

# 2020 NEVADA FOOD SECURITY REPORT

## COMBATING THE STATEWIDE HUNGER CRISIS



@JeffScheid



**PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:**

**Nevada Department of Health and Human Services**

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*A special thank you to all the dedicated food security partners who work tirelessly to meet every day food needs of Nevadans, amid the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond.*

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### About the Cover

Cover photo taken by Jeff Scheid and provided by Three Square of Southern Nevada. Image is of outdoor food distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as households uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of household members due to insufficient resources for food. Food insecurity is a significant public health concern associated with adverse health outcomes and a poor quality of life, including chronic diseases and mental health issues.<sup>1,2</sup>

In 2016, Nevada was one (1) of sixteen states to experience a significant decrease in food insecurity; however, from 2016-2018, one (1) in eight (8) Nevadans remained food insecure.<sup>3</sup> Nationally, in 2018, the prevalence of household food insecurity declined for the first time to the pre-recession (2007) level of 11.1%.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of the Great Recession, Nevada has made significant strides in addressing food insecurity. Through the development of *Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action* in 2012, the creation of the OFS within DHHS, the creation of the Nevada Council on Food Security (CFS) via Executive Order, and codifying the CFS into state law in the 80th Legislative Session in 2020, Nevada continues to demonstrate its dedication to providing a platform for enhancing collaborative efforts throughout the food security network and implementing policies supporting food security statewide.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, statewide food security partners face unprecedented new challenges, as the pandemic implications reversed Nevada's improvements in addressing food insecurity. The economic shutdown led to a staggering increase in unemployment resulting in an increased need for nutrition services. COVID-19 disproportionately impacts individuals most likely to be food insecure, including racial and ethnic minorities, senior citizens, people with chronic disease, and people who have lower incomes.<sup>3</sup> These communities are subject to experience a greater impact to their lives not only from the virus itself, but also from the economic repercussions. Households experiencing economic burden from the pandemic are forced to choose between competing priorities, including rent, utilities, transportation, medication, and food. As DHHS continues to monitor data on the impact of COVID-19, particularly in low-income communities, Nevada must be aware of the food insecurity crisis it will face as a result of the pandemic.

This report will explore the impact the of COVID-19 pandemic on food security in Nevada through May 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA, Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Leung et al., Household Food Insecurity is Positively Associated with Depression among Low-Income SNAP Program Participants..., 2015

<sup>3</sup> USDA, Household Food Security in the United States in 2016, 2017

<sup>4</sup> USDA, Household Food Security in the United States in 2018, 2019

## ***Statewide Shutdown and Unemployment***

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by low-income, food insecure individuals and families nationwide. Nevada is experiencing a greater burden than other states, as approximately 25.8% of Nevada's labor force works in the leisure and hospitality industry, which was deemed unessential and forced to shut down early in March 2020.<sup>5</sup> High rates of unemployment are linked to increasing rates of food insecurity, which is persistent in Nevada. On March 13, 2020 Governor Sisolak ordered a mandatory shutdown of nonessential businesses. From that date, Nevada ranked 51<sup>st</sup> for unemployment in April 2020.<sup>7</sup> In January 2020, the unemployment rate in the United States and Nevada was only 3.6%.<sup>6</sup> As the United States economy shut down, the national unemployment rate peaked in April 2020 at 14.7%, but dropped to 13.3% as of May 2020. Nevada's statewide unemployment peaked at 30.1% in April 2020, but has since decreased to 25.3% in May 2020 after the state entered Phase One of reopening.<sup>8</sup> Unemployment rates are anticipated to continue to decrease nationwide as the economy reopens, however there is uncertainty of how quickly job market stability will occur and if certain jobs will return.

## ***Population Disparities***

Social inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic isolated people from resources they needed to prepare for and respond to outbreaks. Populations disparately impacted by hunger include racial and ethnic minorities, lower income communities, rural communities, single parents, children, and seniors.<sup>9</sup> Households with children are at a greater risk of experiencing food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Feeding America estimates nationwide, 54 million people, including more than 18 million children, will experience food insecurity as result of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>9</sup> Record high unemployment, lost wages, school closures, and shelter-in-place directives have quickly escalated hunger throughout Nevada. Lack of nutritious food can have serious implications on health outcomes and impact chronic disease management. Vulnerable, food insecure populations are more likely to experience negative health consequences, including susceptibility to diseases that are associated with increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

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<sup>5</sup> CDC Gaming Report, 2019

<sup>6</sup> BLS, Civilian unemployment rate, 2020

<sup>7</sup> BLS, State Unemployment rates, April 2020, seasonally adjusted, 2020

<sup>8</sup> BLS, Economy at a Glance- Nevada, 2020

<sup>9</sup> Feeding America, Hunger in America, 2020

## ***State Nutrition Assistance Programs: DHHS***

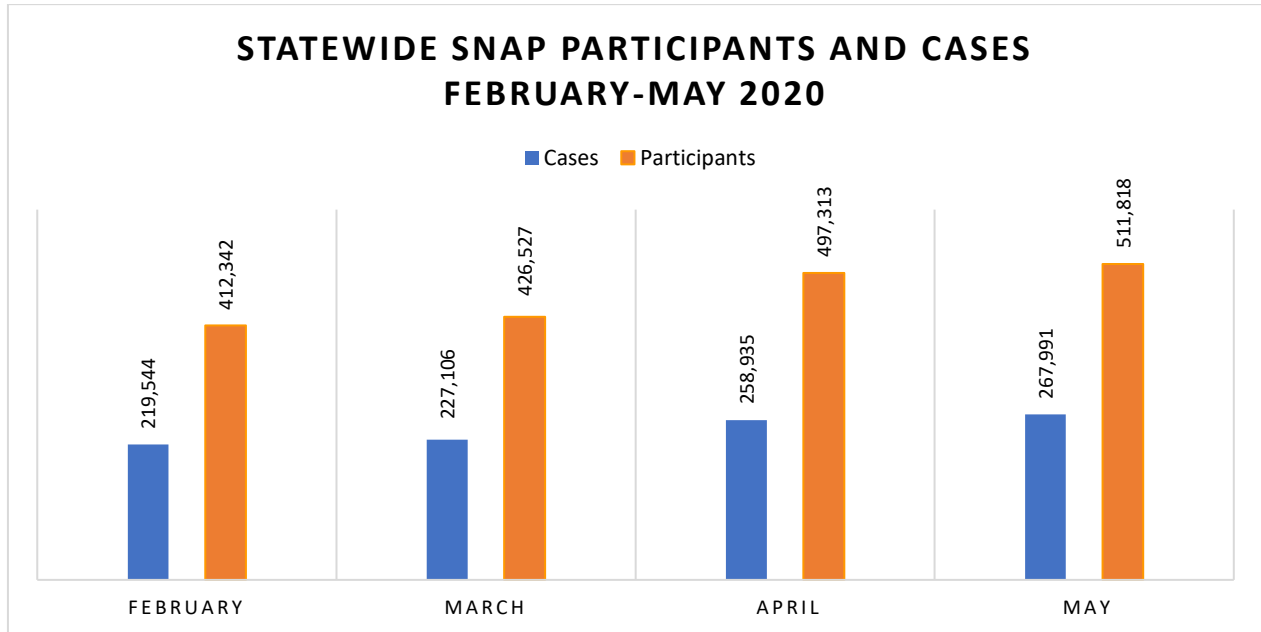
The Nevada DHHS promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents through the delivery and administration of many essential services to ensure families are strengthened, public health is protected, and individuals achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency. DHHS houses programs critical to Nevada's social safety net, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; previously known as Food Stamps) and WIC. The economic shutdown resulted in the closure of program lobbies, outreach sites, and clinics, forcing both SNAP and WIC to significantly adjust their program delivery models.

### ***SNAP***

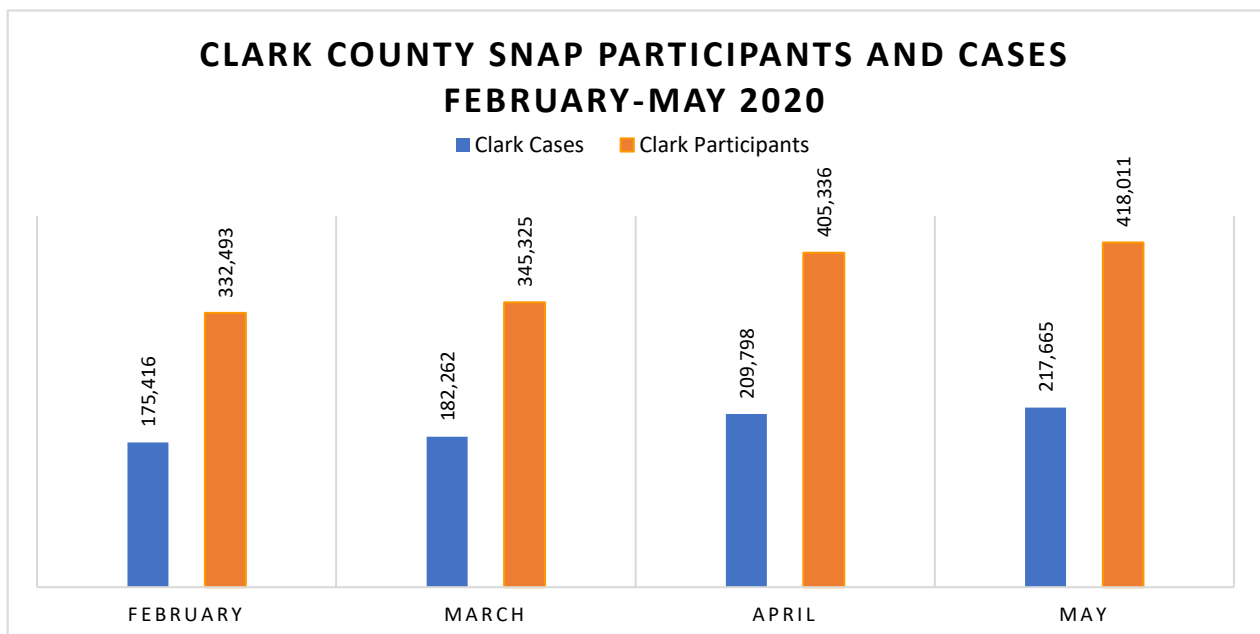
SNAP is a supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by Nevada DWSS. SNAP provides monetary aid to supplement eligible, low-income individuals' and families' food budgets, to support their ability to purchase food. The DWSS SNAP Outreach team works with various partners to conduct SNAP outreach statewide, including the FBNN and Three Square. Both food banks participate in the Nevada DWSS Community Partner Interview Demonstration Project. They are authorized to assist the potential client in applying for SNAP and for conducting the required interview.

