According to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma (RFB), Oklahoma is the sixth hungriest state in the nation. One in six Oklahomans struggle with hunger with one in four children going hungry each day.

In September 2018 Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City entered into collaboration with the RFB and other local hospital systems to feed hungry patients in hopes of improving health outcomes. Patients who are food insecure struggle to manage chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City identified two sites for the pilot: Coletta Cancer Center and Mercy Clinic Primary Care-Bethany. Both sites serve a large number of high-need patients.

In early November 2018 the RFB provided training to Coletta and Bethany Clinic co-workers who will be screening patients for food insecurity. The training discussed the screening tool and how to assist patients in accessing food resources in the community.

Both sites will use a two question food insecurity screening tool to determine if a patient is in need of food. If it is found that a patient is food insecure, Mercy will provide that patient with a supplemental food box and assist in identifying food resources and supplemental nutrition assistance programs.

Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City dietitians will work alongside the RFB and dietitians from other local hospitals to determine appropriate foods for the shelf-stable pantry boxes provided to patients during this pilot. The dietitian workgroup will ensure that chronic disease patients are provided healthy foods that will aid in their healing.

The Food for Health pilot is set to go live in January 2019.