Reimagining Hunger in Times of Crisis:
Insights, Case Studies, and Survey Results from Indian Country

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HER/NOPREN COVID-19 Food & Nutrition Working Group
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FOOD INSECURITY RATE BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Food insecurity rates are significantly higher for respondents with children under age 5 in their household (p=0.03), with 56 percent experiencing food insecurity and 22 percent experiencing very low food security during COVID-19. Similarly, 55 percent of respondents with children under age 5 in their household experienced food insecurity and 27 percent experienced very low food security (Figure 6).

Households with children experiencing greater levels of food insecurity is a pattern consistent across online surveys of food insecurity conducted during COVID-19 and with the latest 2020 USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) annual food security estimates. A recent review of other online surveys during COVID-19 provides evidence that regardless of the data source, studies consistently find that food hardship has increased during COVID-19 and is higher among households with children. Congruent with this pattern, USDA ERS annual report, Household Food Security in the United States in 2020, shows that the rate of food insecurity in 2020 (most of which was characterized by COVID-19) for households with children (35.8 percent) was higher than for those without children (8.4 percent).
FOOD INSECURITY IS TOO HIGH IN INDIAN COUNTRY
49% of American Indian and Alaska Natives experienced food insecurity during COVID-19
Important Insights from the Survey:

54%  54 percent indicated that sometime or often during COVID-19 they couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.

48%  48 percent indicated that sometime or often during COVID-19 the food their household bought just didn’t last, and they didn’t have money to get more.

37%  37 percent indicated that, in at least one month during COVID-19, they or other adults in their household cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn’t enough money for food. Ten percent reported this occurred almost every month during COVID-19.

34%  34 percent indicated that they ate less than they felt they should because there wasn’t enough money for food.
NATIVE COMMUNITIES’ FOOD ACCESS SHIFTED DURING COVID-19
Shift Towards Tribally Led Programs
Figure 10. Change in SNAP and FDPIR Participation From Before to During COVID-19

Source: Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey

Federal Food Assistance Program Usage
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

- **ABOUT FDPIR:**
  - FDPIR is a federal nutrition assistance program that provides food packages to low income families living on Indian reservations, and areas in Oklahoma.
  - Food packages contain frozen & canned meats, grains, pasta, canned fruit/veg, soup, and more.
  - FDPIR is currently administered to 276 tribes via 112 ITOs and 3 State Agencies.

In addition to fresh fruits & vegetables, several traditional foods are available to FDPIR participants, including bison, wild rice, salmon, blue cornmeal, catfish, and lamb/mutton.
Who uses FDPIR?

42% of FDPIR households have elders over the age of 60

Wages and Social Security are the main sources of income, with over 1/2 of all participants reporting earnings

81% of elders using the program rely on Social Security as well

but-- 1 in 10 FDPIR households has no source of income, and 9% of zero income households have multiple members

About 1/3 of all FDPIR participant households have children under the age of 18

59% of FDPIR households lack access to internet service

74% of FDPIR 2 parent households and 60% of single parent households are in the labor force

1/3 of FDPIR households do not have a vehicle
FDPIR ITO Response to COVID-19

Social Distancing:
Many sites are promoting drive-up service only. Participants receive pre-packed food boxes instead of shopping in a storefront model or pickup inside in warehouse models.

Deliveries
Some sites are calling participants who may now need home delivery service because they are high risk and isolating, or lack access to vehicles.

Times of Service Change
Some sites may be operating on different schedules to accommodate staff, stocking, and other issues. Contact your ITO for details.

Additional food ordering
Multiple ITO sites report placing additional food orders to ensure they can meet the growing needs in their communities.