In the interest of social distancing guidelines and public safety, DWSS lobbies were closed to the public throughout the statewide shutdown. In response, DWSS partnered with select grocery stores statewide to provide paper SNAP applications to interested individuals. The applicant would then complete the form and place it in DWSS's office drop box for processing. FBNN and Three Square pivoted their SNAP outreach strategies as well, through shifting to phone applications. FBNN and Three Square worked diligently with DWSS to address the influx of new applicants. Despite significant barriers, the number of SNAP applications submitted from March to May 2020 via the food banks was comparable to the same months in 2019 (843 in 2020 v. 848 in 2019).

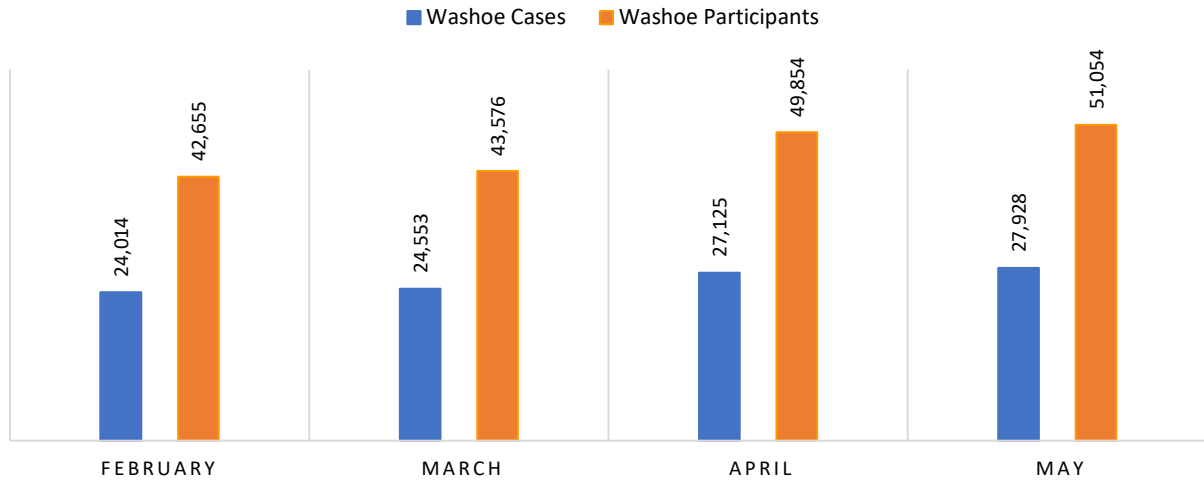
Overall, DWSS SNAP caseloads and participation increased from March through May 2020, within every county statewide. SNAP cases are defined as the individuals enrolled to receive benefits, while the participants are the number of people who receive SNAP benefits from the individual cases. As an example, a household of five (5) people represents one (1) case and five (5) participants. From February to May 2020, the number of Nevada caseloads increased by 18.1% statewide, a total of 48,447 additional cases. At the same time, the number of SNAP participants increased by 19.4% statewide, a total of 99,476 additional participants.



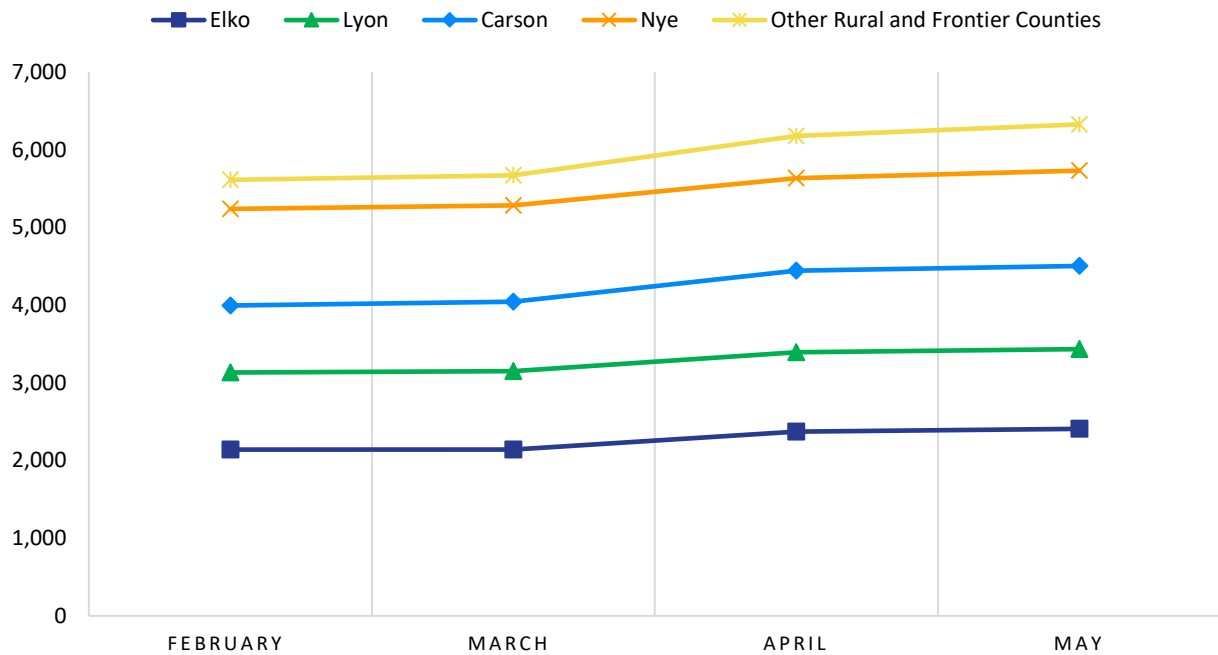
Clark County experienced the highest percent increase in total new cases (19.4%) between February and May 2020 compared to Rural/Frontier Counties (14.8%) and Washoe County (14%). Similarly, Clark County experienced the highest percent increase in total new participants (20.4%) compared to Washoe County (16.4%) and Rural/Frontier Counties (12.3%).



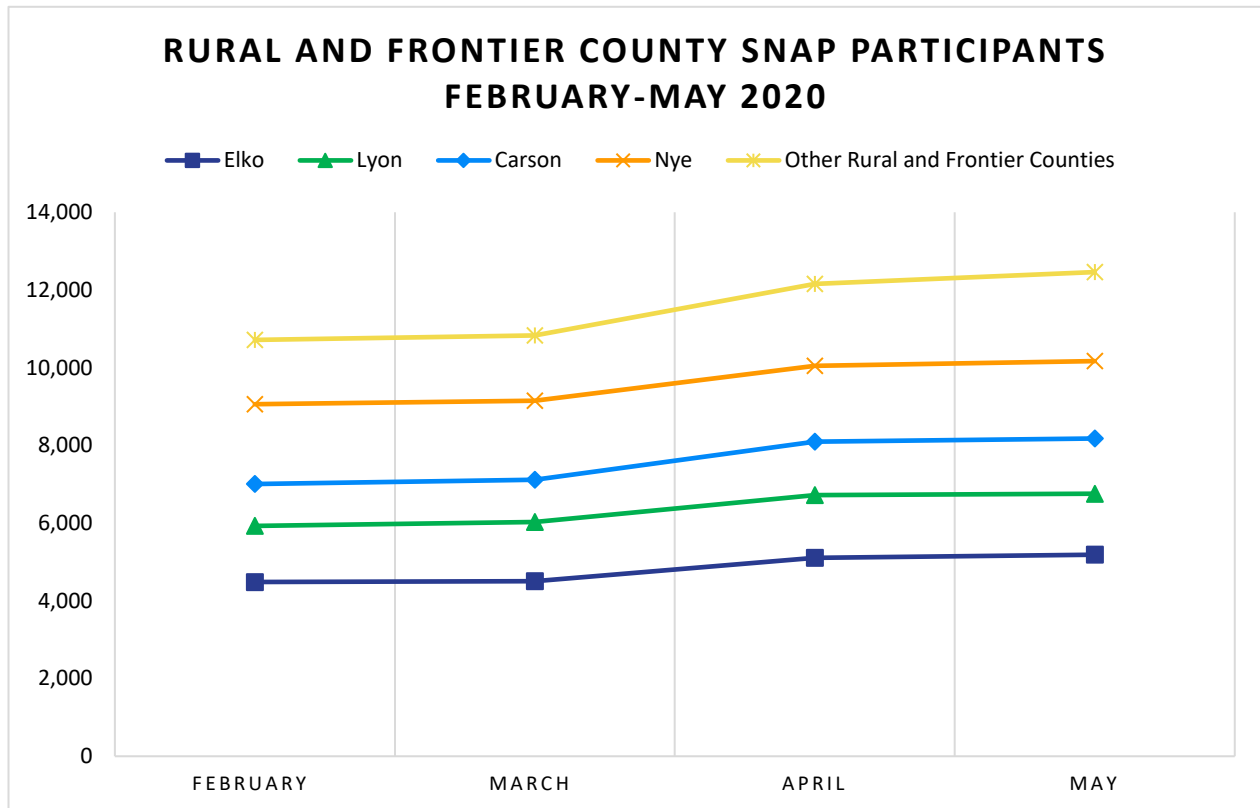
### WASHOE COUNTY SNAP PARTICIPANTS AND CASES FEBRUARY-MAY 2020



### RURAL AND FRONTIER COUNTY SNAP CASES FEBRUARY-MAY 2020







Overall, there was an increase in SNAP applications across all ages, demographics, and Nevada counties between February and May 2020. The age group with the greatest increase in SNAP applications recorded were those between 21 and 49 years, with an average 21% increase for this group between February and May 2020.

