

# 2020 NEVADA FOOD SECURITY REPORT

**JUNE-AUGUST 2020 ADDENDUM**



**PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:**

**Nevada Department of Health and Human Services**

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*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.*

### *About the Cover*

Picture was provided by the Food Bank of Northern Nevada. Picture is of a volunteer assisting with a Mobile Pantry distribution site in Northern Nevada.

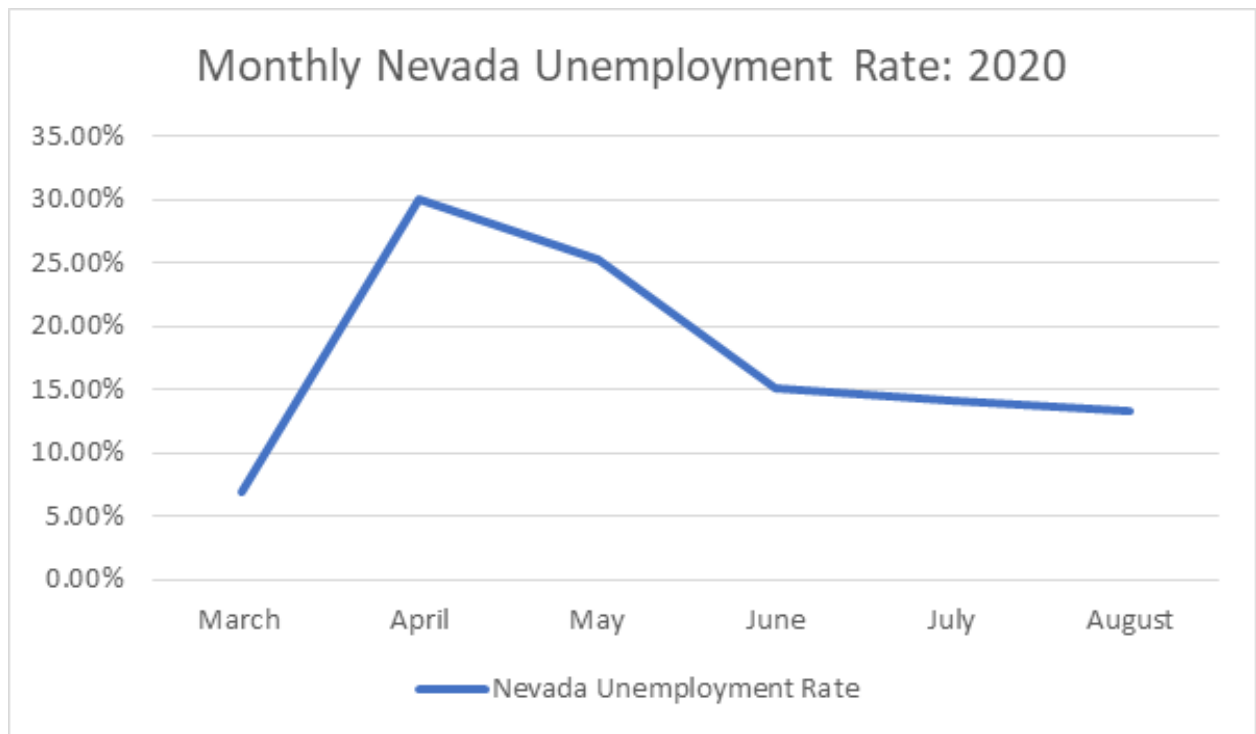
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## INTRODUCTION

As the pandemic persists, Nevada’s food security network endeavors to meet the increased need for nutrition services and programs. With the initial three (3) months now past, Nevada food security partners continue to pivot and enhance programming, resulting in a number of innovative new/modified strategies and new partnerships. Despite the many significant barriers, partners

## Unemployment Data Update

Food insecurity is a multi-faceted issue with various contributing factors, including unemployment. High unemployment rates among low-income populations make it more difficult to meet basic household food needs.<sup>1</sup> In addition, children with unemployed parents have higher rates of food insecurity than children with employed parents.<sup>2</sup> When compared to other states, it is projected that Nevada’s food insecurity will be more adversely impacted by COVID-19.. This projection is due to Nevada’s consistently high unemployment rates. While Nevada’s unemployment rate decreased approximately 40% between May and June 2020, Nevada’s rates remain higher than pre-pandemic rates. Nevada has also maintained the highest rates of unemployment in the Nation between June and August 2020.<sup>3</sup>



Effective April 2020, Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) was made available to eligible Nevadans. FPUC was created under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, to provide additional assistance to unemployed individuals during this critical time. Under FPUC, eligible individuals received an additional \$600 per week in addition to their weekly benefit amount from other unemployment compensation programs, including Unemployment Insurance, State Extended Benefits (SEB), Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), and the new Pandemic Emergency Unemployment.

Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) programs. FPUC was payable beginning the week ending April 4, 2020 through the week ending July 25, 2020. FPUC was one of many resources available throughout August 2020 helping to supplement the income of those impacted by the pandemic to sustain quality of life and purchase everyday necessities, including food. The FPUC program ended July 25, 2020, a significant loss for those participating and relying on the program.

## ***Food Insecurity***

There are various partners throughout Nevada's food security network who distribute food, provide nutrition education/programming, and other social services that support self-sustainability among vulnerable/ at-risk Nevadans during these unprecedented times. The data and information following represents a highlight of the significant efforts that took place statewide from June to August 2020.

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

The DHHS SNAP and the WIC program continued to operate remotely and/or with restrictions in place to reduce interaction with the public to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Both programs continued to implement United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) waivers to streamline administrative processes and reduce barriers related to COVID-19.

### ***SNAP***

Throughout the period, a number of COVID-19-related SNAP initiatives continued and/or came to fruition, including the Pandemic - Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program and online Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) grocery ordering. The Nevada DWSS began working with the NDA and the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to implement the P-EBT program. P-EBT provides additional SNAP benefits to SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic-related school closures. Through this program, each eligible child received \$5.70 per day for each school day missed in March, April, and May 2020, as long as the child was enrolled and eligible for the NSLP. This project processed benefits on August 29, 2020 with benefits available to recipients between August 31 through September 9, 2020. The availability dates for P-EBT benefits were staggered to reduce any potential burden to retailers and other shoppers. A total of 327,397 children in 201,062 households were eligible for P-EBT benefits. The total amount of P-EBT benefits issued to Nevada families was \$96,089,300.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Division provided the opportunity to issue a second round of P-EBT benefits to eligible children, which would be effective September 2020 through September 2021, if approved. The DWSS is currently working with the NDA and NDE to draft a plan and cost proposal to submit to FNS. Effective June 2020, Nevada EBT holders were able to use their SNAP and TANF benefits at any retailer who accepts online EBT for personal pick-up, with delivery available from Amazon and Walmart in certain residential zip codes. Between June and August 2020, there were 49,052 SNAP transactions through Walmart for \$4,184,938.88. During the same time, there were 18,489 SNAP transactions via Amazon for \$1,058,410.52.

