



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

Emergency Food Assistance Program

Closeout Report for State Fiscal Year 2017

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Consumer Services Division

Food Assistance

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The WSDA Emergency Food Assistance Program

Closeout Report for State Fiscal Year 2017

Food Assistance Overview

The Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) Food Assistance (FA) programs assist 500 local food banks, food pantries, meal programs, and tribes in providing emergency food to low-income families throughout Washington State. In State Fiscal Year 2017 (SFY17), 1 in 6 Washingtonians received help from food pantries supported with resources from our programs. FA is committed to developing collaborative partnerships and data-driven strategies to alleviate hunger and increase access to healthier food options available in the emergency food system, while supporting a vibrant agricultural community.

Emergency Food Assistance Program Food Pantry Closeout Results*

Food Pantry Operations

Washington State food banks and pantries, including tribal food pantries, received a total of \$4,975,538.12 in state funding from the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) in SFY17 to help provide 140.47 million pounds of food to 1.16 million Washingtonians struggling to put food on the table. Food pantries provided a pound of food for an incredibly low average cost of only \$0.29.

Of that nearly \$5 million dollars of EFAP funding, only 11.34% went to administrative costs, an almost identical rate to SFY16. Approximately 36.74% was spent on direct food purchases. The remaining 51.92% was spent on costs associated with operating food programs such as storage, transportation, food repackaging, gleaning, equipment, employees' salaries and benefits, supplies, and utilities. The EFAP funds do not cover all costs, but they are an essential foundation for food banks and pantries in providing food to families in need.

The total number of times clients received emergency food in SFY17 dropped by just over 200,000 from the previous year, but the need remained deep, with visits per client reaching an all-time high of 6.91.



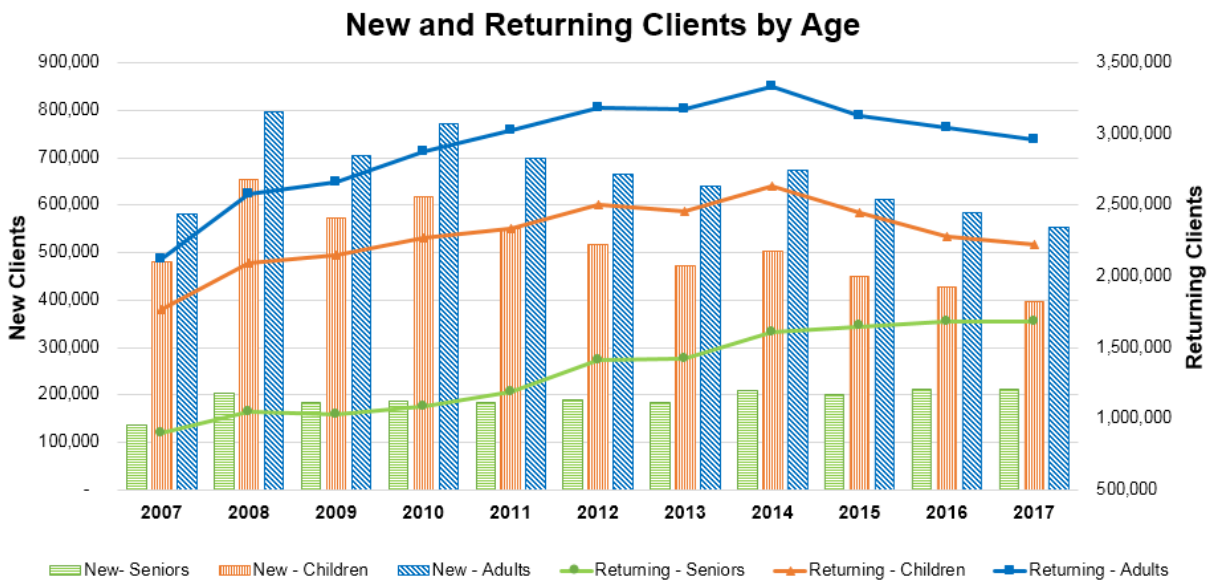
Hopelink's Kirkland Food Bank

* Note: Food pantry data is shown on table 1, p. 13.

Food Pantry Client Visit Demographics

New clients: The number of people using food pantries in SFY17 was 1.16 million as compared to 1.22 million in SFY16. This represents a decrease of 5.25%.