Table 1 (page 9) demonstrates the racial disparities in SNAP participants in Nevada. Asians and Pacific Islanders experienced the greatest increase overall with a cumulative 26% and 23% increase in applications from these groups, respectively, from January to May 2020. Hispanic and African Americans experienced the highest participant number increase among all other minority groups, with approximately 27,070 and 17,499 new applicants, respectively. SNAP applications visibly increased across all demographics from January through May 2020, with an overall increase in SNAP applications of 16%.

**Table 1.** SNAP Application Demographics with Difference Observed from Jan to May in Nevada, 2020

Demographics	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Participant Change*	Percent Change*
Total Hispanic	125,326	124,730	128,377	145,440	152,396	27,070	18%
Total Non-Hispanic	291,108	289,462	296,980	328,361	340,844	49,736	15%
Total Asian	16,481	16,382	17,232	20,725	22,288	5,807	26%
Total African American	117,930	117,285	119,557	130,664	135,429	17,499	13%
Total Native American/Alaskan Nat	7,894	7,852	7,999	8,842	9,189	1,295	14%
Total White	243,298	241,943	248,484	276,453	287,190	43,892	15%
Total Pacific Islander/Nat Hawaiian	871	849	887	1,036	1,124	253	23%
Total 2 Or More Race Combinations	22,929	22,880	23,909	27,776	29,291	6,362	22%
Unknown	7,031	7,001	7,289	8,305	8,729	1,698	19%

\*Change is calculated by difference from January to May

To address the financial burden from untimely unemployment, the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 provided Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) effective April 12, 2020, which provided individuals on unemployment an extra \$600 per week. The federal regulations required FPUC income be counted when determining SNAP eligibility, causing 20,100 cases and 41,743 participants to be terminated in June 2020 due to the additional income. FPUC ended July 2020; therefore, an increase in SNAP-eligible recipients is anticipated in August 2020.

### ***SNAP: Waivers and Rule Flexibilities***

In response to COVID-19, waivers and rule flexibilities/suspensions for federal nutrition programs were made available or enacted to streamline program administration and break down barriers for hungry individuals and families, which may have contributed to the increase in SNAP participants and cases. The Family First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 provided several flexibilities for various programs, including SNAP.

*Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS):* One of the many provisions of The Family First Coronavirus Response Act enacted suspension of all ABAWD work requirements, effective April 1, 2020 until one (1) month after the Federal Pandemic Declaration is lifted. An ABAWD is an abled bodied individual between the ages of 18 and 49 years, who is not currently working, who does not have any children under the age of 18 years in the home, and who does not meet a Federal exemption, such as having a disability. ABAWDs are only entitled to receive three (3) months of SNAP in a fixed 36-month time frame, unless they become employed and work at least 80 hours a month. The Nevada DWSS's 36-month timeframe is January 2019 through December 31, 2021. January 2019 through May 2020, approximately 24,500 individuals became ineligible for SNAP, due to exhausting their ABAWD months; most of these individuals resided in Washoe County. It is presumed the increase in applications and cases, in part, were a result of these individuals coming back on assistance due to the ABAWD waiver since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Intake and Annual Recertification Interviews:* The intake and annual recertification interviews were waived effective April 2020 through September 2020 for all states to help manage the ever-growing caseload and to limit client interaction in the interest of social distancing guidelines and public safety. Nevada has requested and obtained a month-to-month additional waiver for July, August, and September 2020.

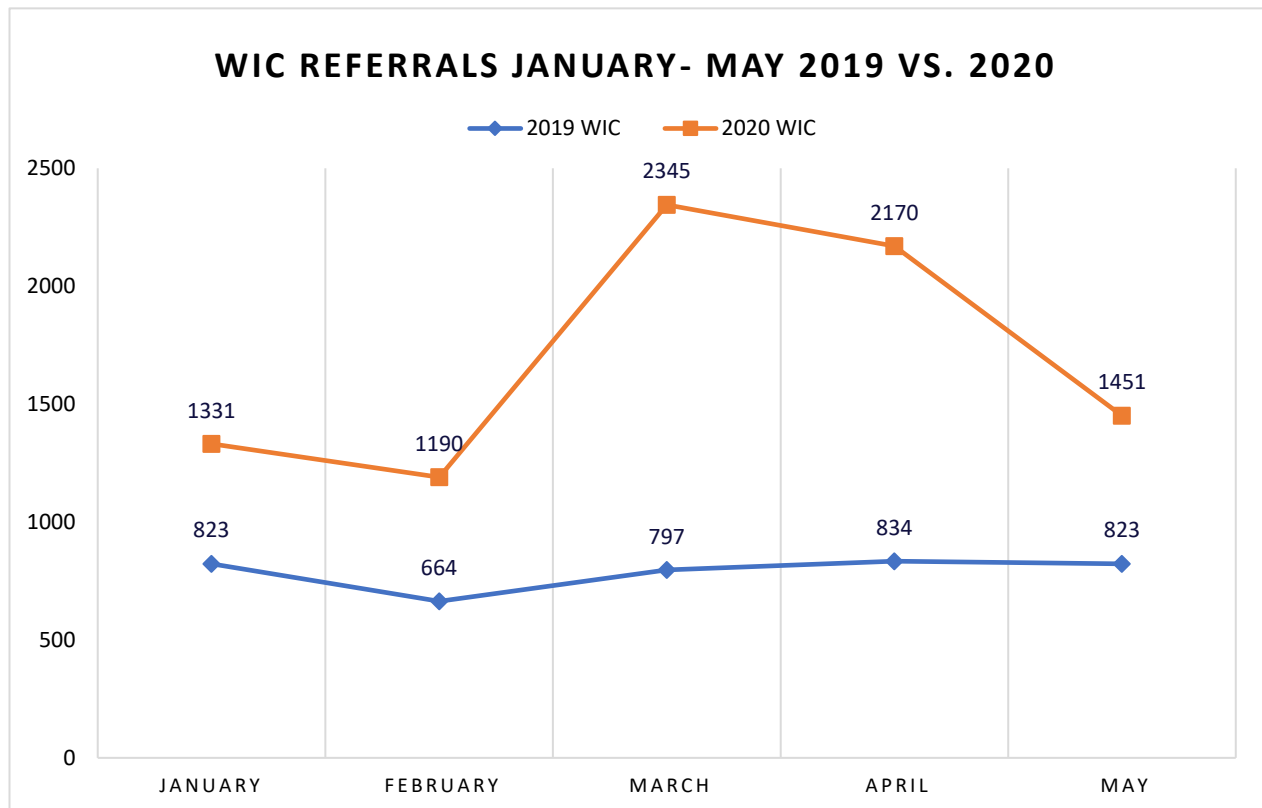
*Online Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT):* In April 2020, Nevada DWSS submitted a request to the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to participate in the online EBT state option. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, online EBT was only available to limited states participating in the USDA pilot. The USDA expanded the program to include additional states to support Americans following social distancing guidelines and slow the spread of SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. FNS has since made online EBT a permanent state option. Effective June 2020, Nevada EBT holders can use their SNAP and TANF benefits at any retailer who accepts online EBT for personal pick-up with delivery being available from Amazon and Walmart in zip codes where they currently deliver. Online EBT purchase data and trends will be shared in forthcoming reports.

*Pandemic – SNAP (P-SNAP):* Nevada DWSS also received a waiver allowing for the issuance of emergency allotments for SNAP participants via P-SNAP. P-SNAP increased all cases to the maximum SNAP allotment for their household size, regardless of income. Nevada SNAP participants received this supplement in March and April 2020, and extensions through August 2020 were approved.

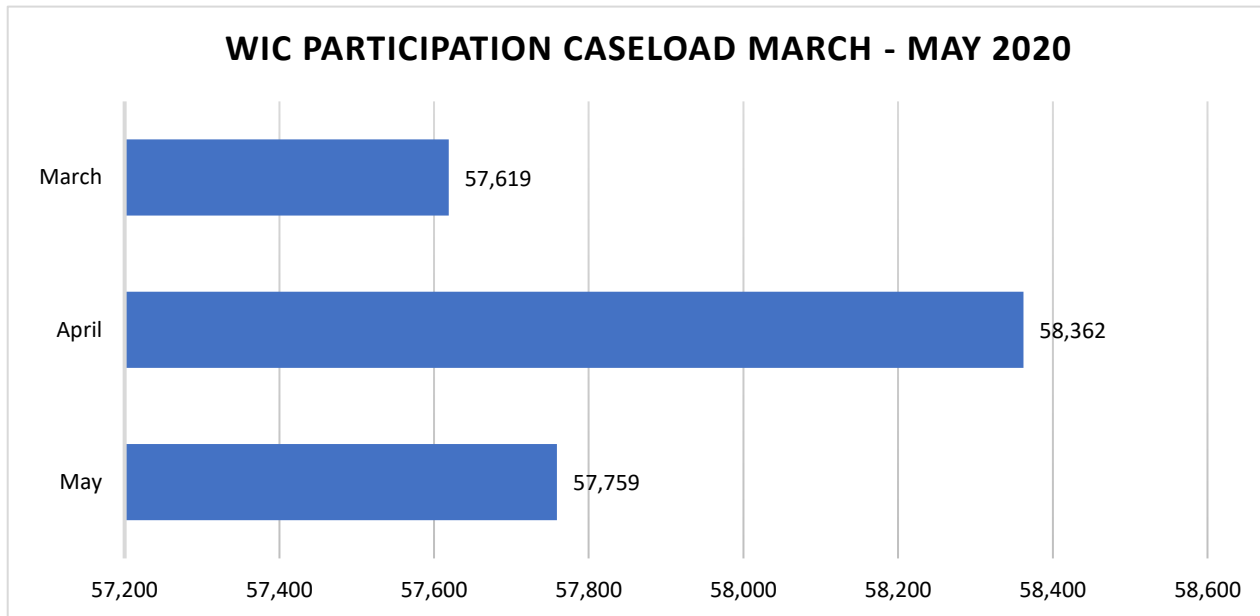
*SNAP Certification Extension:* In March 2020, DWSS received a waiver to extend SNAP participants whose certification was set to expire in March, April, May, or June 2020 for an additional six (6) months.

