

Human Services Information Sharing—COVID 19: Impact on Food Security

1. Updates from public partners

- a. IDHS, Ahlam Jbara, chief of staff, division of Family and Community Resources
 - i. Department has been doing a lot of work to prepare for the new-normal in service delivery.
 - i. Initiative is called Restore & Reinvent
 - ii. Department wants to listen to community providers to better aid efforts.
 - i. There is a new Committee that community partners can join to voice their thoughts on the Restore & Reinvent initiative
 - a. Will share info with DuPage Federation
 - iii. Currently working out how to safely reopen for both community members and staff.

2. Panel to share information – with your constituents, what has been the impact of the pandemic on food insecurity? How have you changed your operation? Looking forward, what do you need from the community of human service providers to be able to achieve your mission?

- a. Dr. Saima Azfar, director of operations Midwest Region, ICNA Relief,
 - i. ICNA food security related stats:
 - i. 44,625 lbs of food
 - ii. \$227,719
 - iii. 4,603 food boxes
 - a. Everything has changed, now weekly, rather than monthly. Used to provide 500 boxes before COVID. Now nearly 5,000 boxes are needed.
 - ii. Providing drive-thru and doorstep distribution of food resources
 - i. As Islamic Center of Wheaton, which had provided emergency space, reopened, ICNA now requires new, bigger space for packaging to keep volunteers and staff safe.
 - a. Please contact if you know of some space ICNA could use
 - iii. As ICNA Relief serves many Muslim families, there is a need for halal diet, including meat and protein
 - i. Need to find a source for this.
 - ii. Will be holding an event that could help with this need, but will still need more.

- iv. Volunteer Appreciation Drive-By event to honor volunteers
 - i. Contact to join the celebration on Saturday, July 9th, 2020
 - ii. Link shared in chat:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfERaaX9fxMX1rJXsLyOZ69_5-eq0beKl9wHC2QsnJ_mYBZtw/viewform
- b. Jane Macdonald, director of community health, Loaves and Fishes Community Services,
 - i. There is not much that didn't change! Have seen significant increase in food needs (25%-30% increase)
 - ii. Have had to change distribution methods – all requires more space – “food pantry creep” underway
 - iii. We are challenged to bring a new normal
 - i. Nutrition content and consistency diminished with loss of consumer in-person “shopping”
 - ii. Needs to be consistent with clients’ needs – this is a long term concern
 - iv. They are also dealing with space challenges to store food
 - v. Clients lost opportunity for choice to select specific foods for dietary reasons (in adjusted system of pre-boxed drive-through distribution).
 - i. “Recovery food” volume has been lost
 - vi. Used to be able to talk one-on-one with clients. Can no longer do that due to COVID and increased needs. Now looking into other client engagement and communication tools.
 - i. Technological advances continues to be a big part of this.
 - ii. Want to use new platforms to draw volunteers back into the volunteer workforce. Pandemic safety has kept many volunteers away, volunteers who are key leaders in the Loaves & Fishes operation
 - a. Rely heavily on volunteers, so need to increase volunteers.
 - i. Volunteers tended to be older and more COVID-vulnerable. Need to find ways to re-engage safely, and need lower-risk volunteers.
- c. Jeni Fabian, executive director, People’s Resource Center
 - i. Half of staff are working in office now. Open in Westmont and Wheaton. Throughout pandemic, services have been open.
 - ii. Food pantry creep (aka the increasing space needs of food pantry work) is a problem for PRC as well.

