

Pennsylvania's Food Bank Network

Response to COVID-19

April 2020 through December 2020

The state's charitable food network has been in overdrive since the start of the pandemic to meet the surging demand among individuals and families who have been affected by the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19.

PEOPLE SERVED

An average of 2.4 million Pennsylvanians received food assistance each month, with the volume hitting a peak in July of 3.25 million people — enough to fill Beaver Stadium more than 25 times.



BOXES DISTRIBUTED 9 Million Boxes

Nearly 9 million boxes were distributed. Each box holds 23 pounds of food.



POUNDS OF FOOD 205,388,206

That is more than 4,890 truckloads of food. Each truckload averages about 42,000 pounds of food.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

On average, 1,538 agencies, with thousands of volunteers, provided drive-thru distributions each month. Many of the individuals who visited these distribution centers were turning to food banks for the very first time.



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State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)

Since 1983, the State Food Purchase Program has been one of the commonwealth's most important tools in the public-private fight against hunger and a lifeline for food banks trying to help families in all 67 counties meet their most basic needs.

Over the years, funding has fallen far short of what is needed to meet demands. The pandemic has only compounded these challenges. The number of people seeking food assistance has exploded, and that won't change any time soon in 2021.

During the pandemic, the total number of Pennsylvanians served at drive-thru, walk-thru and pop-up distribution locations averaged 2.4 million individuals per month. **With requests for food assistance up 40 percent, more than 1 million Pennsylvanian's are seeking aid today compared to pre-pandemic levels.**

Many of these individuals and families were turning to food banks for the first time, and most of them keep coming back, as the number of food insecure Pennsylvanians rises.

SFPP helps organizations purchase food and nutritional supplements, finance food provider transportation and infrastructure, and gain access to federal food commodities.

The state recognized the value of this program by providing temporary supplemental assistance to SFPP during the pandemic. But more must be done to shore up the program to address the challenges our state faces over the long term.

In 2006-07, the state allotted \$18.75 million for SFPP. Nearly 15 years later, the program is forced to do more with less, as funding has dropped to \$18.188, even as the need has skyrocketed and everything from the cost of food to transportation has increased.

Hunger remains an epidemic — and the pandemic has only made it worse.

The state's charitable food network has been in overdrive and continues to meet higher-than-usual demands across the commonwealth. But we can't do it alone.

Please help us fulfill our mission by increasing the line item for the State Food Purchase Program to \$24 million in the 2021-22 General Fund budget.

We care deeply about our neighbors struggling with hunger and food insecurity. We know you do, too. Thank you for your support.



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