### *Nevada Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program*

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program that serves income-eligible pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five (5) years who are at nutrition risk. The WIC Program provides participants with many services, including nutrition counseling, nutritious food, breastfeeding support, community referrals, nutrition handouts, and health screenings. WIC has been uniquely impacted by the pandemic, with a variance in referrals, redemption, and program participation. Referrals received through Nevada DWSS between January and May 2020 represent an overall increase in eligible WIC referrals compared to the same months in 2019.



The spike in WIC referrals was accompanied by an increase in the WIC caseload to 58,362 people during the height of unemployment in April 2020 but decreased to 57,759 people in May 2020.



Between March and April 2020, the greatest increase among WIC participant type was seen among pregnant women and children participants, with a 2% increase among both population groups. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a statewide decrease in WIC participation. It is presumed the decrease is related to the requirements to maintain WIC status during the pandemic, as well as families receiving FPUC. WIC has also seen an overall decrease in product redemption, with the exception of fish and eggs, as outlined in Table 2 (page 13).

A WIC redemption survey was sent to all Nevada WIC participants the first week of August 2020 to better understand WIC redemption trends since the beginning of the pandemic. The survey was open for one (1) week, was made available in both English and Spanish, and was shared with all Nevada WIC participants via text message. Upon closure, 4,304 WIC participants had responded to the survey. Approximately 76% of respondents reported often experiencing a shortage in availability of WIC-approved foods while grocery shopping, compared to 22% reporting never or rarely experiencing a food shortage. When asked why participants were not redeeming WIC benefits, 38.9% reported limited food availability. Additionally, 32.3% of respondents avoided grocery shopping due to fear of contracting COVID-19. Of the people that chose “other reasons,” 33% reported they would have redeemed if foods were available via curbside pickup. An infographic summarizing these findings is included in the Appendix (page 32).

**Table 2.** WIC Redemption Rate by Food Category from March to May in Nevada, 2020

Item Category	March	April	May
Cheese or Tofu	70.51%	68.55%	66.95%
Eggs	64.23%	69.86%	70.50%
Adult Cereal	57.62%	53.67%	51.74%
Legumes	47.39%	45.34%	44.87%
Fish	47.74%	51.43%	51.97%
Infant Cereal	51.30%	46.46%	44.72%
Infant Fruits and Veggies	59.02%	53.06%	51.98%
Infant Meats	27.20%	23.08%	23.37%
Whole Grains/Breads	51.56%	50.94%	50.58%
Fruits Veggies Cash Value	79.72%	78.52%	77.35%
Infant Formula	90.14%	84.79%	84.69%
Exempt Infant Formula	83.82%	79.88%	79.45%
WIC Eligible Nutritional	18.69%	18.16%	14.84%
Yogurt	50.20%	50.49%	50.90%
Milk Whole	70.70%	68.86%	67.50%
Milk Low Fat	59.66%	57.60%	55.78%
Juice 48 oz	33.10%	32.27%	30.96%
Juice 64 oz	69.67%	66.45%	64.47%

### *WIC: Waivers and Rule Flexibilities*

Due to CDC social distancing recommendations, the USDA FNS allowed flexibilities for normal WIC operations through applications of various waivers. The Nevada WIC Program worked diligently between March and April 2020 to ensure all applicable waivers were received and approved by the USDA. Ultimately, Nevada WIC was approved for six (6) separate USDA waivers to continue serving participants safely and effectively. The waivers allowed for flexibility in WIC federal regulations to streamline program administration and operations, while adhering to Nevada's shut down and social distancing guidelines.

*Physical Presence Waiver (includes lab work):* In March 2020, Nevada WIC received a waiver to defer anthropometric (body weight, height, etc.) and bloodwork requirements to determine nutrition risk. WIC staff continued to attempt to retrieve this information through referral data and/or online communication.

*Remote Benefit Issuance Waiver:* In March 2020, Nevada WIC received a waiver allowing WIC staff to issue benefits remotely to any participant (parents/caretaker or proxy). Under this waiver, the second nutrition education contact was not required prior to issuance of benefits, however the USDA encouraged WIC agencies to reschedule nutrition education when circumstances permitted or could be conducted remotely (with approval of physical presence waiver).

*Medical Documentation Waiver:* As of March 2020, the requirement to provide updated medical documentation for benefits can be delayed by no more than two (2) months, for participants with qualifying conditions. Medical documentation may be provided electronically, by facsimile or by telephone.

*Food Package Substitution Waiver:* Due to the limited availability of drinkable milk at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nevada WIC received a waiver providing flexibilities and food substitutions that would otherwise prevent participants from receiving benefits. Specifically, the waiver allowed the participant to substitute milk regardless of fat content.

*Food Package Substitutions Waiver (whole wheat/whole grain bread, cheese):* Due to a significant impact on the supply chain, WIC vendors were unable to maintain minimum stock requirements to meet the maximum monthly allowance. Effective April 2020, Nevada WIC received a waiver allowing for the following food package substitutions:

- Whole wheat/whole grain bread: Allows participants to substitute authorized whole wheat/whole grain bread and other whole grains in packages up to 24 ounces when 16 ounces is unavailable.
- Whole wheat/whole grain bread: Families with aggregated food benefits will be allowed to purchase up to 32 ounces of brown rice.
- Cheese: Families with aggregate food benefits will be allowed to purchase up to 32 ounces of cheese.

*Local Agency Monitoring:* Effective April 2020, the Local Agency Monitoring waiver allowed Nevada WIC to conduct agency monitoring reviews virtually rather than on-site.

Nevada WIC temporarily expanded WIC's food allowance policy, in addition to the approved waivers. Select foods were not WIC-approved according to state policy, though still fell within federal regulations. The food allowance policy also permitted Nevada to temporarily revise the policy, as opposed to applying for another waiver. Some of the additional food Universal Product Codes (UPC) will become permanent, per state staff review and identified benefits (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Food Items Added to WIC in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Temporarily added WIC Approved Foods (expired 6/30/2020)	Permanently added WIC Approved Foods
Organic specialty eggs	<b>356 yogurt items:</b> 59 whole milk varieties 146 low fat varieties 151 nonfat varieties New flavors and sizes
Organic rice and pasta	<b>265 new cheese items:</b> 8 oz sizes varieties of shredded, sliced, and cubed Swiss and muenster cheese
Organic yogurt	<b>Canned Fish:</b> Canned Salmon Canned Jack Mackerel
Organic milk, and chocolate milk	<b>Hundreds of various flavors, brands and sizes were added to the food categories:</b> infant foods, juice, legumes, and breakfast cereal

## ***State Nutrition Assistance Programs: NDA***

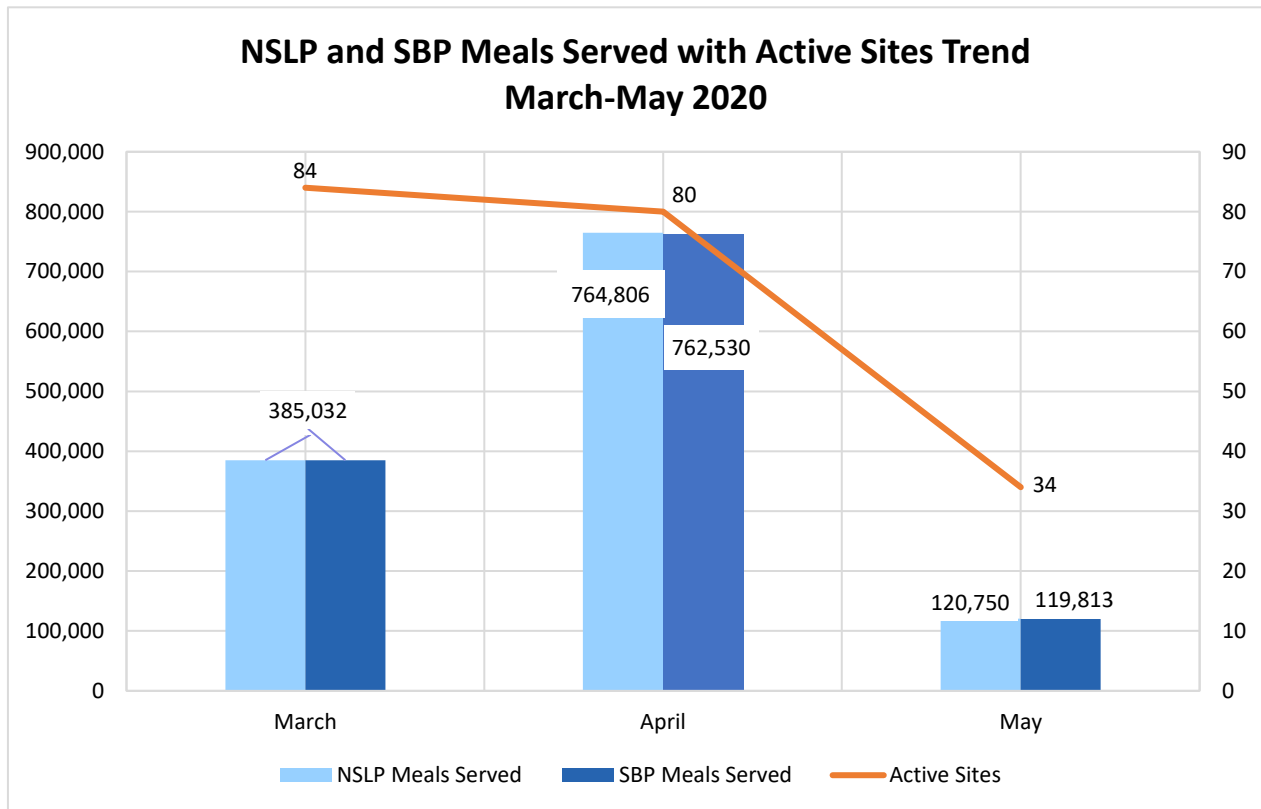
The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) is comprised of five (5) divisions—Administration, Animal Industry, Consumer Equitability, Food and Nutrition, and Plant Industry—with the mission to preserve, protect and promote Nevada agriculture. Part of this mission includes ensuring the availability of nutritious foods for food-insecure Nevadans. The NDA administers several federal nutrition programs, including Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and Commodity Food Distribution Programs through USDA Foods. The NDA has continued to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a safe and continuous food supply for all Nevadans, including administering new funding to producers and community nutrition partners through programs made available by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act the CARES Act and helping sponsors implement USDA state and national waivers for school and child nutrition programs.