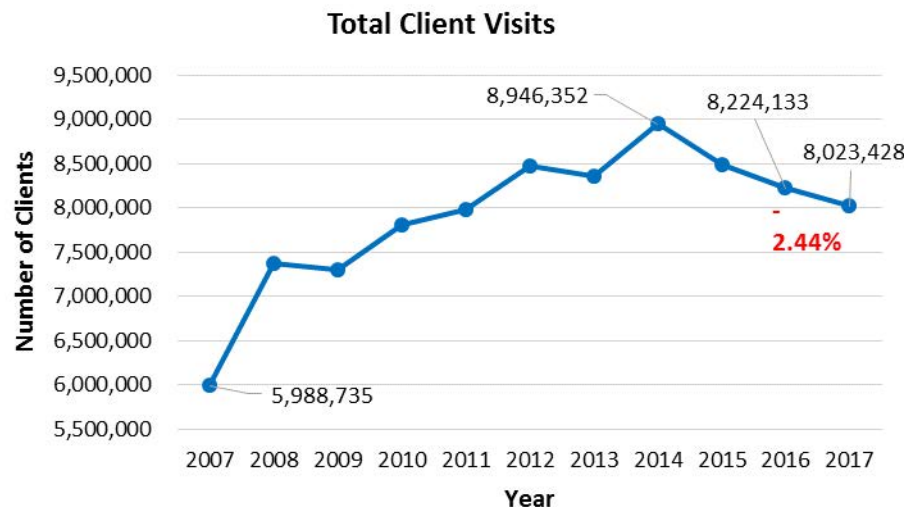
Returning clients: Interestingly, unlike SFY16, the number of returning clients dropped by 1.95%; from just under 7 million to 6.86 million. The exception to this decrease in the number of returning clients were seniors (55 and older), whose returning visits have actually continued to rise by 0.09%.



Total client visits: The total number of visits (new plus returning clients) in SFY17 was 8.02 million. This represents a 2.44% decrease from 8.22 million in SFY16. Despite the decrease in visits, Washington's emergency food system met the needs of a staggering two million more annual client visits compared to SFY07 prerecession figures.

Visits per client: Despite the drop in total client visits, the frequency amongst those using the emergency food system reached an all-time high; 6.91 times per year in SFY17 compared to 6.71 times per year in SFY16. By far, seniors experienced a deeper need. Seniors visited food pantries more often, an average of 8.96 times per year.

The fact that those using food pantries averaged nearly 2 visits more per year than pre-recession 2007 figures, seems to indicate that, even with the improving economy and fewer people needing help,