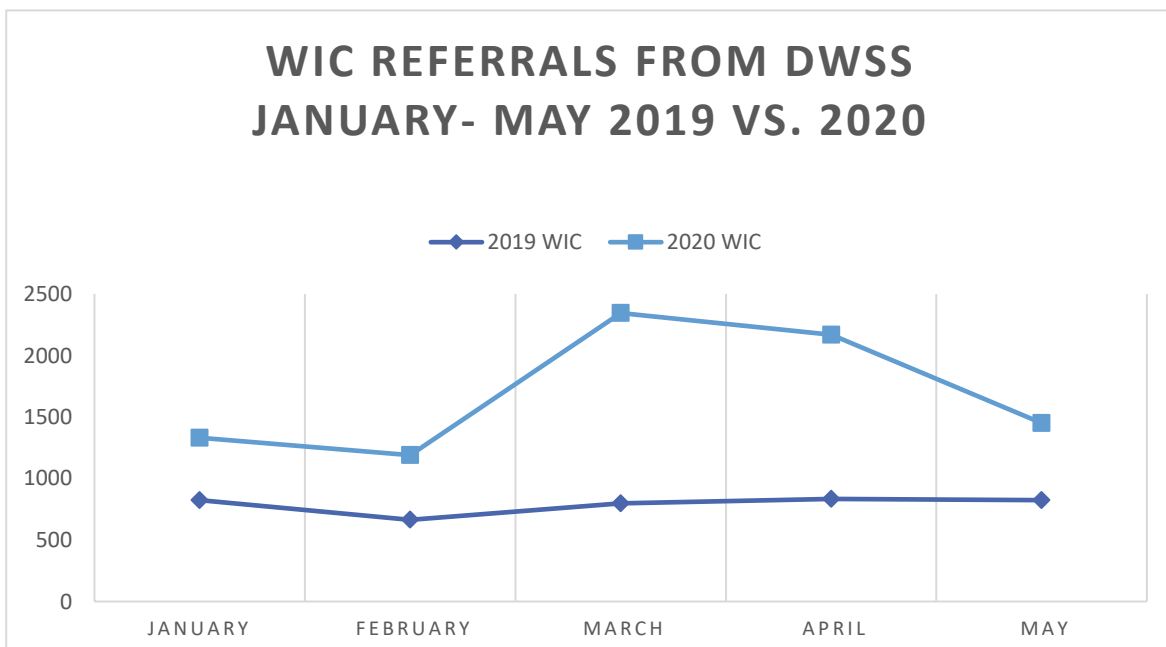
*SNAP participation/caseload and demographic data will be shared in forthcoming reports.*

### SNAP: Waivers and Rule Flexibilities Update

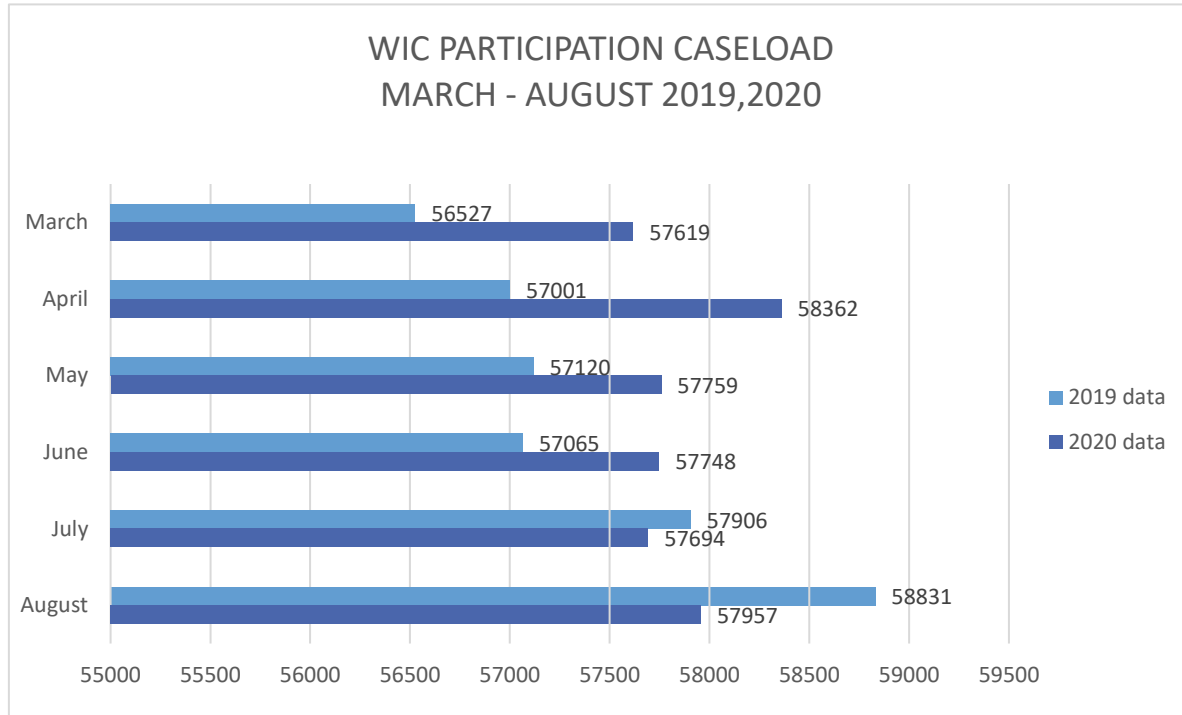
In response to COVID-19, waivers and rule flexibilities/suspensions for federal nutrition programs were enacted to streamline program administration and break down barriers for hungry individuals and families. All SNAP-related waivers and flexibilities were extended or are still active.

