

Wisconsin Food Pantry Conference Call Notes, August 14, 2020

COVID-19 Update:

- August 8, 2020, highest number of new reported cases in a single day: 1,165. Yesterday, 943 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 were reported. On date of our last pantry conference call (July 24th) there had been 1,018 new cases reported. The rate of positive tests increase from 4.8% on Wednesday to 7.6% yesterday.
- There are 63,206 confirmed reported cases since the outbreak began; 1,013 Wisconsinites have died from COVID-19-related condition. Currently, 8,961 active cases are known.
- The second Governor's order to wear masks in public in Wisconsin remains in place, unchallenged in court at this time.

Assistance to households update:

- Last week, Wisconsin retroactively provided FoodShare participants who had not received the maximum FoodShare benefit for the months of July and August with that benefit amount. Eligible households now have any difference between their usual allocation and the maximum benefit on their Quest cards.
- Nationally, July 24 was the final day for the additional \$600 unemployment benefit for people who have lost their jobs.
- The federal CARES Act prohibition on evictions from federally funded housing expired on July 25, 2020. Remaining is a prohibition against landlords evicting tenants in single-family homes purchased with government-backed mortgages through Freddie Mac and Fannie; that prohibition is in place until at least August 31, 2020.
- The United States Senate adjourned on August 7, 2020 without reaching agreement with the House of Representatives on a coronavirus funding package to provide further relief to households. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell adjourned the Senate until September 8, 2020; the Majority Leader has the power to reconvene the body with 24-hour notice.

Food outlook:

- TEFAP supplies remain robust; Wisconsin has placed orders for food that will be arriving to counties through February 2021 and unless USDA substantially cancels orders, supply is strong.
- The food supply in Feeding Wisconsin's affiliated food banks is sufficient for now, but economic conditions suggest that without further financial relief for households, there will be an emerging gap between need and supply in shelf-stable foods beginning in fall with the closing of peak growing season. Feeding Wisconsin affiliated food banks project an expected 60-70% increase in demand in the months ahead through the winter. The network is currently purchasing 60% of its food supply whereas it historically purchased 20% of its food supply. FW and its affiliates are working collaboratively and creatively to meet demand for both volume and food varieties.

TEFAP Reviews of food pantries:

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- TEFAP will resume conducting the USDA-required program reviews, but we plan to conduct telephone interviews rather than make in-person visits. You will be contacted if your pantry is scheduled for one of the 20 reviews we will complete before calendar year-end.

Discussion: Issues raised on the call

- For planning purposes, Donna from Wausau inquired about what varieties of foods were coming in TEFAP in coming months. DHS will provide information as soon as possible.
- Larry from the Falls Food Pantry discussed our expectations for the fall and winter; indications are that we must plan for winter distributions with COVID as a key concern. COVID management is still a distant goal and it is unclear when it will be safe to come inside. We must all prepare to continue working outdoors as it appears it will likely be necessary.
- Billie from Milwaukee shared the challenges of providing choice to participants without food being wasted. We discussed some ideas. Sandy from the Vilas Food Pantry described strategies they use, including how they adjust for household size with a prepack, and how they offer folks options to increase variety, including putting “one-zees” single items in a shopping cart to show folks in cars what they can have. We discussed putting bins on premises during distribution in case folks get something they do not want and can leave behind.
- A question was raised about how much surface cleaning sanitation is needed in a pantry. Most COVID appears to spread by droplets rather than on surfaces, so letting a facility sit for a couple of days after folks close up is likely quite sufficient if you clean high touch surfaces as you return – doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, equipment handles and counters. Remember that one COVID positive asymptomatic person sneezing can instantly contaminate an environment that has been deep cleaned. Let food donations sit for a few days before you handle them.
- A new study on neck cowl masks made of knit, jersey or fleece (stretchy T-shirt type fabrics rather than woven cotton fabrics) and actually spread more virus because droplets escape the mask and break up into even tinier droplets, which spreads spray over a large area. Tightly woven cotton masks (like quilt fabric) are best. Health care leaders are still asking civilians not to use N95 masks.

Next Call: Friday, August 28, 2020 @ 10AM

Call 1 (267) 930-4000; participant code 904-416-028#

Thanks to Feeding Wisconsin for hosting these statewide calls. All pantry operators are welcome to join on the second and fourth Fridays of the month.

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Questions welcome at dhstefap@dhs.wisconsin.gov