



Nevada Council on Food Security

COVID-19 Response Efforts Update

July 27, 2020

Three Square Food Bank Report

Response Summary

Three Square serves Clark, Lincoln, Nye, and Esmerelda counties. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we primarily utilized our agency partners, commonly known as food pantries, to distribute food to those in need. When faced with the pandemic, we quickly changed our model to mobile distributions. These distributions utilize a drive-thru model where individuals and families in vehicles drive to designated mobile pantry sites, and Three Square employees and/or volunteers place food in the recipient's trunks. For those in need without access to a vehicle or who have the inability to drive, we have a handful of traditional pantry locations available throughout our service area – these pantries are already agency partners registered with Three Square. Mobile distributions were made possible due to our strong relationships with Station Casinos and the Clark County School District (CCSD) - we have since diverted distributions from Station Casinos to CCSD sites because they have reopened for consumer business. Fortunately, we were able to use their parking lots to distribute food with our largest distribution efforts taking place at the Palace Station Casino, Boulder Station Casino, and Sunset Station Casino. At the height of the pandemic we distributed at three casinos and 18 schools, with several sites each day, Monday-Friday, operating in all areas of town. The general public was kept aware of distribution times and locations through real-time updates on our website - <https://www.threesquare.org/get-help>.

Three Square made the difficult decision to suspend all volunteer efforts within our facilities for the health and safety of our staff and for volunteers. Volunteers were, and in some cases will be, needed at mobile sites and for home delivered groceries to seniors. Within the administrative areas of our warehouses, it became difficult to manage social distancing, so we decided to suspend production of our children's meal program in order to fully invest all human capital possible to prepping for agency and mobile distributions, accepting and storing new food product, pre-packing produce and dry goods for home deliveries to seniors.

Distribution Data (March – June)

DISTRIBUTION

Month	Total Volunteers	Households Served	Individuals Served	Meals Distributed
Mar	738	18,140	85,357	2,628,152
Apr	1,242	46,546	209,116	4,431,293
May	1,565	41,913	194,283	4,680,595
Jun	1,100	22,064	104,724	5,157,143
Grand Total	4,645	128,663	593,480	16,897,184

RECEIPT

Month	Pounds Received
Mar	3,886,898
Apr	5,785,827
May	4,932,223
Jun	6,130,651
Grand Total	20,735,599

SNAP

Month	SNAP Applications Taken	Call Center - Calls Answered	Call Center - Inbound Calls	Call Center - Outbound Calls	Call Center - Referrals	Call Center - Intakes for Home Delivery
Mar	168	8,126	21,363	834	1,484	1,484
Apr	211	7,960	10,093	2,066	1,367	790
May	135	3,292	4,563	2,248	1,542	292
Jun	100	2,588	3,426	1,696	1,667	133
Grand Total	614	21,966	39,445	6,844	6,060	2,699

SENIOR HUNGER

Month	Home Deliveries
Mar	519
Apr	1,221
May	986
Jun	820
Grand Total	3,546

Resolutions/Successes

[Outline summary of program resolutions identified and/or implemented in response to COVID-19 and resulting successes.]

Senior Hunger Programs (SHP)

SHP continued to operate through their Golden Groceries program, which provides supplemental, healthy groceries to those who are age 60 and older. Golden Groceries partners that remained open adjusted their operations to take all necessary safety precautions while maintaining their specialized days and hours dedicated to the aging population. In addition, SHP expanded home delivered grocery services through existing and new partners such as Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). For those delivering groceries to seniors, all safety measures

were in place to keep this vulnerable population safe. From March to June, over 44,000 seniors were served over 1 million meals through SHP.