### WIC

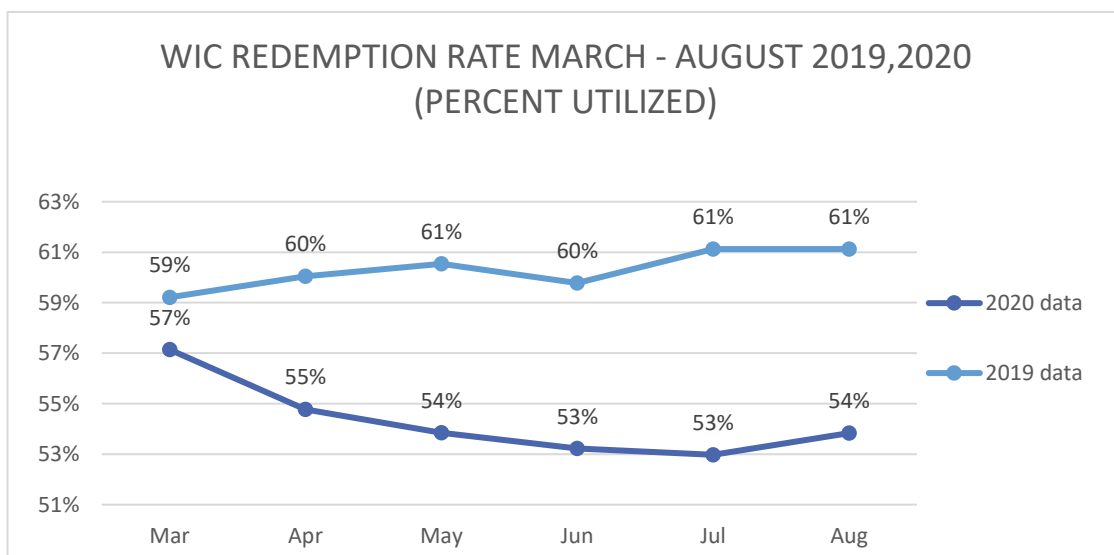
Nevada WIC clinics continue to operate remotely to provide participant certification and nutrition education. While WIC referrals decreased between March and June 2020, referrals increased between June and August 2020. Despite fluctuations in referrals, WIC has experienced an overall increase in referrals between January and August 2020 compared to the same months in 2019.



Additionally, Nevada WIC participation caseloads remained consistent with the average of about 57,789 caseloads between May and August 2020. There was an increase in WIC participation of 0.78% between 2019 and 2020.



From March to August, the average redemption rate was 60% in 2019 and 54% in 2020, respectively. However, from March to August, there was an overall decrease in redemption rate of 10.01% between 2019 and 2020.



In August 2020, Nevada WIC received CARES funds to assist WIC families with shopping needs during the COVID-19 pandemic through a temporary WIC grocery delivery program. Nevada WIC has worked with various stakeholder to establish the program, including grocers, providers, EBT processors, and food security partners. This innovative model is the first of its kind throughout the country and will run from September to December 2020. An update on this initiative will be included in the second addendum of this report series.

### *WIC: Waivers and Rule Flexibilities Update*

After waiver extensions were approved in June 2020, the USDA announced on September 21, 2020 flexibilities were still necessary to provide high quality WIC services while working toward reopening. Therefore, the extension of certain active waivers is to remain in-place until 30 days after the end of the nationally declared public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d). All but one (1) waiver were extended. The waiver regarding food package substitutions for milk and cheese ended in June 2020.

### **State Nutrition Programs: NDA Update**

The NDA has continued to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a safe and continuous food supply for all Nevadans. Efforts include the administration of new funding to producers and community nutrition partners through programs made available by the CARES Act. Additional efforts include helping sponsors implement USDA state and national waivers for school and child nutrition programs.

### *SBP and NSLP*

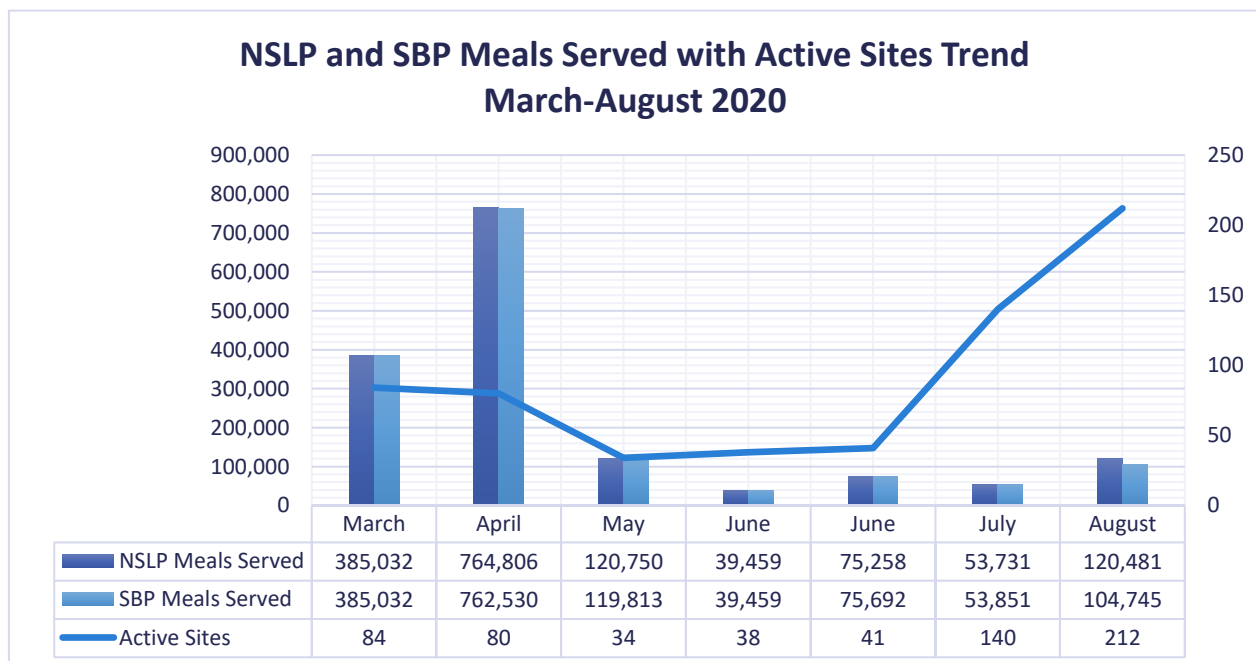
By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, most school meal programs transitioned to non-operational status. Schools worked to ensure local children would still have access to food through alternative community partners. NDA advocated and identified most districts and counties were able to continue partnerships through organizations such as food banks, churches, the Boys and Girls Club, the Frontier Community Action Coalition, and others. Most school food operators forced to discontinue operation in the summer months cited they did not have the financial or operational capacity to continue services.