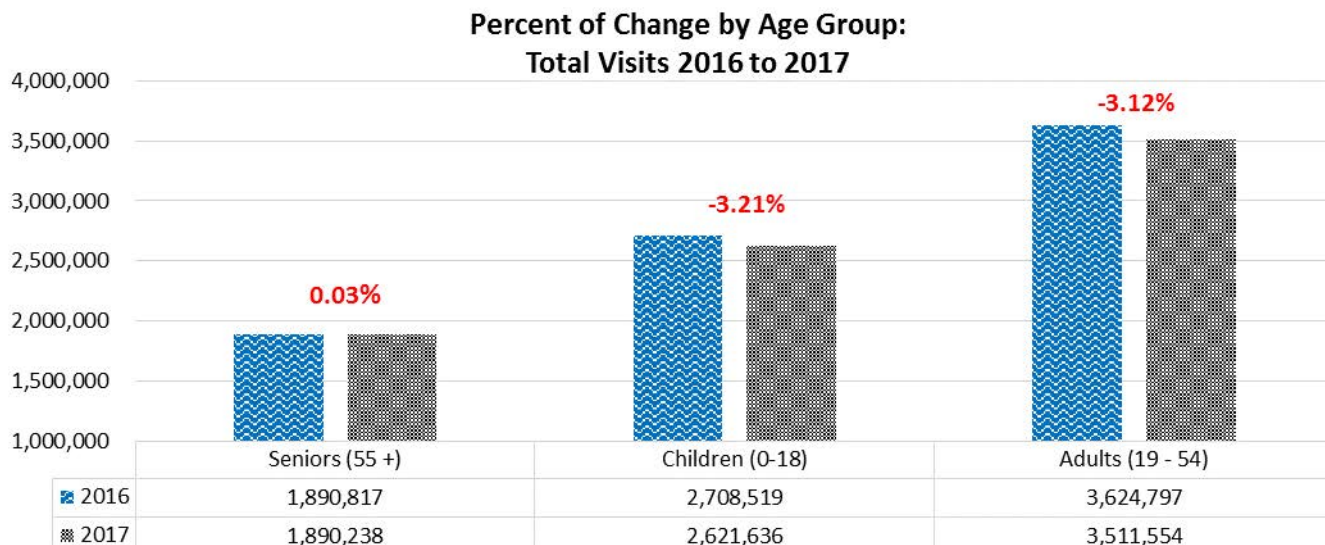
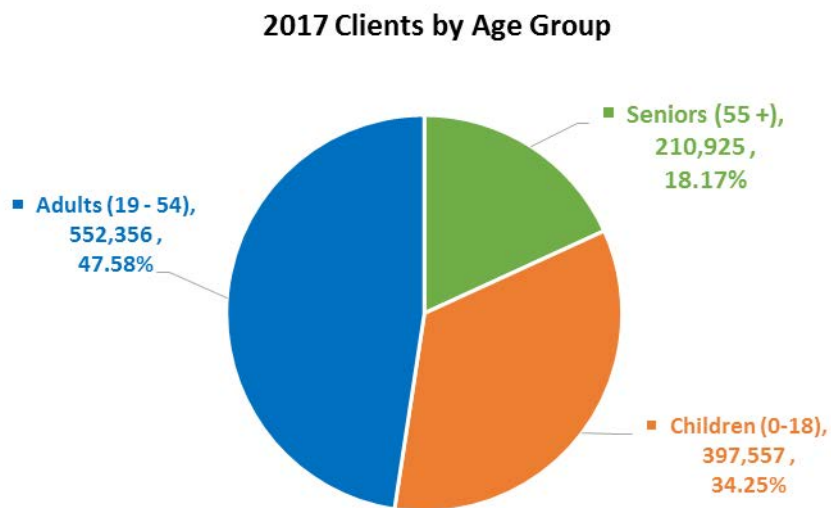


those who are still finding it necessary to request assistance are struggling more than ever, especially Washington's senior population. For many, a visit to the emergency food system has become a monthly occurrence out of necessity.

Food Pantry Client Age Demographics

The percentage of clients by age group has changed dramatically since the recession. The percentage of the senior clients has increased from 11.44% to 18.17% over the past decade. The percentage of children has decreased from 40.14% to 34.25% and, adults have decreased slightly from 48.42% to 47.58%.

The trend of clients decreasing continued this year as compared to SFY16, for both children and adults decreasing by 6.93% and 5.58%, respectively. While we did see a small decrease in seniors of .98%, from last year's all-time high, it can be expected that as baby boomers continue to leave the workforce and find themselves on a fixed income, this figure will continue to trend upward.



In SFY17 seniors continued to have a tougher time than the rest of the population as their total visits dropped by a much lower rate.

Food Distribution

Pounds of Food Distributed

In SFY17, the total pounds of food distributed by food pantries to families was slightly higher than in SFY16, 138.45 million in SFY16 compared to 140.47 million in SFY17. There were fewer total visits to food pantries; the average pounds of food a client received with each visit increased by nearly 1 pound, from 16.83 lbs. in SFY16 to 17.51 lbs. in SFY17, a 4.00% increase. This is the highest number of pounds per visit ever recorded, a testament to the ability of food banks and food pantries to procure and distribute food with increasing efficiency.

