs.state.ma.us/ier/ControllerServlet?PAGE\_ID=APDUM&ACTION=Save%20and%20Continue&intervi

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Welcome to the Online Application for Services

Virtual Gateway

Mass.gov

Mass.Gov Home Help

**User:** Katherine Shocas  
**Location:** UMass Memorial Medical Ctr  
[Cancel Application](#)

**Welcome to the Online Application for Services**

**The Free and Reduced Price School Meals Program application is not available at this time. Please return after August 14th in order to apply online.**

You have chosen to apply online for one or more of the services offered through this website. Click on the appropriate link for information about a specific type of service.

Please select the services for which the household is applying and click on the 'Save and Continue' button:

- [Health Insurance and Health Assistance Programs](#)
  - MassHealth
  - Healthy Start
  - Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP)
  - MassHealth for Seniors and People Needing Long-Term-Care Services at home
  - Commonwealth Care
  - Health Safety Net
- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP \(formerly Food Stamp Program\)](#)
- [Women, Infant, and Children \(WIC\) Services](#)
- Community Services and Long-term Support
  - [Home care services for elders \(or seniors\)](#)
  - [Vocational rehabilitation services](#)
  - [Services for individuals who are legally blind](#)
  - [Services for children with developmental disabilities](#)
  - [Services for adults with intellectual disabilities \(including mental retardation\)](#)
  - [Assistive Technology Fund for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)
  - [Case Management and Social Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)

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# Virtual Gateway application for multiple programs is seamless, but challenges for patients start soon after

- Different eligibility criteria for health insurance and SNAP (may qualify for one program but not the other)
- Different state agencies review each application (multiple communications)
- 30 day time limit to complete SNAP application
- SNAP requires telephone interview with state worker, health insurance does not

# Hospitals are an effective way to reach people in need

Since 2008,UMass Memorial Health Care facilities have filed **over 5,000** SNAP and WIC applications

UMass Memorial will continue to find and implement ways to address hunger as a health issue.

We are proud to work with together with you to achieve a hunger-free community.