The NDA worked with statewide partners and sponsors to continue a number of community Seamless Summer Option (SSO) feeding sites during summer break. NDA also



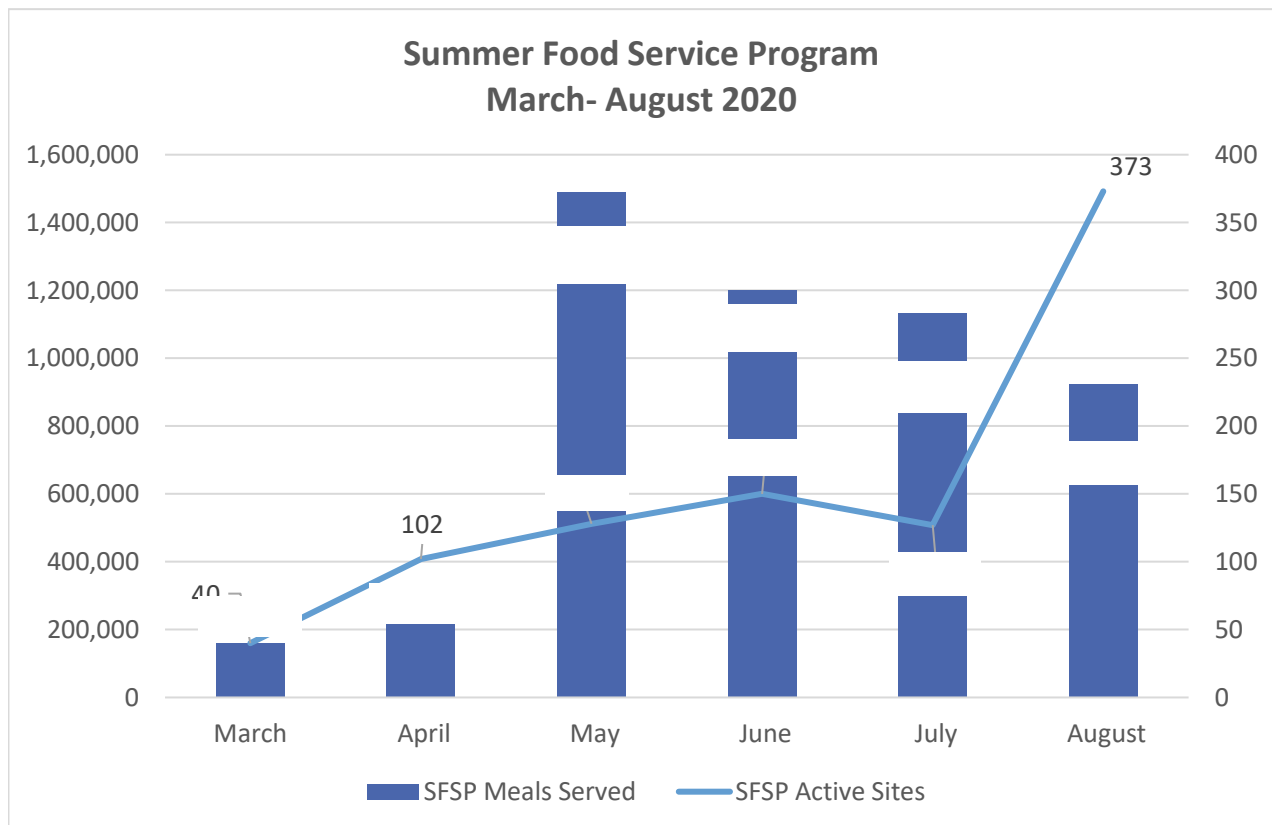
successfully implemented all additional USDA COVID-19 nationwide waivers for continuation of the Summer feeding programs; including the SSO (an extension of the National School Lunch Program) for the School Year 2020-2021. The SSO (and SFSP) allow schools to serve (and claim) universal free meals to all youth under age 18, at no cost. NDA further assisted eligible school food authorities (SFAs) to increase the number of Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) sites from 316 to 399 schools, which will allow for universal no-cost meals to serve enrolled students at all participating schools upon the expiration of nationwide SFSP/SSO waivers.

As the school year began in August, SFAs were still required to collect and process 2020-2021 Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) applications, and to verify free or reduced-price eligibility and enrollment for every student who received a meal. Many school districts were not planning on fully reopening schools at 100% attendance, which posed challenges for picking up meals by parents who were still working and/or had multiple children attending different schools. For districts wishing to continue pickup at alternate school locations, most did not have the technological capability to verify eligibility at a school site, other than the one a child attended. Additionally, many families choose not to re-enroll their children in school due to risks and complications caused by COVID-19. These families could no longer receive meal benefits until Summer waivers were extended. Districts and States across the nation continued strong advocacy for universal no-cost meals for all youth under 18 for 2020-2021 school year until this extension on August 31, 2020. Between June and August 2020, the NDA served 249,470 lunches and 234,288 breakfasts.