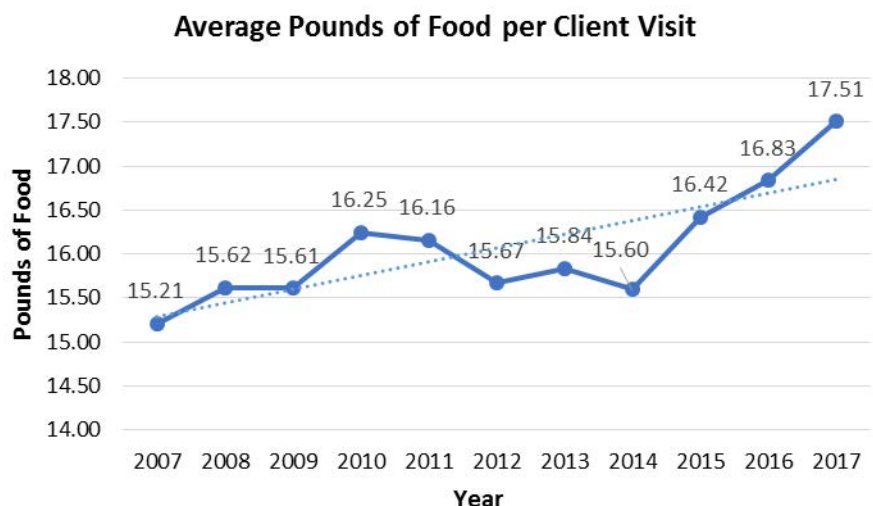


Cost per pound: It cost EFAP food providers about \$0.29 to procure a pound of food. This is about 1/6 of the estimated value of \$1.73 per pound for donated food last year. For every EFAP dollar going into the emergency food system, nearly \$6 goes back to the community in the form of food to low-income families. The 140.47 million pounds of food cost the emergency food system about \$45 million based on the \$0.29 per pound figure; whereas it would have cost approximately \$243 million based on SFY17's donated value rate of \$1.73 per pound.

Match value: The amount of match (cash and in-kind) supporting the emergency food system from other resources increased from \$356.85 million in SFY16 to almost \$434.71 million in SFY17, a 21.82% increase. EFAP contractors are required to match their state funds by 100%, 50% of which must be cash.

This SFY17 figure includes more than:

- \$359.87 million in additional donated food valued at \$1.73 per pound.
- \$33.66 million in volunteer labor valued at \$12.47/hour.
- \$4.85 million in other donated services such as transportation by volunteers.
- \$36.33 million in donated cash funding.



Although these numbers are quite impressive, some contractors chose not to report some of the match they and their subcontractors did acquire. Consequently, this figure actually indicates only a portion of the actual contributed match throughout the statewide EFAP network.

Tribal Food Pantries*

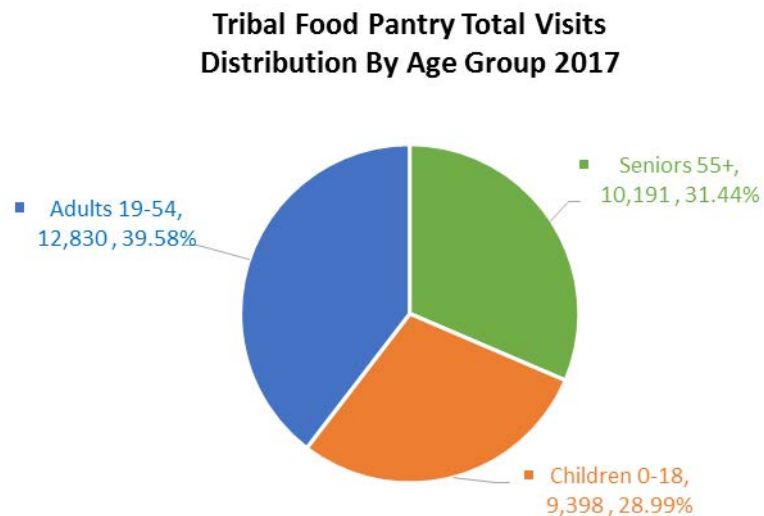
Tribal food pantries are an important part of the hunger relief network in Washington. For some tribes, it may be difficult to find a supermarket to participate in the more labor intensive EFAP Tribal Voucher Program. In these scenarios, food pantries allow tribal services to reach out to members in need. While tribal food pantry data is included in the previous food pantry data it is also important to look at this data and analysis separately to assess trends specific to tribes and to develop targeted solutions.

In SFY17, tribes spent \$76,790 of EFAP funding in their pantries, a similar amount to the previous year. On average, tribes spent just 3.33% of their total funds on administrative costs. The vast majority of participating tribes allocate all or nearly all of their EFAP funds directly into food purchases leaving the tribe to pay for associated administrative and operational costs with matching funds. Tribes reported a total of \$38,417 in match from other resources to support their food pantries, more than the required match of 35%.

Tribal Food Pantry Client Demographics and Food Distribution

Total client visits: Total tribal food pantry clients served decreased by 6.32% from 34,605 in the previous year to 32,419 in SFY17.

Like their non-tribal counterparts who saw decreases nearly across the board, tribal food pantries saw similar trends. During this time, children and adult total visits saw a decrease of 15.12% and 10.79% respectively. The one demographic that saw an increase was seniors visiting tribal food pantries, this group saw a considerable increase of 11.35% as compared with the previous year.