## ***The School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP)***

The SBP and NSLP provide nutritious free and reduced-priced meals for qualifying students and are critical to ensuring Nevada children have access to healthy meals that support school readiness. When Nevada schools were mandated to close on March 15, 2020, over 333,000 Nevada students (in over 207,000 households) participating in these programs were at risk of losing important daily



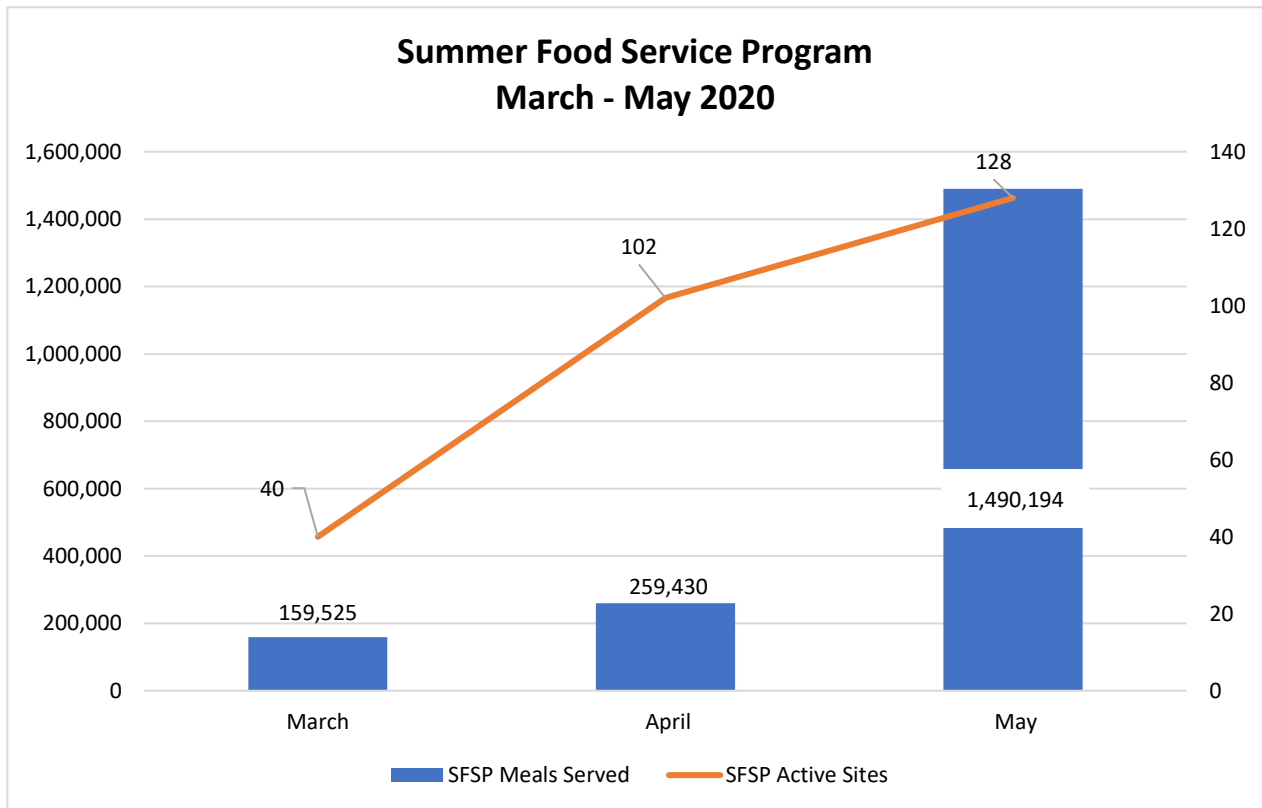
The NDA Food and Nutrition Division acted quickly and coordinated with schools and school districts to revise their standard operations to implement the NSLP-Seamless Summer Option (SSO) with up to 84 sites statewide, many of which started on the first day of school closures. To achieve social distancing, sites implemented a drive-thru, grab-n-go model usually providing both breakfast and lunch to students or parents/guardians of those students. Many sites also implemented multi-day meal distribution to provide more meals to their students with fewer pick-up days.



Children no longer being physically present daily at Nevada schools significantly lessened access and participation in NDA school meal programs, despite the nationwide federal flexibilities and local operator meal distribution efforts. In addition, many school districts – including urban Clark County (starting May 1, 2020), Washoe County, and Carson City – chose to operate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during the closures, which does not count towards NSLP or SBP program participation meal counts. The SFSP has a higher per meal federal reimbursement rate and greater meal pattern flexibility.

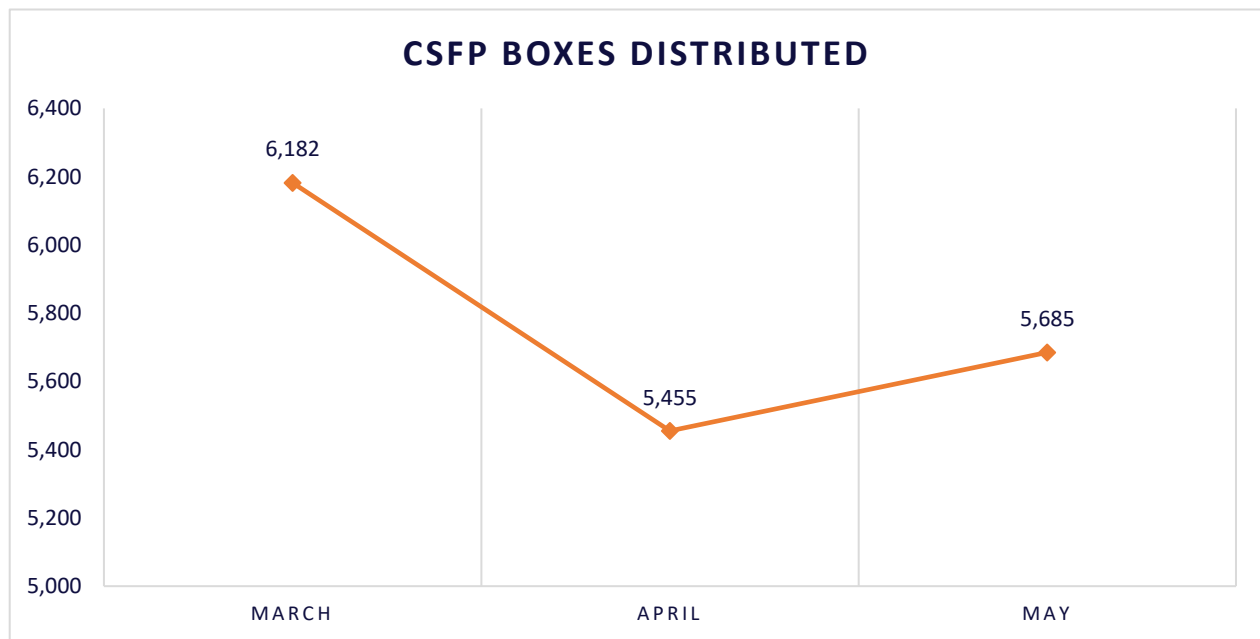
### Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The SFSP provides free healthy meals and snacks to children in low-income areas when school is not in session. The NDA Food and Nutrition Division worked with 15 sponsors statewide to serve meals throughout the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows, FBNN, Nye County School District, and Clark County School District, among others. In response to the school closures, the SFSP started early on March 16, 2020. SFSP saw an immediate increase in site activation as well as food distribution. Pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, USDA FNS released a waiver to allow for non-congregate feeding in Child Nutrition Programs, including the SFSP. SFSP sponsors and participating sites delivered meals to student homes and offered grab-and-go meals. Between March and May 2020, the SFSP provided an average of 500,000 meals per month, more than double the summer 2019 average of 222,000 meals per month.



### *Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)*

CSFP provides USDA approved food boxes to income-eligible seniors. The CSFP maintained operation of all 64 distribution sites throughout the start of the pandemic, but had an overall decrease in participation after an initial spike in March 2020. Participation decrease is presumably due to a lack of comfort visiting sites, as well as senior housing facilities refusing outside food donations. However, CSFP ensured safety measures were followed during COVID-19, which included operating only as drive-through distributions. NDA has waived the requirement to collect signatures from seniors through December 2020.