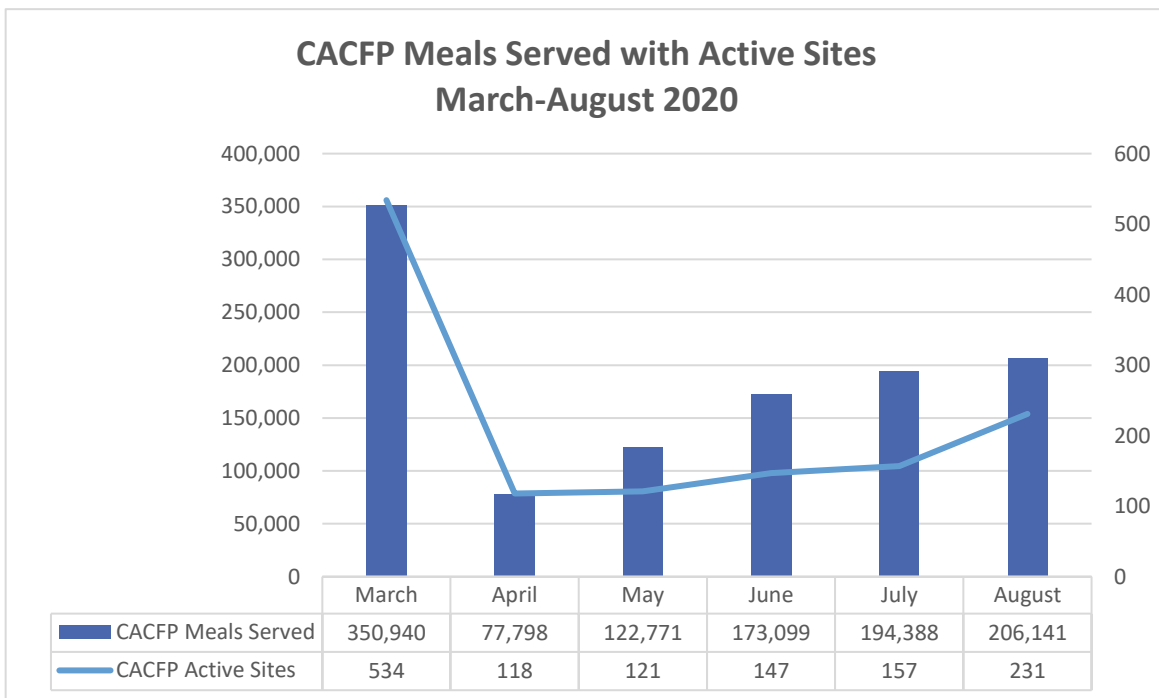
### Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The majority of SFSP sponsors decided to only serve throughout the first two (2) weeks of July 2020, resulting in a decrease of meals served from June to July 2020. Initially, the Nevada SFSP was scheduled to end in the beginning of August 2020, and NSLP/SBP was to resume with the new 2020-2021 school year. On August 31, 2020, the USDA released a nationwide Waiver, Child Nutrition Response (CNR) #56, which extended the SFSP until December 30, 2020. The decrease in meals served from July to August 2020 is due to low participation in NSLP/SBP. On September 14, 2020, USDA released CNR #57, which allowed sponsors to retroactively claim SFSP meals prior to written Sponsoring Agency approval, which allowed sponsors to decide if they wanted to claim August meals under SFSP or NSLP/SBP. Between June and August 2020, 3,255,968 meals were served to children, via 650 meal sites. To increase accessibility to meals, SFSP sponsors collaborated with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to use bus routes to deliver food. Despite the success of the program, food service staff did not have their regular summer break and reported feeling exhausted. In addition, some school sites do not have the capacity to provide weekend meals due to lack of kitchen storage space, and cannot reach children whose parents have returned to work and/or are not located near a designated feeding site.



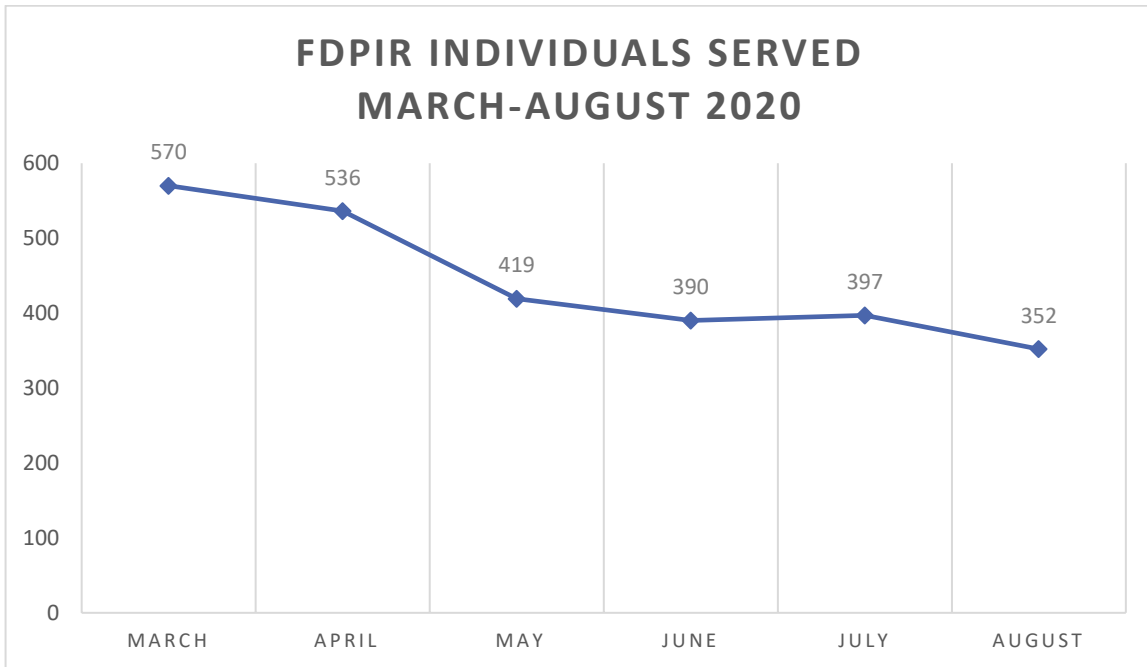
### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Despite the sharp decrease in CACFP active sites and meals served between March and April 2020 due to the economic shutdown, CACFP sites have begun reopening with safety guidelines in place: including limited site capacity. Between April and August 2020, the number of sites reopening, and meals served continued to increase. To increase access, Head Start CACFP programs provided grab and go meals to enrolled participants. Afterschool At-Risk programs also started back in August 2020, which contributed to the increase. Afterschool At-Risk sponsors are required to provide an enrichment activity; most are providing worksheets with grab and go meals or have online activities.



### FDPIR

FDPIR has continued to provide food assistance to 11 Tribal communities throughout Nevada. Prior to COVID-19, the average number of individuals served via the FDPIR was 400-420 people each month. While data shows an initial rise in participation between March and April 2020, participation decreased below the 2019 average, with a 10% decrease in number of individuals served between June and August 2020 (390 in June 2020 vs. 352 in August 2020).