Food distribution: The number of pounds per client visit decreased by .09 to 7.34 and the total pounds of food distributed dropped by 7.52% down to 237,876 lbs.

In order to better understand the trends in tribal food pantries, FA needs to engage tribes in follow-up conversations to root out why the total pounds distributed has continued to trend downward especially given that more resources have been allocated to tribal food pantries as compared with years past.

* Note: Tribal food pantry data is included in table 1, p. 13.

Tribal Voucher Program*

The Tribal Voucher Program plays a critical role in feeding tribal families with limited resources to provide emergency food to their families. In SFY17, tribes spent \$389,168 of EFAP funding on their food vouchers compared to \$389,892 in SFY16, voucher spending has stayed constant. On average, tribes spent just 7.13% of their total funds on administrative costs. The vast majority of participating tribes allocate all or nearly all of their EFAP voucher funds into the vouchers themselves and pay for administrative and operational costs with matching funds. Tribes reported a total of \$387,741 in match from other resources to support their voucher activities. Tribes are required to provide a 35% match to the state funds, voucher programs had nearly a 90% match.

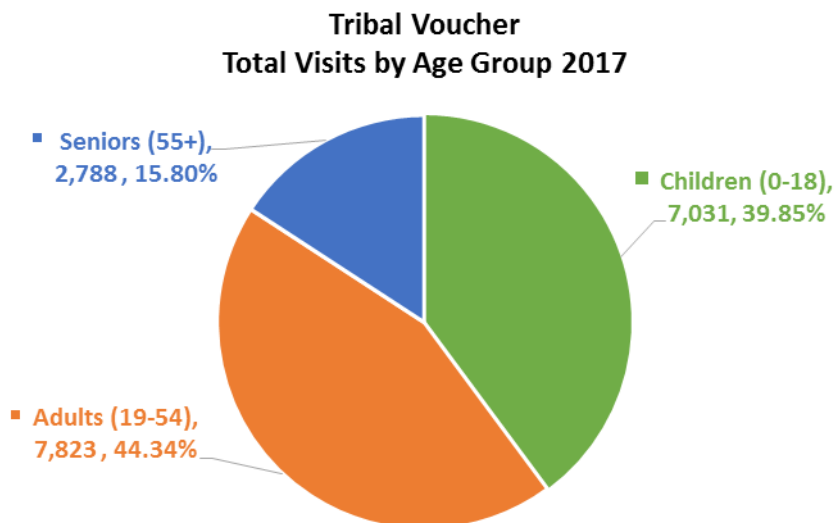
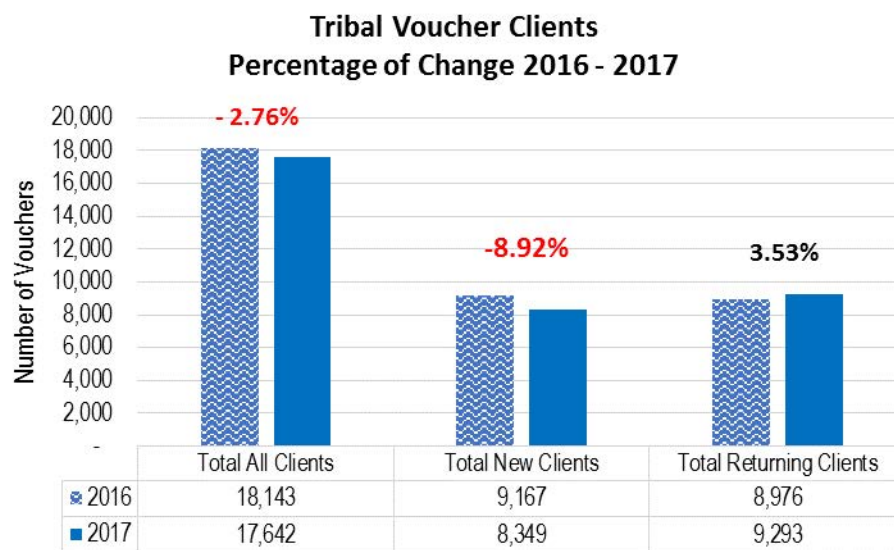
Tribal Voucher Program Client Demographics

New clients: The 25 tribes¹ participating in the voucher program issued vouchers to 8,349 people in SFY17 compared to 9,167 people in SFY16; an 8.92% decrease.