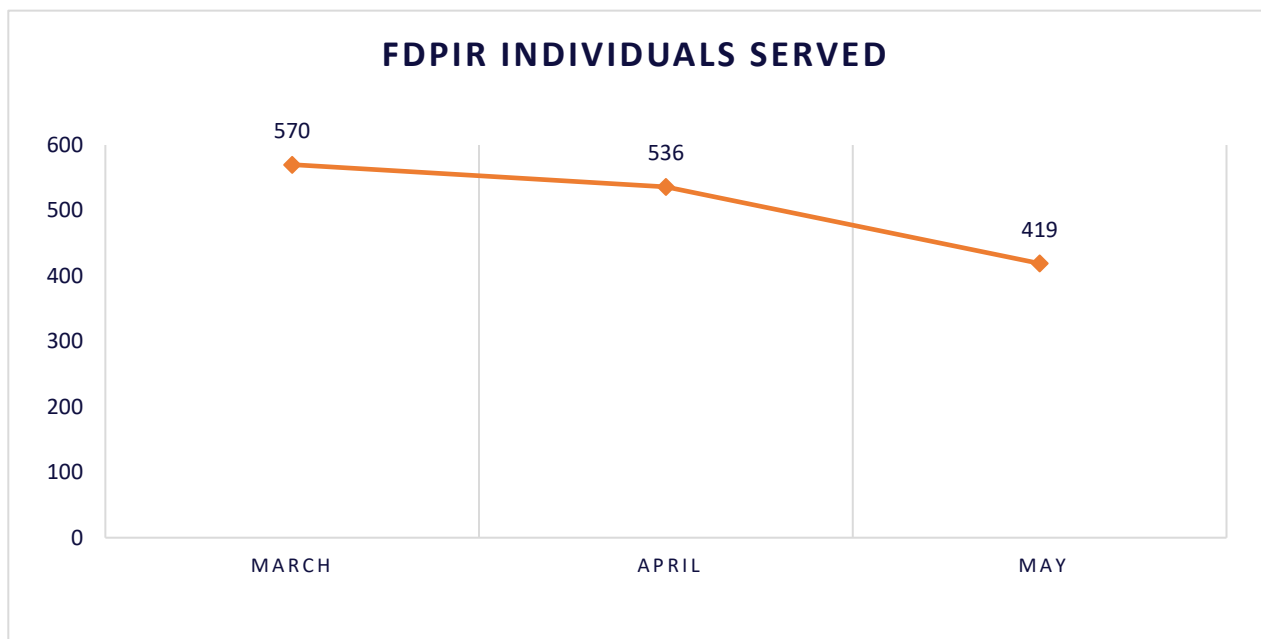


### *Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)*

The CACFP provides meals and snacks to eligible children and adults enrolled for care in participating childcare centers, day care homes, adult day care centers, after school programs, and emergency shelters. Due to the economic shutdown, school closures, and mandated Head Start closures, CACFP saw a decrease in active sites and meals served between March and April 2020. In March 2020, there were 534 active CACFP sites serving 350,940 meals. Due to the shutdown, operations decreased to 118 active sites serving only 77,798 meals in April 2020. In May 2020, there was an increase in active sites to 121 sites serving 122,771 meals. The NDA anticipates a continued trend of reopening CACFP sites statewide.

### *Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)*

The FDPIR provides USDA foods to income-eligible households living on Indian Reservations and to Native American households residing in designated areas.<sup>10</sup> FDPIR is an alternative to SNAP for tribal communities that offers flexible food packages rather than monetary compensation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, FDPIR has continued to provide food assistance to the 11 Tribal communities throughout Nevada. Average FDPIR participation before COVID-19 was 400-420 people each month. Data shows an initial rise in participation between March and April 2020, as families residing in Tribal communities sought food resources amid financial uncertainty, but participation has since returned to previous averages.



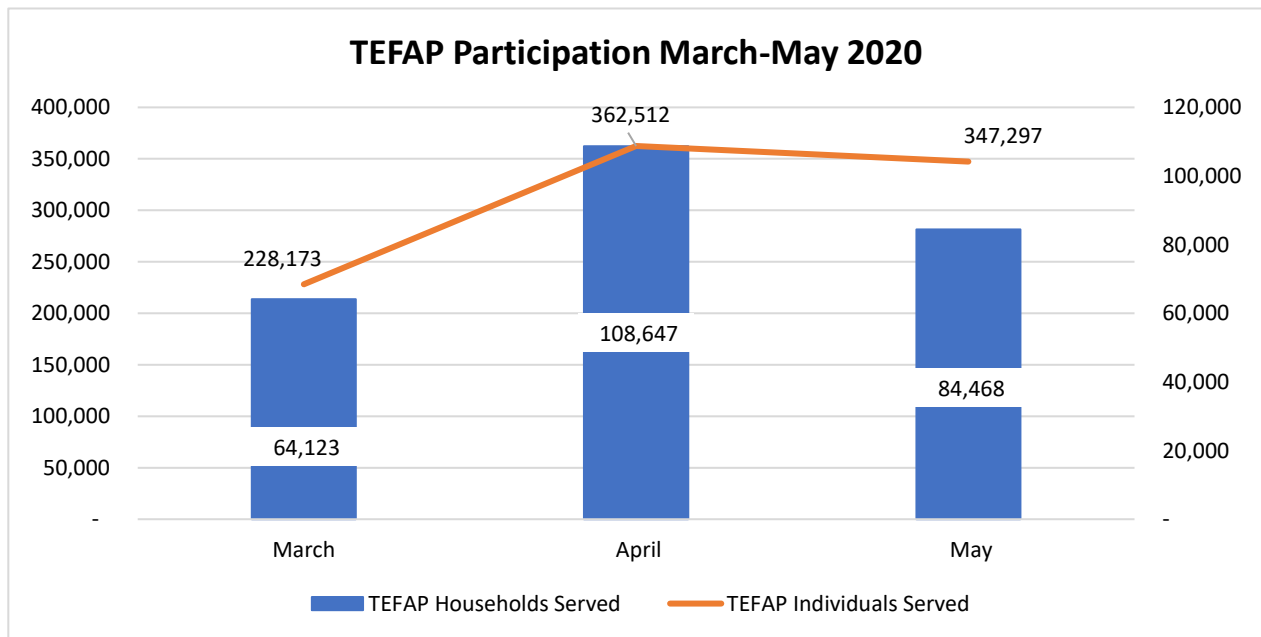
Distribution of commodities on reservations is through a tailgate model, where NDA visits rural reservations and supplies the commodities out of NDA vehicles.

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<sup>10</sup> USDA, FDPIR, 2020

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost.<sup>11</sup> NDA receives food and administrative funding from the USDA and passes these along to Nevada’s two (2) regional food banks, the FBNN and Three Square Food Bank. The food banks in turn provide TEFAP foods to their network of community partners. There was an overall increase in individuals and households served from March 2020 to May 2020, with April 2020 having the highest number of participants and households. There was a slight decrease in pounds of food distributed between April 2020 and March 2020, but in May 2020 it significantly increased (Table 4). TEFAP food packages supplied to food pantries and their partners are variable and TEFAP foods are often comingled with other donated foods; thus, accounting for the discrepancy in pounds distributed from month to month. While TEFAP participation has begun to decrease, the program remains a critical source of food for food banks and community partners.



Month	Pounds Distributed
March	1,857,809
April	1,688,961
May	2,306,026
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,852,796</b>

<sup>11</sup> USDA, TEFAP, 2020

## ***NDA: Program Waivers***

The NDA implemented the following USDA COVID-19 waivers through direct communication and guidance with program sponsors and operators. Like the DHHS program waivers received, the following waivers broke down administrative barriers and increased accessibility to much-needed programs throughout Nevada.

*Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs:* Effective March 2020, FNS waived congregate feeding requirements allowing meals to be served in non-group settings to support social distancing. This waiver has been extended through June 30, 2021.

*Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program:* Effective March 2020, FNS provided a waiver allowing meals served to children to be served outside traditional times to maximize flexibility for meal pick-up. This waiver has been extended through June 30, 2021.

*Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children:* Effective March 2020, FNS issued a waiver allowing parents/guardians to pick-up meals for their children. This waiver has been extended through June 30, 2021.

*Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs:* Effective March 2020, FNS issued a waiver giving states the flexibility to serve meals that do not meet the meal pattern requirements when needed. This waiver has been extended through July 31, 2021.

*Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve (OVS) Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP for School Year 2020-2021:* Effective March 2020, FNS established a waiver to support access to nutritious meals while minimizing potential exposure to COVID-19. This waiver expired June 20, 2020.

*Educational or enrichment activity requirements applicable to NSLP Afterschool Snacks and CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals and Snacks waived:* Effective March 2020, the USDA granted a waiver offering the flexibility to serve afterschool snacks and meals outside a structured environment and without an educational or enrichment purpose.

*Deadlines relating to Community Eligibility Provision reporting and election Onsite monitoring requirements for state agencies AND sponsors waived:* In accordance with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, FNS extended the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) deadlines for the School Year 2020-21. The deadlines affected by this waiver include the CEP election, notification, and reporting deadlines.

*Non-area eligibility waived for underserved areas (extended through September 30, 2020):* Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, FNS waived the requirement in the summer meals programs where "open site" meal service is limited to areas with at least half of the children in the area are low-income households. This waiver has been extended through September 30, 2020.

## **Charitable Food Assistance: Nevada Food Banks**

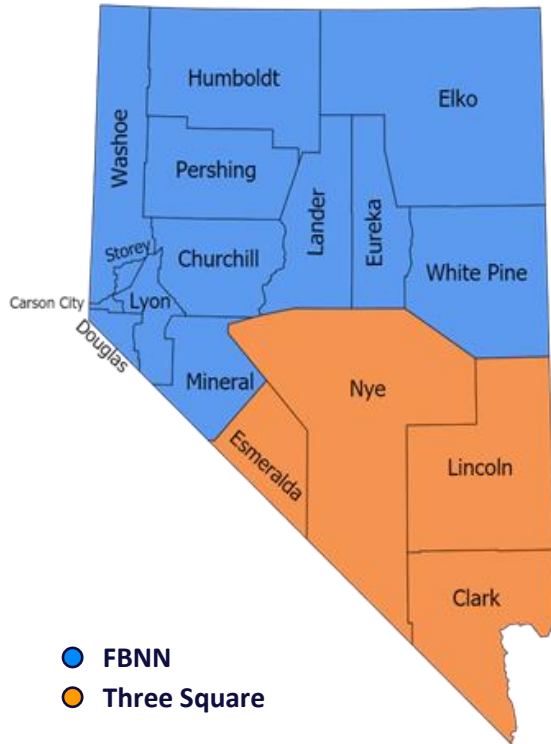


**Pictured:** Food distribution site in Northern Nevada

The charitable food sector is a critical component to addressing local food insecurity. Despite significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, charitable food organizations are equipped to pivot and expand distribution models quickly to meet the need in their communities. These organizations do not require specific income and asset limits, allowing them the flexibility to serve any individual or family experiencing food insecurity. While federal assistance programs like SNAP are widely successful, not all food insecure individuals qualify. Charitable food organizations like food banks can fill the gap and serve those who are ineligible for other public food assistance programs.