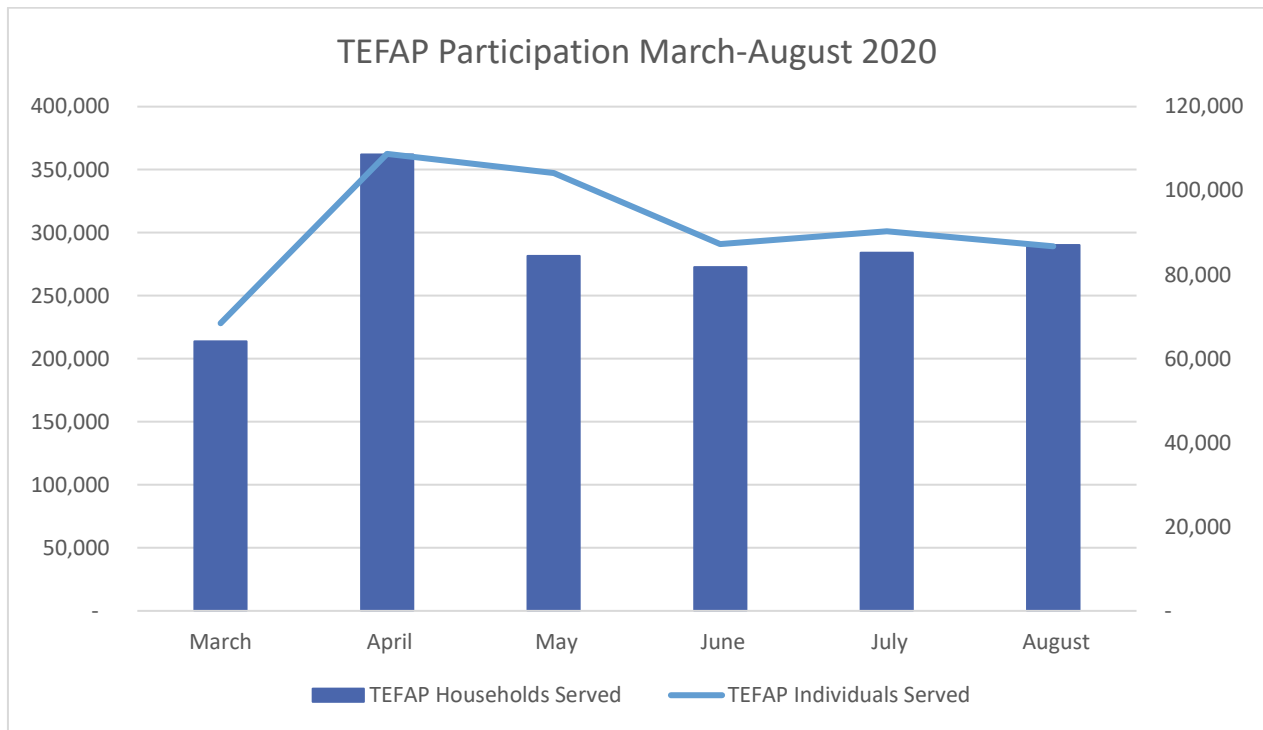


**TEFAP**

TEFAP remains a critical source of food for the FBNN, Three Square Food Bank, and their partner agency network. Between June and August 2020, 5,087,068 pounds of food were distributed to 881,120 individuals representing 254,193 households. Trade mitigation, which has been a significant source of TEFAP food, is not expected to continue into calendar year 2021. Between January and November 2020, approximately 55% of the food in the state’s TEFAP inventory came from trade mitigation.

TEFAP Pounds of Food Distributed 2020

Month	Pounds Distributed
March	1,857,809
April	1,688,961
May	2,306,026
June	1,779,942
July	1,656,897
August	1,650,229



### *NDA: Program Waivers and Flexibilities Update*

During the summer, the USDA released five (5) NSLP nationwide waivers to allow for flexibility during the upcoming 2020-2021 school year for the NSLP meal pattern, meal service time and offer versus serve requirements, and allow non-congregate meal distribution and parent pickup. The intent was for all school districts and charters to resume their NSLP/SBP operations under these five (5) waivers, NDA worked with all operators to determine and implement their specific waiver election needs. However, on August 31, 2020 USDA extended all SFSP feeding program operations COVID-19 nationwide waivers. This allows operators the choice to either operate the SFSP or SSO to serve and claim universal free meals thru December 31st, 2020 (later extended through June 2021), or continue to feed children under the NSLP and SBP.

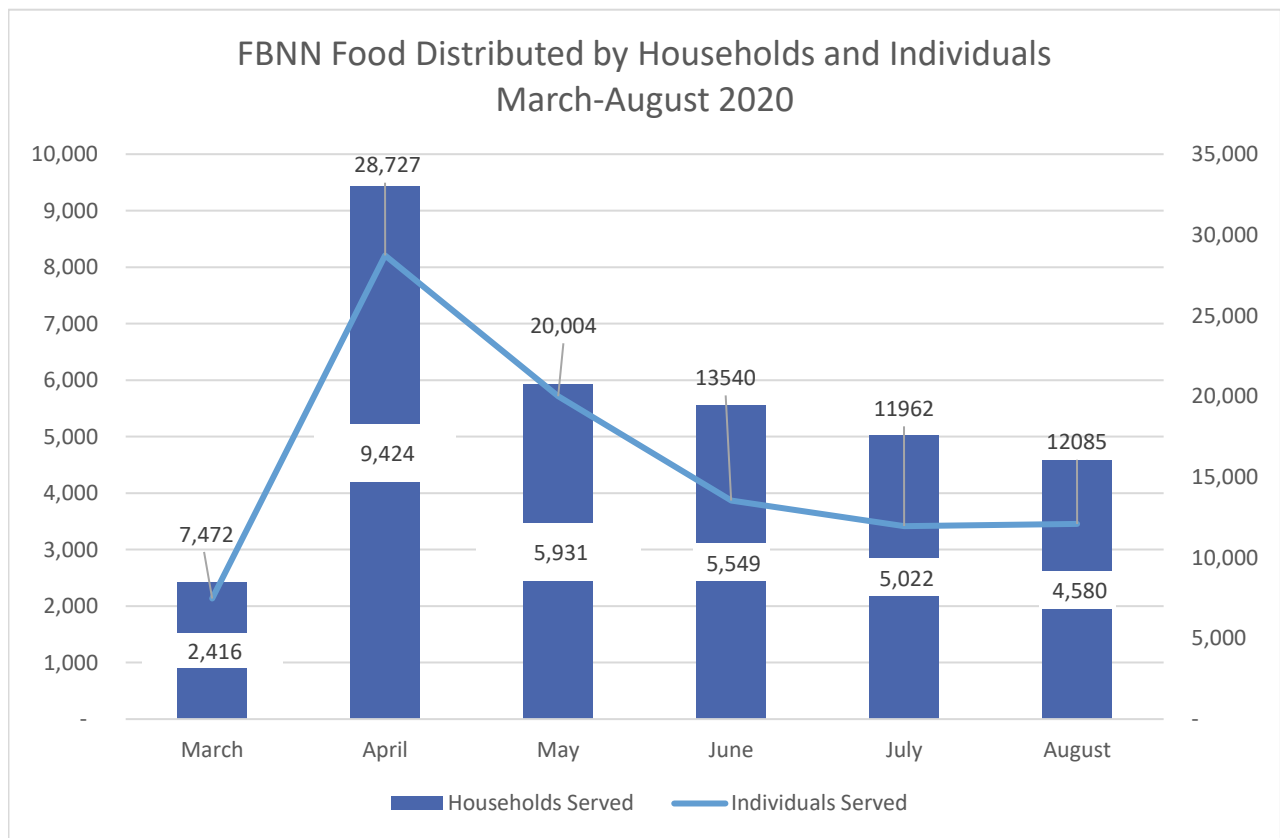
USDA released nine (9) nationwide waivers extending the following; allow area eligibility for closed enrolled sites, waive the first week site visit requirement, meal time flexibility, extension of SFSP, waive area eligibility requirement, meal pattern flexibility, non-congregate feeding, parent pick-up, and to allow all SFSP sponsors to implement Offer Versus Serve.