Returning clients: There were 9,293 returning clients in SFY17 compared to 8,976 returning clients in SFY16, a 3.53% increase. They averaged 2.11 trips to their tribal offices for vouchers compared to 1.98 visits the previous year.

Total visits: There was a total of 17,642 visits this year; a 2.76% decrease from the previous year of 18,143.

This decrease in total visits was not across the board. While seniors and adults decreased by 15.39% and 2.63%, children saw an uptick of 3.18% over the previous year.



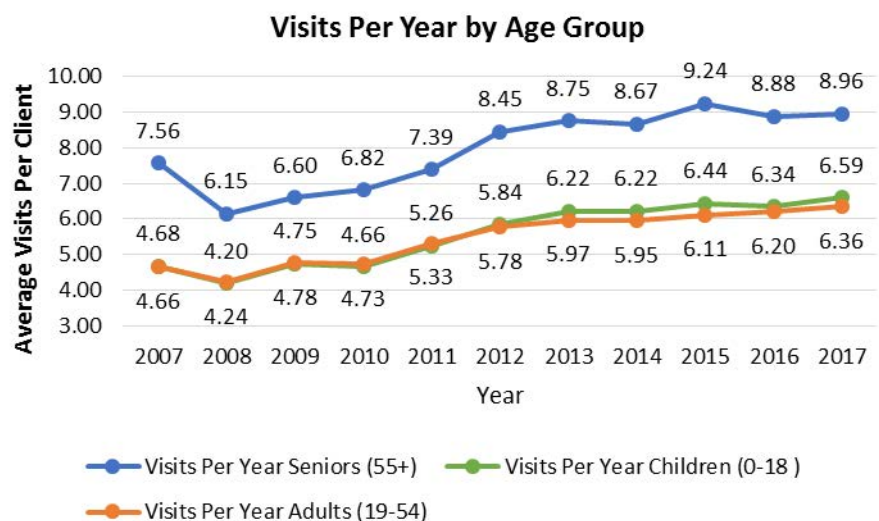
¹ Note: Tribal voucher program data is shown on table 2, p. 14.

Voucher value: There were 3,027 households that received EFAP vouchers in SFY17. The average household received a voucher 2.24 times this past year. The average voucher value per household in SFY17 was \$57.69 and the average amount per client was \$22.06.

Report Summary

There have been improvements in Washington's economy, and unemployment is at or near pre-recession levels. However, EFAP data shows a continued deep need, especially at the regional level, amongst those who rely on the emergency food system. This can be seen through the increased average number of visits per client annually; the need remains high.

One area of particular concern is the number of Washington seniors, 55 and older, who are having to rely on their community food pantry more often. This population is not experiencing the same reduction in need that the general population has. While seniors saw an overall decrease of 579 (0.03%) in total visits, they had a 0.09% increase in returning seniors visiting food pantries in SFY17. Seniors also used food pantries much more often than other age groups by 2.51 additional times per year, a considerable disparity. Washington's elderly as a demographic are growing and their presence at community food pantries around the state continues to rise. Seniors are having a harder time meeting their most basic needs compared to the general population.



In addition, EFAP tribes saw a shift in SFY17 as total client vouchers dropped by 9.49% along with visits to tribal food pantries which saw a 6.32% decrease. In spite of the fact that tribes allocated a nearly equal dollar amount to food pantries as compared to the previous year, the total pounds distributed dropped by 20 thousand for the second consecutive year. The reduction in total pounds distributed coupled with the decrease in clients led to a similar 7.34 pounds per client visit in SFY17.

Several trends across the emergency food system are moving in a positive direction. The number of new clients using food pantries decreased by 5.25% and the number of total client visits decreased by 2.44%.

An impressive 140.47 million pounds of food being distributed, coupled with fewer overall visits, led food pantries to distribute an all-time high of 17.51 pounds per client across the state. Food pantries across the state are working hard to not only provide enough food but to provide higher quality, healthier foods more efficiently than anytime on record.

