

March 23, 2020

**Dear Agency Partners,**

**THANK YOU!** For everything you are doing. Every day we're hearing about the great things happening in your communities to keep groceries in the homes of those you help. **Please extend our thank you** to your staff, your volunteers, and your community supporters as we all work together.

We have noticed, and heard, there are more users of the pantries and meals. We believe people are scared. We hope as things calm down people feel more confident there will be enough.

**Governor Tony Evers is issuing a Safer-At-Home order tomorrow.** The order is for everyone to remain in their homes except for essential needs, including health care, groceries, and getting medication. We don't know how long this will last.

- We are in touch with the Eau Claire County COVID-19 response center. The Health Department will be receiving clarification on the Governor's orders and exemptions and will forward the information to us as soon as they can. They anticipate 24 hours.
- Stephanie, our Feeding WI Executive Director, is reaching out to get state-level clarification (the same information, just a different source in case we can get the information quicker)
- Our MN friends tell us the State Emergency Operation Center indicates that it is very likely that volunteers for food banks, food shelves and meal programs will be considered essential personnel, though it is not yet confirmed.
- We heard that on the news yesterday the first essential service listed in New York was grocery stores/food banks, recognizing that our services were as essential as grocery stores. We are hopeful that food banks/food pantries will be on WI's state list too with an understanding that volunteers are essential also.
- When we hear clarifying information we will provide it to you.

**As of today, Feed My People is considered an essential provider.** We believe all of you are, as well.

- We continue to receive deliveries
- We continue to have perishable products – produce and dairy
- We continue to pick and deliver your orders
- We continue to have volunteers helping us – we have limited to groups of no more than 5,
- We continue to work with our local health department (which has been excellent in communicating frequently) and are following ALL protocols for health and safety (cleaning surfaces, washing hands, wearing gloves, etc.).

We know all of this this puts **stress on your programs.**

- You may not have your regular volunteers.
- You may not be able to work yourself without putting yourself at risk.
- Often you are packing instead of having clients shop and this requires time and help to assemble
- Take some time to talk with your boards about changes you could make to make this easier.
  - Could you be open multiple days to allow more time to pack?
  - Maybe it's easier to only be open one day but for a longer time to spread out the time required to pack and distribute?
  - Could you ask your clients to call to make an appointment, so they aren't all coming at once, or on the same day?

**Some ideas from partners on the call:**

- Prepack and distribute in a 'drive thru' method.
- Provide a list of available items and have people check the list, then have volunteers shop in the pantry and put boxed or bagged goods into clients' cars.
- Obtain minimal information from clients – just enough to fill out your reports (TEFAP and FMP).
- Gloves and masks are nice to have. You may be able to buy painter's masks at your local hardware store.
- New volunteers are available in most places (especially since school is out and some aren't working). Take advantage of this if your regulars are not available. While it requires effort to train new volunteers, it may be necessary for continued distribution.