Nevada is fortunate to have two (2) food banks: 1) the FBNN, serving Northern Nevada, and 2) Three Square, serving Southern Nevada. Both food banks are members of Feeding America’s national network, are valued partners in various statewide food insecurity initiatives and programs, and their staff are leaders in Nevada food insecurity advocacy efforts. FBNN and Three Square employ varying models of food distribution, from distributing food directly through a “mobile pantry” model to distributing through a network of brick-and-mortar food pantries, congregate meal sites, soup kitchens, home-delivery programs, etc. throughout the state.

FBNN, Three Square, and their network of partners are an integral part of food insecurity response efforts in Nevada. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, both food banks and their partners quickly modified their distribution models to meet the unprecedented increase in need of food services, while facing several new challenges including capacity issues, limited volunteers, and food sourcing delays.



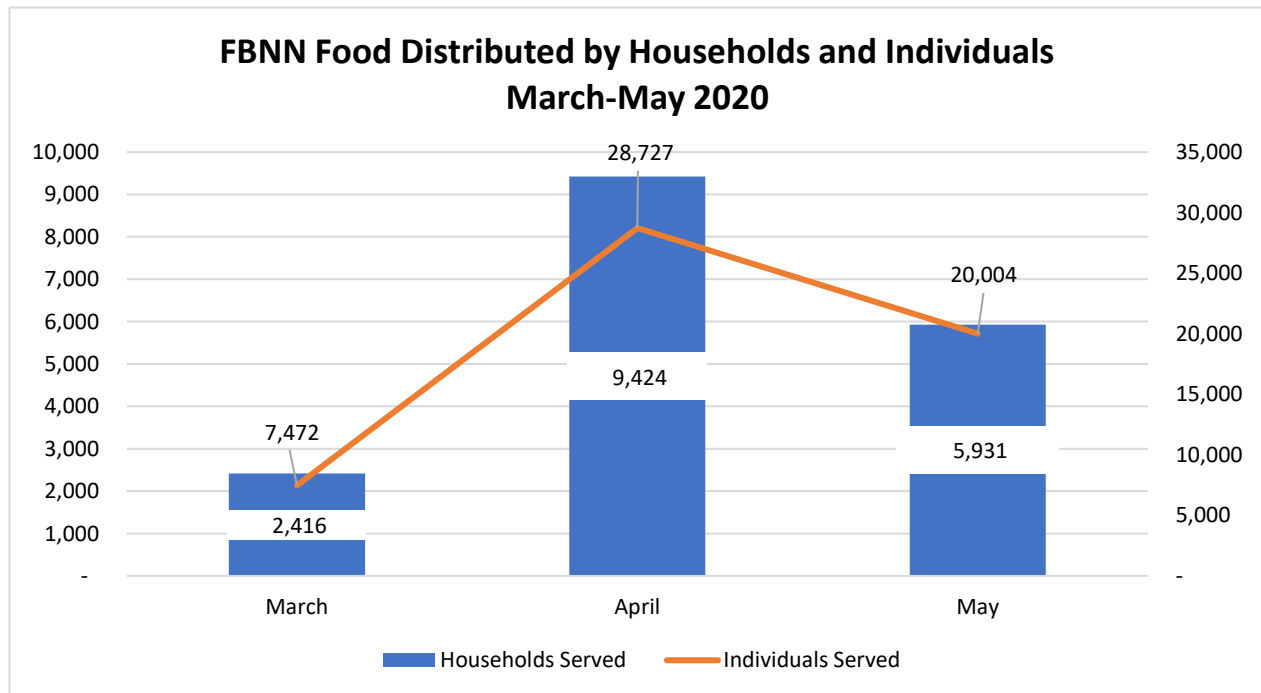
Food banks/pantries continue to adjust daily to serve their community, all the while working to ensure the safety of their clients, volunteers, and employees. Collectively, between March and May 2020, FBNN and Three Square distributed 6,647,541 pounds of food to 547,401 individuals representing 126,099 households through mobile distribution programs. Both food banks also support several state-administered federal nutrition programs, including NDA nutrition programs and DWSS programs. FBNN and Three Square worked closely with Nevada state agencies to implement these programs under new waivers and program delivery models to continue to safely serve food insecure children, families, and seniors. *Food bank specific data for these programs is included in the NDA and DHHS program totals.*



## FBNN

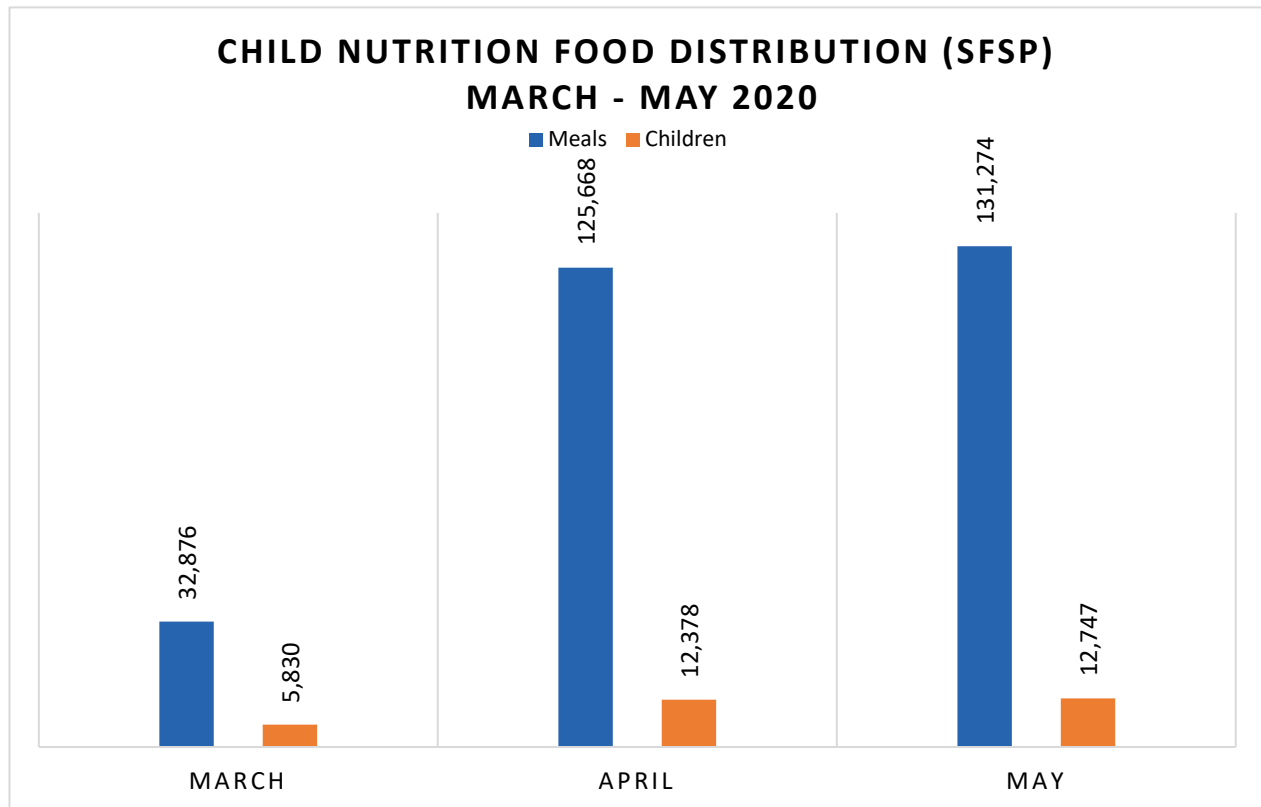
The FBNN partners with over 147 agencies throughout Northern Nevada and the eastern slope of the California Sierras in the fight against hunger, including emergency food pantries, shelters, family resource centers, schools, and more. When the economic shutdown began in March 2020, the FBNN quickly adjusted their Mobile Harvest Program distribution model to adhere to social distancing requirements to safely serve their growing number of clients. This adjustment required larger distribution sites with the capacity to accommodate lines of cars, pre-packed food bags and boxes, longer distribution hours, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for volunteers and employees. The transition to larger distribution sites impacted the number of Mobile Harvest active sites, decreasing the total number of sites from 43 located in neighborhoods to about 20 located in larger parking lots.

In April 2020, the average monthly number of individuals served through the Mobile Harvest Program increased by 400% (28,727 individuals) compared to March 2020 (refer to FBNN Food Distributed by Households and Individuals). Between March 16, 2020 and May 29, 2020, 58,643 individuals were served via the Mobile Harvest program’s 20 sites, a total of 21,500 households.



One (1) Mobile Harvest Program site at the Grand Sierra Resort [(GSR) pictured page 25] in April 2020 served 1,000 households alone in just three (3) hours.

In addition, within the first ten (10) weeks of school closures, the FBNN served over 300,000 meals through their SFSP. In comparison, total meals provided to children and youth in Washoe County through the FBNN CACFP program, Kids Café, was 292,234 the entire FY19.



To support food insecure homebound seniors and individuals with underlying chronic conditions, FBNN partnered with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Northern Nevada to provide weekly home-delivered groceries to qualifying individuals. Since the program's inception in March 2020, 788 individuals have been served, representing 303 households.

While many FBNN partner agencies had to pause food distribution initially to prepare for and implement changes to their own distribution models, all remained opened for serving the community. Many pantries implemented innovative solutions, including drive-through distribution models, home delivery programs, pantry appointments, and/or grab-and-go models to meet the need. Between March and May 2020, FBNN's network of partner agencies served 257,904 individuals. Additionally, many of FBNN's partnering school pantries continued operations or were able to reopen in April 2020 to provide food support to food insecure families with school-aged children.

From April to June 2020, the FBNN reported a 150% increase in utilization of school pantries, compared to the same time in 2019.



**Pictured:** FBNN Mobile Harvest distribution site at GSR in Reno, NV

### **Three Square Food Bank**

Three Square's partner network typically exceeds 160 agencies within Clark, Lincoln, Nye, and Esmeralda counties to combat food insecurity in Southern Nevada. On March 15, 2020, the landscape and nature of Three Square's operations changed overnight to meet the dramatic need of children, families, and seniors, due to the unfolding of events of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the economic shutdown was ordered in Nevada in March 2020, Las Vegas was hit hard with record-high layoffs, particularly within the hospitality industry. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Three Square primarily leveraged their network of partner agency pantries to distribute food.