- iii. They are working to reopen more fully, but there are a lot of variables to account for. Looking to re-open in West Chicago
 - iv. Continuing to adjust dispersal methods
 - i. Using food delivery and pickups
 - ii. Using phone calls to collect more info from clients, had to redesign process of information
 - v. Seeing increase in need, anecdotally from many “never used pantry before,” and unpredictable surges, as needs are tied to changes on the ground (economic changes, school updates, etc.), difficult to anticipate
 - vi. Prioritizing getting basic necessities like food and clothing as well technology help.
 - i. Client choice is limited as well.
 - ii. Unusual shortages, running out of specific types of foods, parallel to grocery shortages -- such as canned beans.
 - vii. Bracing for a surge in housing, utilities, and transportation needs. Communication with resources to provide that assistance will be crucial.
- d. Joie Frankovich, coordinator of partnerships, We Go Together for Kids
- i. West Chicago has been really hard hit by COVID, highest number of cases, or second highest, in county, and most per capita
 - ii. Been reaching out to their families to learn what they need
 - i. Found out that food was very high on the list
 - ii. Created help packages that included West Chicago grocery stores to provide culturally relevant foods to families
 - iii. Partnering with lots of community and faith-based organizations in order to provide more food to client families; Wheaton Bible Church hosted two large food drives.
 - iv. Have hosted pop-ups in traditional food desserts with bags of shelf-stable food.
 - v. WeGo partnered with PRC for a food pantry but had to shut it down due to COVID and construction (PRC hopes to reopen soon). St. Andrews Lutheran has set up a pop-up distribution.. And partners such as Loaves & Fishes, PRC, etc. have brought fresh foods to this new pantry.
3. Roundtable – ask human service providers participating in the meeting: regarding food security and your constituents, what is working, not working, missing for your constituents in your community?
- a. HCS Family Services, Amy Wickstrom
 - i. Food security and safety are big concerns for everyone, so they appreciate what the panel shared.

- ii. Currently using a Anne M. Jeans elementary school gym for food packing activities
 - i. However, there are concerns for where to do this when/if schools reopen in the Fall.
- b. Northwestern Medicine, Ann Marie Bianchi
 - i. Getting back to normal procedures, but they are really focusing on safety for staff and patients.
 - ii. Been seeing an uptick in chronic health issues as chronically ill have been avoiding hospitals
 - iii. Working to reassure everyone
 - iv. Been amazing to see people address rising needs.
- c. DuPage Foundation, Barb Szczepaniak
 - i. How is Food Rescue going?
 - a. This program has dwindled because (1) it takes a huge volunteer force to accomplish and (2) traditional food suppliers don't have their normal resources right now.
- d. Giving DuPage, Shefali Trivedi
 - i. Reminder: Please continue to share volunteer needs with Giving DuPage (GivingDuPage.org). They can push the word out to over 5,000 potential volunteers.
 - ii. Reminder: Giving DuPage can push requests for in-kind donations. "If you need beans, we'll get you beans!"
 - iii. Will be pivoting to pushing virtual volunteer opportunities.
- e. Wayne Township, Juanita Martinez
 - i. Wayne Township Food Pantry is now providing food to anyone who comes to the pantry. They are also increasing access to weekly instead of a biweekly visits.
 - ii. Also still providing financial assistance and other needs.
 - iii. Will publicize other community-based organization events if you contact.
 - iv. They have Spanish speaking workers, so don't hesitate to send folks their way.
- f. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Kim Reed
 - i. Thanks to everyone!
- g. Metropolitan Family Services, Mariola Kasper
 - i. Slowly transiting staff to in-person services. Psychiatric evaluation returning. Working through all the challenge and learning a lot.

h. Age Guide, Megan Wileman

- i. Social isolation and food insecurity has been magnified. To deal with this, Meals on Wheels has increased eligibility to anyone 60 years old and older
 - a. Over 2,000 new referrals for Meals on Wheels, administered in DuPage by DuPage Senior Citizens Council (dupageseniorcouncil.org), now serving 1,000 daily
 - b. Enroll for Meals on Wheels here
www.dupageseniorcouncil.org/meals-on-wheels-sign-up

4. Actions

- a. If you know of large spaces that could be safely used as food packing areas, then please reach out.
- b. If you know of ways to get donations of culturally appropriate foods, then please reach out.
- c. Remember to reach out to organizations such as Giving DuPage to help find volunteers and donations.

5. Adjourn