Monitoring, meal pattern, mealtime, non-congregate, and parent pick up waivers were extended through August 31, 2020.

## FBNN

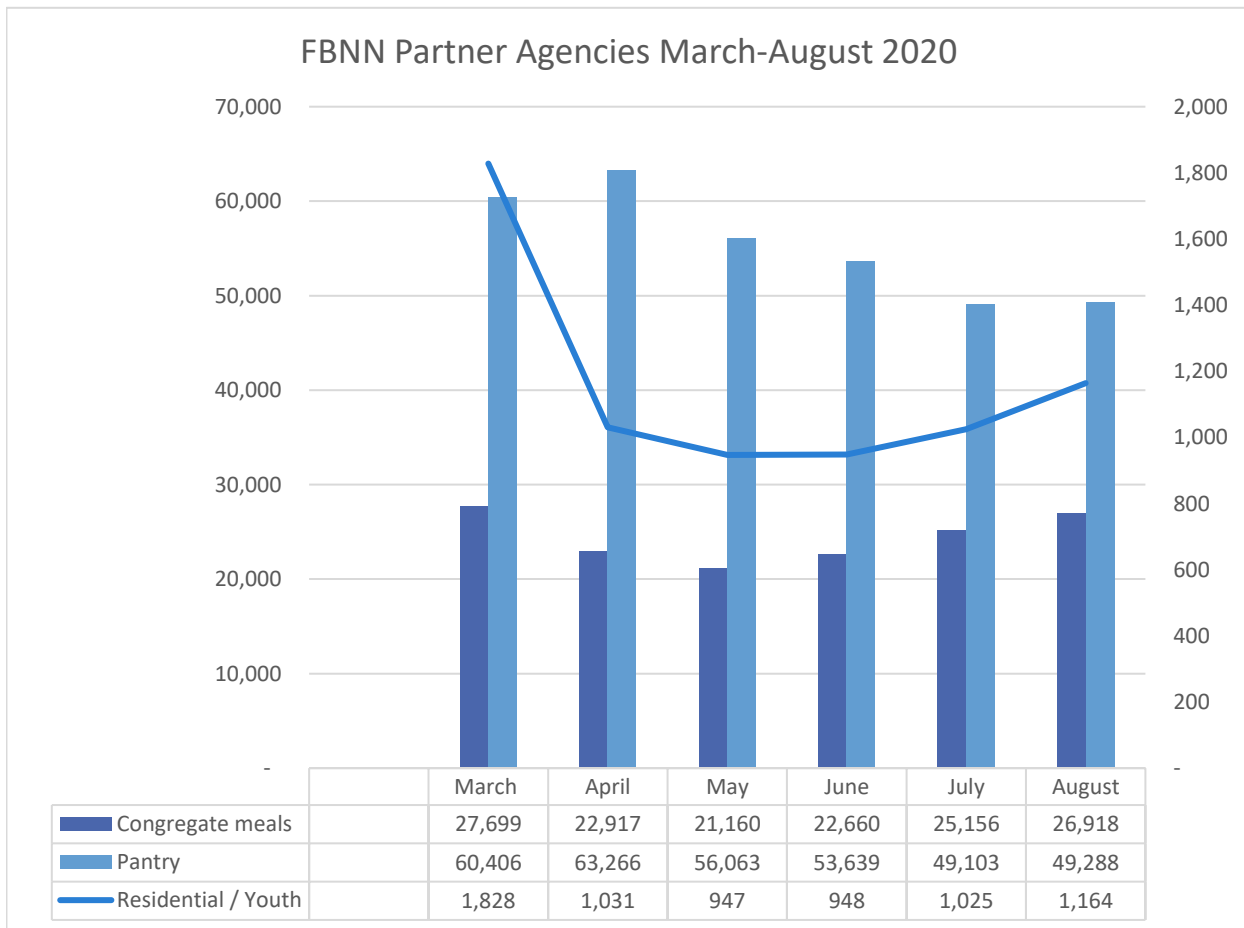
The FBNN and their partner agency network have continued distribution, outreach, and education programs. The FBNN’s Mobile Pantry Program and partnering pantries have continued to implement drive-through, or grab-and-go boxes, to ensure client and volunteer safety through social distancing.

Between June and August 2020, FBNN’s Mobile Harvest Program served 9,987 unduplicated households and 15,151 duplicated households.



As an SFSP implementing agency under NDA, the FBNN continues to provide meals to school-aged children through the SFSP. Between June and July 2020, FBNN served 245,625 meals to 8,331 children. This data is included in the NDA SFSP update. Throughout the same timeframe, the FBNN maintained 34 school pantry sites throughout Washoe County, which served 3,152 individuals.