Food Rescue

With the increase in shopper demand in March and April, there were some decreases in food rescued from retailers, especially in the highly sought after non-perishable, meat, and dairy categories. The interruption to the supply chain impacted what was available for consumer purchase, resulting in less product available for donation. In the last month, these levels have slightly returned closer to what we saw pre-COVID-19, with the exception of the short-term meat shortages and a continuation of non-perishable item shortages, as there are still purchase limits on items with known supply chain issues (rice, pasta, peanut butter, and beans). We also saw an extreme increase in the donations received from casinos, warehouses, and distributors as their business needs declined drastically or closed immediately due to Governor Sisolak's shelter-in-place order. These donations stayed at a higher level through June as there was no delivery destination for many of the distributor and warehouse deliveries with the closure of restaurants, schools, entertainment venues, and other businesses providing food to their clients. Incoming and expected orders of purchased product or full loads of donated product were subjected to 6-8 week delivery delays as well as cancellations when the product orders were not able to be transported or filled by the vendor or grower. As public shopping patterns returned to normal the logistics and transportation bottlenecks have reduced and the only cancellations we are seeing now are from the production end as we wait for the next harvests from plants to resume production.

Three Square Call Center

The Three Square Call Center, established in 2012 to assist with SNAP applications, referrals and assistance, typically receives 15,000 calls a month. As an example and comparison of the extreme need in the community, from March 16-20, we received 9,333 calls – over half of what we typically receive during a one-month period was received in one week. We increased the number of phone lines from 9 to 16 in order to refer more people to available food resources and other social services. Before the COVID-19 crisis, The Three Square Call Center was powered entirely by trained volunteers; because of the volunteer shortage, we have re-deployed paid staff to man the lines.

East Campus

Three Square is proud to announce that we have moved into our third warehouse, known as our East Campus. This warehouse will serve as a facility dedicated to SHP and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) product. The office space is the new home to government affairs, SHP, and the Three Square Call Center and boasts 31,200 sq.ft., of which 21,000 sq.ft. is dedicated to warehouse, cooling, and freezing space. This campus is a much needed relief, as we were at capacity for the storage of federal commodities received and the additional office space allows for increased social distancing practices.

TEFAP/CFAP

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) that was approved in March 2020, provided additional funds for TEFAP, however, we did not see the first shipments until late May. In June 2020, Three Square distributed 6 million pounds of food, of which 3.3 million was pandemic TEFAP. The product is high quality and provides a nutritious basket of options that clients are excited to get. Also in June, through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, we have access to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which is a USDA program that collectively assists farmers, ranchers, and consumers in response to COVID-19. CFAP products are delivered to the food bank boxed and ready to go. There are three varieties of boxes; dairy, meat, and produce.

Barriers/Needs/Gaps in services

[Outline existing barriers/needs and/or gaps in services.]

Due to the challenging environment, there has been a need for Childhood Nutrition and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) waivers to navigate the pandemic. The USDA has primarily extended these waivers on a monthly basis. It would be helpful to all parties involved if these waivers could be extended for multiple months due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases and other economic factors impacting food security in our communities. Some examples of these waivers include:

Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS)

- SNAP Flexibility for Quality Control Interviews
- Extended Certification Periods
- Pandemic EBT

Nevada Department of Agriculture

- Non-congregate Feeding
- Meal Pattern Waiver
- Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup Waiver

As we look into 2021 and beyond, Three Square is optimistic about putting a sustainable model in place, such as a statewide food purchasing program in Nevada, to offset potential barriers we may face concerning federal commodities. With trade mitigation coming to an end, and the CFAP program set to expire at the end of October 2020, it is important to look at permanent, consistent options. To paint a clear picture, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is set to expire on July 31, 2020; a gradual lift of Nevada's rent moratorium has begun; and as more casino furloughs and layoffs are imminent, we expect food insecurity rates to rise as more people face harsh financial realities and we want to make sure we, as a regional food bank, have enough supply for the demand. In fact, the 2020 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap results reveal a significant increase in food insecurity across Southern Nevada due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the absence of COVID-19, the food insecurity rate was estimated to remain at 12.9 percent, or one in eight individuals. The impact of COVID-19 on unemployment will increase these numbers to 20.5 percent, equivalent to one in five individuals – or approximately 447,820 people – experiencing food insecurity. If this trend continues, we will need more support to meet pressing needs.