

Wisconsin Food Pantry Conference Call Meeting Notes; Friday, April 9, 2021

(Next meeting May 14th, 2021 from 10-11am; NOTE: moving to monthly meetings on the second Friday of each month)

Meeting hosted by Stephanie Dorfman, Feeding Wisconsin; led by Kitty Kocol, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Thanks to Feeding Wisconsin for hosting calls, and posting information to the [FW website](#). Call support folks distributing food to needy households by providing information, providing an ear for challenges and ideas for solutions of practical problems.

1) Introduction: Today's topics include changes in FoodShare; a COVID-19 update; food supply information including TEFAP volume, Farm to Family Food boxes and the new fresh produce boxes through TEFAP; update on evictions and plans for upcoming pantry calls.

2) Food Supply

a) Wisconsin Supreme Court Decision and its impact on FoodShare:

On March 31, the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down the ability of the governor to issue repeated emergency declarations related to the COVID-19 pandemic and ending the statewide mask mandate effective immediately.

Through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Congress authorized emergency increases to FoodShare benefits in states that have emergency orders in place to address the increase in hunger due to the pandemic. This policy has provided individuals experiencing food insecurity with added resources to put food on their table and added purchasing power to support our local economies through the pandemic and economic recovery. For example, this change will likely impact seniors and individuals and families with some income such as disability benefits or low-wage and part time work. These individuals may have previously received \$16 per month in FoodShare benefits and with the increased allotments are now receiving \$234 a month in benefits.

On April 1, the [USDA announced](#) an [expansion of the emergency allotments](#). This will help the poorest of the poor--those who were already receiving the maximum benefit due to having very little to no income. - Increased allotments for period of time that Wisconsin has a declared public health emergency – through March at this time and then determined monthly.

Unfortunately, for the state to issue emergency allotments and to implement the expanded emergency allotments, BOTH a state and a federal public health emergency must be in place. With the Supreme Court striking down Governor Evers' public health emergency order, Wisconsin will no longer be eligible for these increased benefits. As a result, over 410,000 Wisconsin households will not have access to over \$70 million each month in increased FoodShare benefits ([USDA](#)).

This will have a great impact on the resources those experiencing food insecurity will need to come. Without the increased allotments, it is likely that our food banks and pantries will see another surge in those needing emergency food assistance.

FEDERAL 15% INCREASE IS STILL INTACT- FoodShare benefits will have an increase of 15% from through September 2021 currently.

b) Pandemic EBT – STILL INTACT as planned for 2020-2021 School Year

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/forwardhealth-pebt.htm>

Benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be allocated over the next few months

Benefit Issue Date	Estimated Amount per Child
End of March/Early April	Aug-Nov benefits (up to \$361)
End of May	Dec-Mar benefits (up to \$484)
End of July	Apr-June benefits (up to \$293)
End of September	Sept benefits (up to \$109)
Total Potential Benefit per Child	\$1,248

c) **TEFAP food supply status:**

- i) Beginning with foods that were ordered and scheduled for county deliveries in August, **TEFAP has shift food allocations from the southern warehouse in Madison to the northern warehouse in Eau Claire**, to provide a greater food supply to northern counties. Based on county ordering, more food is needed in the north.
- ii) With **Trade Mitigation ending** (with the exception of a few trucks), the volume of trucks per month has reduced from a high of 20-25 trucks/per month to each warehouse to 15-17 trucks per month to each warehouse. This compares with past history of 4-7 trucks per warehouse per month, so the supply is still relatively robust.
- iii) **Eligibility levels** were adjusted in June 1, 2020 from 185% to 300% FPL. If we find that demand starts to go up, this could be adjusted once again.

d) **Farm to Family Food Box:** The program is ending. USDA is doing an assessment of the program and will let us know if/how it will continue in some other form in the future.

3) COVID-19 update: As of April 7, Wisconsin has had 581,797 *reported* cases since the beginning of the outbreak. Since April 8, 2021, 6,667 Wisconsinites have died – **nineteen people within the last two days**. New strains are reaching Wisconsin, particularly the strain that hit England and South Africa –both more easily spread and have greater mortality in their outcomes. **Wisconsin is experiencing a COVID-19 spike**. Pantries should continue “no contact” distribution through the end of September, 2021.

a) Important for pantries to let communities know that they are there to serve.

4) An eviction moratorium has just been renewed by the federal government through the month of June 2021. This does not mean people don’t owe rent; it just means they can’t be evicted for reasons of non-payment. For more information about how this works, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt8t_lkFY0.

5) **We will be moving our joint, statewide pantry meetings to once monthly.** Our WI Food Pantry Call will be the second Friday of each month at 10am.

How to participate in the calls: Dial: 267-930-4000; Enter Meeting ID: 904-416-028# then when it asks for your participant ID, press “#”. Food pantry operators, charitable feeding organizations, emergency response, and social service folks are the key constituents of these calls. During announcements, all participants can mute themselves by pressing mute on their phone or “*#6”.

6) **State Budget Update (Feeding Wisconsin)** – see Feeding Wisconsin’s website for more info if interested

www.feedingwi.org/statebudget

Feeding Wisconsin Budget Priorities:

<https://feedingwi.org/content/FW%20State%20Budget%20Priorities.pdf>

Budget Process – public hearings have now been scheduled

<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/public-hearings/>

Whitewater April 9th

Rhineland April 21st

Menomonie April 22nd

Virtual April 28th

You can also submit written comment here:

<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/submit-comments/>

Participant Comments

Question: How will FoodShare participants get updates about the decrease in their FoodShare benefits with the end of emergency allotments?

Answer: FoodShare participants have been receiving monthly notifications (via mail and email if they are signed up to receive email notifications) informing them of the increase allotments. We are unsure at this time if they will receive a notification that the emergency allotments will not be issued. Feeding Wisconsin will reach out to DHS and follow up.

Questions related to notes: Questions related to notes can go to sdorfman@feedingwi.org. For urgent questions about The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) email DHSTEFAP@dhs.wisconsin.gov. For Emergency food needs, dial 2-1-1, describe your need and location. Staff will assist you in locating food resources.