All of these measures, as well as any additional cleaning and sanitation measures, are costs for ITOs: additional staff time, supplies (boxes for prepacking food, cleaning/sanitation and PPE for employees), fuel for deliveries have all been reported as rising costs for ITO's across the country.
NAFDPIR recently conducted ITO member surveys to better assess needs. Of ITO's reporting:

- Recent surveys of ITO's indicate:
  - **Avg. 11% increase in new participants**
  - Take rates increasing, 80% of sites reporting indicated this.
  - Inventory was unprepared for drastic increased participation at many locations. Most sites reporting had 1 month or less in inventory as of 3/26.
  - 66% of ITO's reporting said they were out of some inventory items.
  - 43% of ITO's reporting said they were out of certain fresh fruits & vegetables. This increasing take rates of canned goods.
NATIVE PRODUCERS’ RESILIENCY AND COVID-19 RESPONSES
Tribally Led Food Systems Investment

Osage Nation Meat Processing

Muscogee Nation Meat Processing
New opportunities/investments grew local food production:
- Farmers to Families
- FDPIR 638
- CARES Act and other COVID response funding leveraged by Tribal Nations
  - Meat processing facilities
  - Farms/ranches
  - Community kitchens/entrepreneurial support
- Food systems facilities/entities
- NAAF COVID19 Rapid Response Funding
Empowering Indian Country through economic
development and greater food access

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Co-Leads

• Hannah Lane, PhD MPH (she/her)
  • Medical Instructor, Department of Population Health Sciences, Duke University SOM
  • Interested in developing/testing implementation strategies to improve equitable implementation of K-12 nutrition and wellness policies

• Yuka Asada, PhD RD (she/her)
  • Clinical Assistant Professor in Community Health Sciences, University of Illinois Chicago
  • Interested in nutrition and health/wellness policy access and implementation in early childcare and K-12 settings
Qualitative Data Subgroup 1.0

- Goal: streamline and ensure policy relevance of qualitative investigation of school meal program implementation during COVID-19

- Developed a repository of open-ended questions for food service directors or other stakeholders
  - Collaborated with organizational partners (School Nutrition Association, Lunch Assist) to create concept definitions and sample questions
  - Mapped concepts of interest to existing frameworks and FNS nutrition standards