The pounds of food and client visits metrics listed in this report are used to measure need and understand trends within the emergency food system. Large food bank networks and small food pantries alike use these universal figures because they matter, and allow us collectively to look at the system as a whole. However, as stakeholders in the emergency food system know, these figures are limited and may not tell the full story. As the emergency food system continues to place more of an emphasis on healthier foods, measuring these system changes and their effects on clients will be important. Agencies are beginning to identify more nuanced measurements that help evaluate the changes in the emergency food system in a more complete manner with figures that relate for example to ideas about food waste and nutritional density.

We are privileged to work with thousands of dedicated emergency food providers, staff, volunteers and community partners who are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors struggling to put nutritious food on the table. Without their commitment to provide quality data we would not be able to assemble this statewide snapshot year after year.

Strategies to Move the Needle

Over this next year, we will continue to make headway on strategies and opportunities to support the needs of our agricultural and hunger relief partners. FA works collaboratively with a wide variety of partners to anticipate and respond to the evolving needs of the emergency food system. We engage and develop partnerships and resources that support our work, a shared vision, and the people and communities we serve. Integral to these partnerships are the Washington Food Coalition's Food Assistance Advisory Committee, emergency food assistance communities and partners that help to sustain vibrant communities and healthier foods for all Washingtonians, including low-income families. Some of the most recent projects include:

Increasing the Availability of Healthier Foods:

- **Farm to Food Pantry (F2FP)** - Our F2FP initiative is a partnership with Rotary First Harvest that provides funding for food pantries to purchase fresh produce from local farmers in 14 counties. This initiative increases access to healthier foods for low-income families, while helping Washington farmers enter new markets. Preliminary results for 2017 indicate a total of \$48,108.11 was paid to local farmers participating in this initiative. Establishing this relationship between farmers and food pantries encourages future donations and gleaning opportunities for fresh produce. In 2017 fresh produce donations increased in counties participating in the F2FP initiative by 860% since 2014. We have moved to a more streamlined reporting system, making it easier for F2FP participants to report their qualitative and quantitative data, and allowing us to see their progress in real time. In 2017, we initiated monthly check-in meetings to touch bases with participants and identify best practices. agr.wa.gov/foodprog/f2fp.aspx
- **Healthier Food Options Reporting (HFOR)** – We are excited to report that we not only met, but exceeded, our Results WA Goal #4: 1.2.A.f, to increase the percentage of healthier food options being offered to low-income children and families through food pantries, farmers markets, and meal programs by 5% from 2014 baseline to 2017. Our goal was \$207.25 million but we were able to reach \$209.12 million to ensure Washington's neediest have access to healthier food options. Our Healthier Food Options Reporting

(HFOR) surveyed 500 food pantries and meal programs to obtain an overview of statewide trends in the emergency food system. The data we collected allowed us to see the percentage of each food category being distributed for the first time. Over the last three years, EFAP food pantries distributed an average of 82.1% healthier food options such as fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein, and grains. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) meal programs provided meals averaging 85.4% healthier food options.

Increasing Access:

- **Seniors** - Seniors need assistance with additional and more nutritious food. We are increasing our nutrition education efforts targeted towards our senior community through EFAP's sister program called the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), which is a federal program that provides seniors a 30 pound box of nutritious food each month. We also implemented a small pilot program with Thurston County Food Bank to add fresh produce to CSFP food packages in Lewis County. Best practices from this pilot will be shared with all CSFP contractors.
- **Tribes** - We will work closely with tribal partners to determine strategic ways to increase access to culturally appropriate foods for tribal clients as well as develop culturally appropriate outreach messaging. In SFY18, efforts will be aimed at developing culturally appropriate resources such as educational booklets on tribal specific cuisine (salmon, shellfish and foraged foods).

Increasing Collaborative Partnerships:

We continue to collaborate and partner with the Department of Health, Department of Social Health and Services, Dairy Farmers of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Veterans Affairs, Department of Corrections, nonprofits, and others to support effective partnerships that lead to greater impacts within the emergency food assistance community. Below, is a list of just a few of the projects that were the result of these collaborations:

