



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

USDA Proposal to Increase Access to Healthy Foods Already in Practice in New Bedford

Mass in Motion's Healthy Markets Program is Working with New Bedford Shops to Stock More Healthy Food Items

New Bedford, Massachusetts—Recently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a proposal to require retailers to stock more healthy food items—a practice that Mass in Motion New Bedford (MiM NB) has been working with city retailers to adopt through its own Healthy Markets Program since 2014. The new USDA proposed rule is designed to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants increased access to healthy foods by requiring stores that accept SNAP to stock a wider array of healthy food choices.

Many who use SNAP to feed themselves and their children also rely on small neighborhood markets or corner stores to purchase food items where access to fresh produce, dairy products, breads and cereals, meats, poultry, and fish is limited. However, New Bedford has been working with local retailers since 2014 through its Mass in Motion Healthy Markets Program to improve access to healthy food items.

“It is great to hear that we in New Bedford are ahead of the curve when it comes to improving access to healthy food for our residents. Mass in Motion New Bedford is helping us to increase access to healthy foods whether it’s the ability to shop for fresh produce at a neighborhood market as part of the Healthy Markets program or at a nearby Farmers Market location during the warmer months,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

MiM NB has worked with a nine small markets in New Bedford that have voluntarily adopted guidelines to stock more fruits and vegetables, healthy grains, low-fat dairy products, and more. The organization also provides participating stores with promotional materials, food bins, publicity, and more.

“The Healthy Markets program is so important because many children stop at these local stores on their way to school in the morning, and with increased options, we’re making it easier to

choose a banana instead of a processed sugary snack,” says MiM NB Director Kim Ferreira. “And many parents shop at markets for their dinner ingredients, so they will now have access to brown rice and fresh vegetables.”

Healthy Markets is one of several programs MiM NB has implemented to expand food access among low-income populations that face major barriers to purchasing healthy food, including a lack of reliable transportation and a lack of discretionary income to purchase food outside of their SNAP benefits.

MiM NB also managed the New Bedford Farmers Market last year and went through the process to make all three markets eligible to accept SNAP benefits.

“Many people often think of farmers markets as outrageously expensive, and we worked really hard last year to dispel that myth,” says Ferreira. “At the end of the season, we were proud to find that 1/3 of our electronic transactions at the Farmers Markets were made with SNAP benefits, and our goal is to increase that number this coming season.”

MiM NB is also planning the first year of a subsidized community supported agriculture (CSA) project that delivers fresh, local produce directly to the doorstep of low-income families living in public housing. With a grant from the Healthy Food Fund, provided by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, two local farms – Apponagansett Farm and Ashley’s Produce at Round the Bend Farm – will each put together up to 30 boxes of fresh picked produce each week and distribute it at one of two housing sites. Participants will pay \$10 – which can be automatically deducted from their SNAP benefits – and receive the other \$10 as a subsidy paid by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation.

The subsidized CSA program is modeled after a successful statewide initiative put together by Project Bread and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance. The project was implemented at the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center last year in partnership with Apponagansett Farms.

About Mass In Motion New Bedford

Mass in Motion is a statewide movement led by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that helps local communities increase opportunities for residents to eat better and move more in the places they live, learn, work, and play.

You can learn more about MiM NB by visiting their website at massinmotionnewbedford.org or liking their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/massinmotionnewbedford>.

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