- Repository use
  - Data collection instrument in ~5 state-specific studies, 2 national studies/projects, 1 social media project during 2020 – several papers published or under review
  - Adapted based on state policies, state and local stakeholder interest, organizational priorities, time period of data collection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Overlapping Concepts</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Example Questions</th>
<th>Relevance to Policy/Practice</th>
<th>USDA/FNS Professional Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1</strong> USDA Waivers &amp; Flexibilities</td>
<td>Process of understanding waiver policy language, the impact of waiver flexibilities on child nutrition programs, and other instructions from federal and state authorities</td>
<td>Meal Procurement &amp; Preparation</td>
<td><strong>Meal Distribution</strong> Financial Impact Future Needs Summer Meal Provision</td>
<td>What you know about the USDA waivers, and how did you find out? How did you determine the operational changes that would take place as a result of the waiver flexibilities? What was the decision-making process like for what to do once you learned about the waivers? Who had a role in that decision? How did you communicate waiver flexibilities with your program or agency staff? What questions arose from the waivers? What unanswered questions do you still have regarding the USDA waivers? How much of what has been different about your food service during COVID-19 is related to the USDA waivers? Any additional thoughts on the process of using these waivers?</td>
<td>May inform efforts to improve communication and technical support between federal/state and local agencies.</td>
<td>3410, 4150, 3510, 3240</td>
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<td><strong>C2</strong> Site Selection, Adoption, &amp; Closing</td>
<td>Process and description of opening and cozier sites, including characteristics of selected sites</td>
<td>USDA Waivers &amp; Flexibilities</td>
<td><strong>Program Operations Barriers</strong> Initial Selection Decision to Close Sites Community Partners/Engagement</td>
<td>Thinking back to when schools first closed, tell me about the decision-making process for selecting distribution methods and sites. What factors did you consider? (e.g., staff, experience with summer, safety, &quot;readiness&quot; or preparedness, equity, ability to use school buses to transport meals, school district leadership involvement). In your program, were the qualities of sites that were &quot;ready&quot; compared to those that were not? Tell me about how your program operated before all this happened. Which programs were you operating before, and which ones have you been operating during the pandemic?</td>
<td>May inform efforts or potential policies that can lead to an increase in the number and types of sites serving meals.</td>
<td>3510, 4150</td>
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<td><strong>C3</strong> Student Participation &amp; Reach</td>
<td>Process and description of student participation and reach, including characteristics of participating students</td>
<td>Site Selection &amp; Adoption Pandemic EBT Augmenting Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can you tell me about the families that are participating in your program now, compared to who was before? How does the demand of new families and the demand of repeat families differ? How does your staff accommodate new families? How have you communicated with families about participating?</td>
<td>Inform potential new strategies, programs, and policies for reaching children not currently being reached.</td>
<td>4120, 4130, 4150</td>
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<td><strong>C4</strong> Staffing</td>
<td>How sponsors staff their sites, including use of volunteers, and how decisions were made</td>
<td>Meal Preparation Staffing Future Needs Summer Meal Provision</td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety/COVID-19 protocols Communication Volunteers</td>
<td>What was the decision-making process for staffing the sites? What mattered most (e.g., part-time/full-time, under/over conditions)? How did staffing challenges differ in your staff? How did staffing challenges differ from previous years? What does your staffing/your volunteer situation look like now? Compared to how it was before? Who is staffing your sites right now (child nutrition staff, volunteers, principals etc)?</td>
<td>Identify new technical support and professional development needs and opportunities for staff.</td>
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<td><strong>C5</strong> Communication</td>
<td>Channels and processes of communication across stakeholder levels throughout the pandemic response</td>
<td>Meal Distribution Community Engagement P-EBT Augmenting Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What lines of communication were used between FNS and Site Supervisors? Were they successful? What lines of communication were used in your district to keep parents updated on site openings/closures and new distribution methods? What were the biggest barriers to implementing these lines of communication?</td>
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<td><strong>C6</strong> Meal Procurement and Preparation</td>
<td>Methods and processes used to prepare meals, including comparisons to pre-COVID practices</td>
<td>Meal Distribution Financial Impact Staffing USDA Waivers Site Selection Student Participation</td>
<td>Food Quality/Nutritional Value Food Sources</td>
<td>What is different with your program than what you would usually do, in terms of distribution? (e.g., protocol: nutrient value) How many meals have you used during the pandemic? What is the process in your program? Are there any changes you have had in terms of preparation? (e.g., procurement delays, meeting nutrition guidelines, switch to grab and go, volume) What are some innovative or creative preparation methods that you have used or that you heard of others using?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1170, 1130, 2210, 2620, 2630, 3210, 3220, 3240</td>
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Please use and share the [Google doc](#) (and document usage)!
Maryland

EVALUATION OF COVID-19 SCHOOL MEALS RESPONSE: SPRING 2020

Solutions during COVID-19 have proven the role for food insecurity among children.

1. Dissemination

http://www.marylandschoolwellness.org/tools/Data-Reports/

Dissemination

http://www.marylandschoolwellness.org/tools/Data-Reports/

Dissemination

https://www.carolinahungerinitiative.org/Voices/

Dissemination
Coming Soon! Qualitative Data Subgroup 2.0

• Goals:
  • Synthesize “state of the qualitative science” on school meal program implementation during COVID-19
  • Facilitate discussion of future qualitative and implementation research (works in progress, gaps, needs)
  • Provide forum for dissemination of COVID-era qualitative findings to practitioners and policy makers

• Structure
  • Monthly to bi-monthly all group meetings to provide synthesis updates, share works in progress, discuss findings with involve policy/practice stakeholders
  • More regular meetings with a small writing group for synthesis led by a student or early career person

• Products
  • Scoping review manuscript + policy or practice brief
  • Present works in progress and identify grant collaborators
Next Steps

• Email hannah.lane@duke.edu to be added to the listserv and nominate a student or early career person (including yourself!)

• First meeting will be April 2022

• Please include your preference for meeting time options (every other month)
  • First Mondays of the month after 12pm EST OR
  • Second or third Wednesdays of the month between 2-3 pm EST