The shelter in place rule issued by Governor Sisolak on March 13, 2020 ordered all non-essential workers home, especially vulnerable groups like older Nevadans. Volunteers are not technically considered essential workers and many of Three Square's volunteers are seniors. It was critical to the health and safety of volunteers and many agencies dependent on volunteer labor shut down immediately.

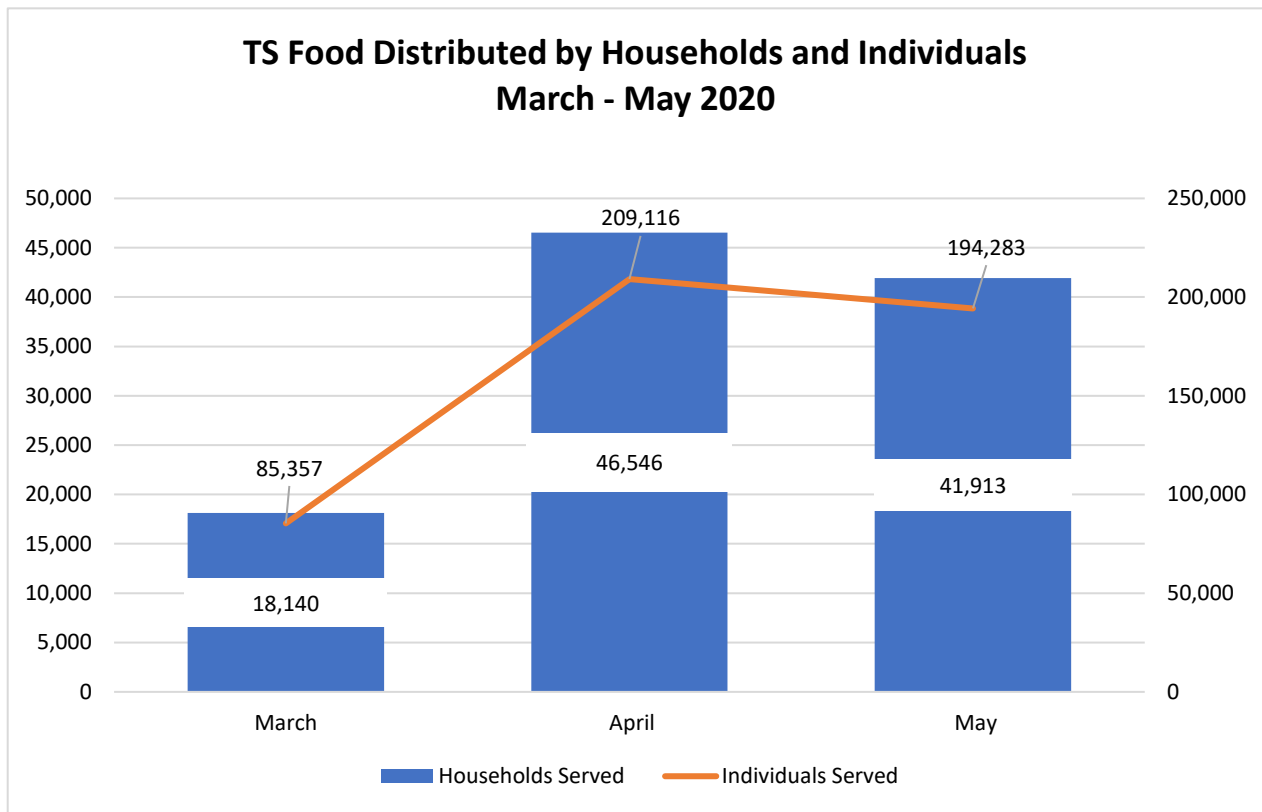
In order to meet the growing need of food and services, Three Square quickly adopted their Emergency Response Plan and implemented large-scale mobile distributions. The drive-through model was an efficient way to serve hundreds of families in a short time frame and had the added value of adhering to social distancing requirements. For those without a vehicle or unable to drive, a handful of traditional pantry locations remained open, through existing partner agencies. Walk-up pantries were established along bus routes, had ample open hours, and were mostly located in the central core of the Las Vegas valley. The mobile distributions, on the other hand, were located across the valley in each of Three Square's six (6) geographic regions to ensure accessibility to the majority of the Southern Nevada's population. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Three Square offered a total of 21 mobile pantry distribution sites per week, [three (3) casinos and 18 schools], with several sites each day, Tuesday-Friday.

Targeted Three Square programs serving children were suspended immediately in March 2020 when schools closed as part of the shelter-in-place order. Instead, Three Square focused on food for the family and food for vulnerable individuals, like older Nevadans, who were more susceptible to illness and afraid to leave their homes. In addition to suspending children's programming, Three Square suspended all indoor volunteer activities in each of their facilities. Instead, Three Square re-invested all their human capital (staff) to prepping agency and mobile pantry distributions, accepting, and storing new food product, and pre-packing produce and dry goods for their senior home-delivery program. In the first 90 days of the pandemic, nearly 10,000 deliveries of groceries were made to senior citizens. Many volunteers helped deliver food to seniors; up to 80 deliveries could be made in a single day.



***Pictured:*** Volunteer preparing food for distribution

Through mobile pantry distribution and home delivery programs, Three Square increased the total number of meals distributed between March and May 2020 by 43% (2,628,152 meals in March 2020 v. 4,680,595 meals in May 2020). As shown in chart below, Three Square served 488,758 individuals representing 106,599 households between March and May 2020.



Prior to the start of COVID-19, Three Square worked closely with resorts for their Food Rescue Program to safely collect, preserve, and distribute surplus banquet food to help reduce food insecurity and food waste in Southern Nevada. Upon the start of the economic shutdown, all Las Vegas resorts were forced to close their doors. Within a 72-hour period, Three Square received nearly half a million pounds of food, equivalent to 416,000 meals, from Las Vegas MGM Resorts, the Venetian Resort, and Caesars Entertainment Resorts.

As the COVID-19 pandemic persists, Nevada will continue to face growing food insecurity and economic instability. Nevada has had among the highest unemployment rate in the United States throughout the duration of the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Feeding America Report, *The Impact of the Coronavirus on Local Food Insecurity*, found as a result of the pandemic that Nevada is projected to be eighth in the United States for food insecurity throughout 2020. The same report projected Nevada to have the third highest rate of child food insecurity in 2020. Nevadans must now combat the statewide epidemic of food insecurity as well as the global COVID-19 pandemic.

DPBH is committed to further exploring disparities in food insecurity in Nevada with plans for future food security reports to follow the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DPBH Nutrition Unit will continue to work with diverse state programs and community partners to monitor data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity is often a side effect of a crisis and will persist if resources and support are not focused to combat the issue. State programs and local organizations have worked diligently in these early phases of the pandemic but will need continual support as the pandemic continues. Public and private efforts must work together to help the most vulnerable populations in Nevada to fight more than COVID-19, but also devastation from economic instability and food insecurity in its aftermath.

# APPENDIX

## Acronym Glossary


Acronym	Definition
ABAWDS	Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents
CACFP	Child and Adult Food Program
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CDPHP	Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
CFCW	Bureau of Child, Family, and Community Wellness
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DPBH	Division of Public and Behavioral Health
DWSS	Division of Welfare and Social Services
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
FBNN	Food Bank of Northern Nevada
FDIPR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation
FNS	Food and Nutrition Services
FPUC	Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation
NDA	Nevada Department of Agriculture
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
P-SNAP	Pandemic Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WIC	Women, Infants, and Children

## Resources

For more information regarding local and federal food security programs and COVID-19 relief efforts, visit the following websites:



# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON NEVADA WIC REDEMPTION

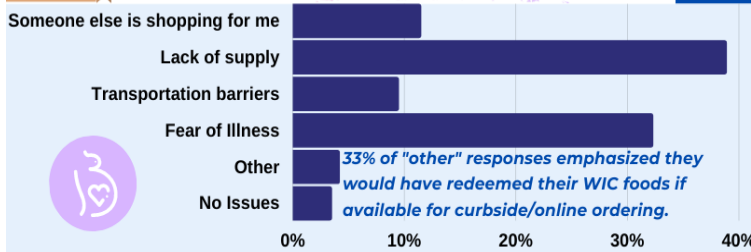


4,304 Adult Nevada WIC participants responded to a survey regarding WIC redemption since beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, administered the week of August 3, 2020

## WIC FOOD REDEMPTION SINCE MARCH 2020



## REASONS FOR NOT REDEEMING

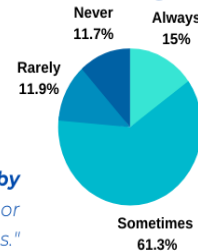


*"I have been doing online pick up for my shopping needs, but I cannot get my WIC items. **I'm less likely to use WIC because I'd rather not risk going into a store.** I'm 3 months pregnant, my son has a blood disorder, and my mother in law who lives with us has lymphoma."*

## WIC FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN DURING PANDEMIC

*"There has been a shortage of milk, cheese, and eggs. I hate going shopping because **I'm so afraid** of bringing the virus home to my two year old."*

*"It's been incredibly **difficult to get what my baby needs** when at the store due to shortage of formula or shortage of employees to open up cases."*



## CONCERNS FROM WIC RECIPIENTS

*"I have been doing online grocery pick up because **I don't want to expose my kids, myself, or my husband.**"*



*"Family member has an auto immune disorder which makes us have a **tough choice** when stores **do not allow WIC items to be redeemed through pick-up.**"*

*"I have nobody to take care of my baby so **I can't go to the store with out risking his health.**"*

**33% fear illness becoming sick from shopping**

**1 in 5 adults & 1 in 3 children** are food insecure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nevada.

*The Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health is committed to combating the statewide hunger crisis.*

### Questions regarding WIC and survey results?

EMAIL: [WICGENERAL@HEALTH.NV.GOV](mailto:WICGENERAL@HEALTH.NV.GOV) | VISIT: [HTTPS://NEVADAWIC.ORG/](https://NEVADAWIC.ORG/)

Survey was available in both English and Spanish



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