

Partnering with Families to Build Economic Security During Emergencies



Partnering with Families to Access Food Assistance

The information in this tip sheet was current as of July 1, 2020.

Families may experience food shortages at any time, including during an emergency or natural disaster. Early care and education professionals can partner with families to:

1. Access food assistance
2. Track progress and celebrate successes

1. Partner with Families to Access Food Assistance

You can provide families with information about different types of food assistance. You also can help them determine their eligibility and navigate the application process.

- **WIC and SNAP:** Programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help families meet their food needs.
 - The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 adds \$500 million to the WIC program to cover increases in program participation.
 - To address temporary food needs, the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is also approving states to issue emergency supplements to SNAP households that normally receive less than the maximum benefit.

- Use the WIC State Waivers and the SNAP State Waivers online search tools on the FNS website to learn about specific waivers that your state is using to address temporary family food needs.
- **Food banks:** You can refer families to food banks and meal distribution programs in your community. Use Find Your Local Food Bank on the Feeding America website to locate programs and food banks.
- **National Hunger Hotline:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Hunger Hotline is a helpful resource for people seeking information about meal sites, food banks, and other local social services.
 - English: 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479, toll free)
 - Spanish: 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273, toll free)
- **Food shopping tools:** You can share with families tools from the USDA on budgeting for healthy meals, meal planning, and reading food labels. Find them on ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- **Food assistance for families with school-aged children:** To meet the needs of school-aged children, the USDA is coordinating several efforts that may apply to older siblings of children in early care and education programs.
 - Participating rural school districts are enrolling families in the Meals-to-You program. Meals-to-You boxes contain 20 nutritious meals—10 breakfasts and 10 lunches—to cover the meals children would normally receive at school during a two-week period. Visit the Meals-to-You website to learn more.
 - Use the Meals for Kids site finder tool on the FNS website to help families access free meals for their school-aged children. This website provides information on nearby school meal distribution sites, as well as hours of operation and contact information. The service is available in English and Spanish.
 - The Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program gives some households a P-EBT card with the value of the free school breakfast and lunch reimbursement rates for the days that schools are closed. Schools must close for at least five consecutive days for families to receive a P-EBT card. Eligible households include those with children who are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals and who attend schools that offer free school meals. The P-EBT program is currently available in 19 states. You can learn more on the FNS website.

2. Track Progress and Celebrate Successes

Follow up with families to ensure they are finding the food assistance they may need.

Celebrate their successes!



Staff Tip

You may also benefit from the information in this tip sheet. Use the resources described here to address any needs you may have related to food security.

Check out the other staff tip sheets in the *Partnering with Families to Build Economic Security During Emergencies* series. Let families know about the companion family tip sheet series so they can get important information on how to improve their family economic security during emergencies.

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