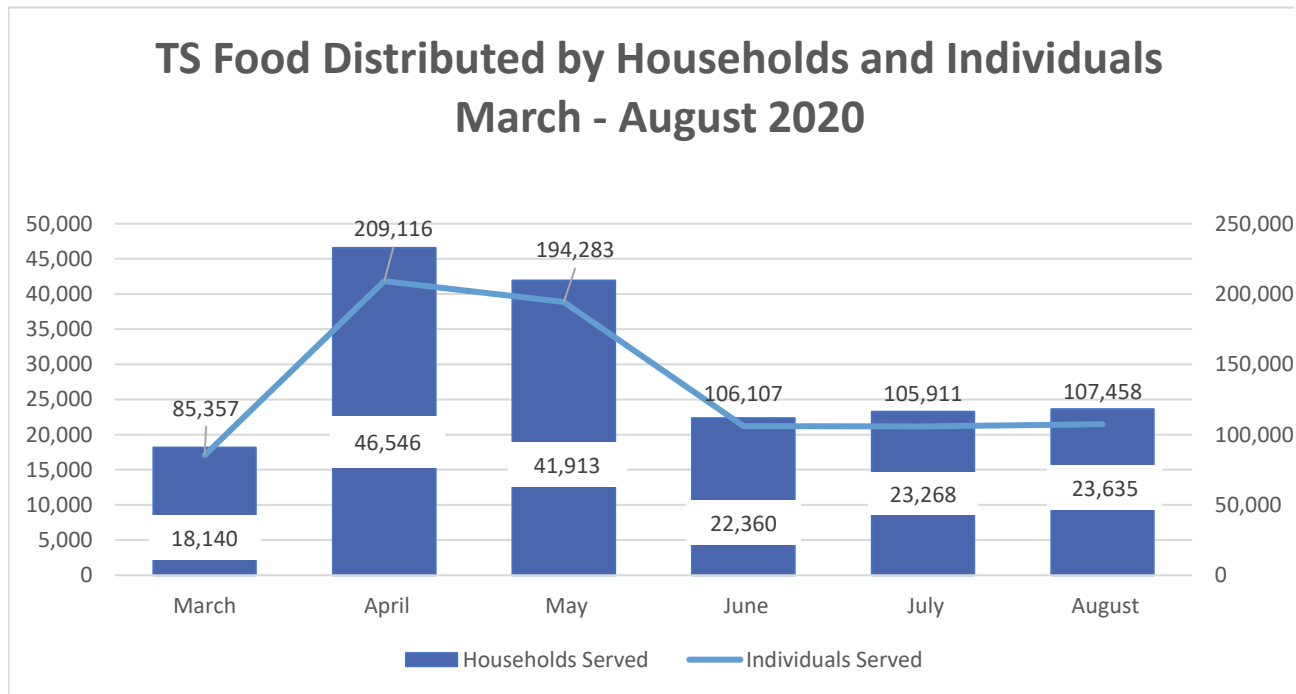
The FBNN’s partner agencies remained open and continued to serve their communities throughout June to August 2020. To adhere to social distancing requirements, many partnering pantries continued to implement drive through pantry models or have moved to pre-packed boxes versus client-choice pantries. When a pantry employee or volunteer tested positive for COVID-19, the pantry had to close for short periods of time [no more than two (2) weeks], to quarantine and work with the local health authority to clean and sanitize the pantry space. The FBNN supported these pantries by communicating changes to the pantry schedule to the community, as well as providing alternative pantry locations/nutrition program options, and promoting the pantry once it reopened. Collectively, the FBNN partner agency network, including pantries, residential/childcare feedings sites, and congregate feeding sites, served a total of 229,901 individuals.



The FBNN also participated in the USDA Farm to Families Program. For this program, the FBNN collaborated with local food distributors to provide fresh produce, animal protein, and dairy products to the FBNN’s partner agency network. Through this program, the FBNN served 36,052 boxes of food (~872,531 total pounds) through 151 distribution sites.

### Three Square

Throughout June to August 2020, Three Square continued distributing food through 18 monthly Mobile Pantries. Additional partner agencies resumed food distribution as well. Three Square continued to prioritize the health and safety of their volunteers and clients and ensured all distribution sites continued aligned with safety guidelines. Between June and August, Three Square served 13,630,321 meals to 319,476 individuals representing 69,263 households.



During this time, Three Square continued to experience disruptions in the food procurement supply chain, due to COVID-19 responses and consequences, trade war shortages, delays in imports being able to port and unload, harvesting issues, natural disasters, driver shortages causing delays or drops in deliveries, and others. Prepared food donation programs continue to be nonexistent, with no estimated return date.



Three Square Food Bank also participated in the USDA Farm to Families program. Through this initiative, Three Square Food Bank distributed 322,414 boxes (8,303,100 pounds) of food. These free, pre-packaged boxes alleviated many obstacles Three Square faced with supply chain and volunteer labor disruptions due to the pandemic. The boxes included assorted fresh produce, pre-cooked proteins, dairy, and fluid milk options that are the core of a healthy diet. The program served a stable, varied food source packed inside of one box that permitted more efficient, socially distanced placement into the trunks of over 69,000 Southern Nevada households driving through a distribution line.

The Farm to Families Food Box program reduced the waste of food and resources in US produced agriculture and made this food available to nonprofits to reduce the meal gap influx created by the pandemic. Farmers were compensated for food products and remained operational. The food was collected and sent to companies who were awarded bids for the packing and shipping portion of the program, who in turn were able to keep businesses running and staff employed. The boxes were packed and shipped to nonprofits across the US, increasing the ability to provide safe, prepackaged food in a time where packing them using labor and volunteers at food banks and pantries was not an option.

Food banks also benefitted from new partnerships with vendors and suppliers involved in this program. These introductions opened channels for other food sourcing opportunities, including continuing to mitigate food waste through donations as well as new channels in which to purchase food to benefit those served.

# CONCLUSION

The impact of COVID-19 on Nevada households has been significant, and food insecurity will persist in Nevada as the pandemic continues. The pandemic and resulting closures, precautionary measures, and procurement/grocery shortages continues to exacerbate existing food insecurity and food accessibility barriers. Nevada food security partners are resilient, strategic, and flexible, but are still vulnerable to various barriers – forcing them to continuously pivot, adjust, and enhance programming to meet the growing need.

The Nevada 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. 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, including a second addendum to the 2020 Food Insecurity Report: *Combatting the Statewide Hunger Crisis*, which will cover data and updates for September to November 2020.

# APPENDIX

## Acronym Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ABAWDS	Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents
BFCFCW	Bureau of Child, Family, and Community Wellness
CACFP	Child and Adult Food Program
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CDPHP	Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
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:



## References

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