- **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Partner, Posters** - As a Department of Health (DOH) partner, we were able to help share the benefits of the FINI grant with our emergency food assistance network. Posters were developed for display at food pantries informing clients how they could receive additional fresh produce when using their EBT funds on fresh produce. This also led to the development of Product Identification posters and brochures which included nutrition and cooking tips for different types of produce commonly found at food pantries. We have also translated these into Spanish and are getting them ready for print in January of 2018. The Product ID posters and brochures are available on our website.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) Partnership with the Department of Health (DOH)** - We are honored to receive SNAP-Ed contracts via DOH for both FFY 2017 and 2018. These funds supported the creation of our Supporting Nutrition Across Communities Kit (SNACK pack), a compilation of educational tools that encourage food pantry clients to choose healthier options. These tools are targeted toward clients who have low literacy skills, are non-English speaking, speak English as a second

language, or are over 60 years old. One of the tools, the MyPantry posters series, helps connect food found at food pantries to USDA's MyPlate. The SNACK pack was distributed to food pantries in Yakima County and in FFY 2018 will be introduced in Whitman County. The SNAP-Ed grant also enabled us to expand the Farm to Food Pantry Initiative into Whitman County, providing funds that were used for farmers to purchase seeds and pay for labor during the harvest season.

- **Dairy Farmers of Washington Refrigerator Rebate Program** – We will be reaching out to food banks and pantries across the state to promote the Refrigerator Rebate Program for 2018. Many pantries report having limited cooler capacity and offer limited amounts of fresh products like milk, dairy products, vegetables and other perishable goods. Dairy Farmers of Washington is generously offering 30 food banks and pantries up to a \$500 rebate toward the purchase of a refrigerator or cooler to improve client access to fresh products.

These collaborations with private and public sector partners will help in reducing hunger in families across the state and have a positive impact on the economic vitality of our state's agricultural community.

Data Sources

- Contractors' monthly Food Pantry demographic reports
- Contractors' monthly Tribal Food Voucher demographic reports
- Emergency Food Assistance Program Access database reports

Definitions

"New or Unduplicated Client" means a Client served by an Emergency Food Provider during the reporting period for the **FIRST** time in the **current** fiscal year.

"Returning or Duplicated Client" means a client served by an Emergency Food Provider during the reporting period who the Emergency Food Provider previously served during the **current** fiscal year.

"Visits" means all new client plus returning client visits during the fiscal year.

Table 1: Yearly Data for Food Pantries*, State Fiscal Years 2007-2017 (SFY = July 1- June 30)

| | SFY07 | SFY08 | SFY09 | SFY10 | SFY11 | SFY12 | SFY13 | SFY14 | SFY15 | SFY16 | SFY17 |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Client Visits (New & Returning) | 5,988,735 | 7,367,356 | 7,300,476 | 7,803,414 | 7,980,242 | 8,471,871 | 8,353,656 | 8,946,352 | 8,482,299 | 8,224,133 | 8,023,428 |
| New Clients | 1,198,026 | 1,653,009 | 1,461,116 | 1,576,894 | 1,433,580 | 1,371,965 | 1,294,363 | 1,384,608 | 1,260,963 | 1,225,165 | 1,160,838 |
| Returning Clients | 4,790,709 | 5,714,347 | 5,839,360 | 6,226,520 | 6,546,662 | 7,099,906 | 7,059,293 | 7,561,744 | 7,221,336 | 6,998,968 | 6,862,590 |
| Total New Families Served | 421,786 | 567,660 | 499,918 | 546,431 | 505,392 | 488,076 | 458,868 | 484,749 | 457,407 | 443,756 | 432,267 |
| Average # of Visits Per Client per Year (Visits/New Clients) | 5.00 | 4.46 | 5.00 | 4.95 | 5.57 | 6.17 | 6.45 | 6.46 | 6.73 | 6.71 | 6.91 |
| Pounds of Food Distributed | 91,112,694 | 115,061,507 | 113,952,122 | 126,785,318 | 128,951,893 | 132,742,749 | 132,303,513 | 139,522,115 | 139,272,915 | 138,451,384 | 140,473,341 |
| Average # of lbs of Food/ Client Visit/Yr (lbs/client visits) | 15.21 | 15.62 | 15.61 | 16.25 | 16.16 | 15.67 | 15.84 | 15.60 | 16.42 | 16.83 | 17.51 |

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Updated: 11/1/17

* Note: Includes Tribal food pantry data.

Table 2: Yearly Data for Tribal Voucher Programs, State Fiscal Years 2007-2017 (SFY = July 1- June 30)

| | SFY07 | SFY08 | SFY09 | SFY10 | SFY11 | SFY12 | SFY13 | SFY14 | SFY15 | SFY16 | SFY17 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Client Vouchers (New & Returning) | 16,434 | 15,117 | 17,111 | 17,559 | 21,881 | 15,697 | 19,965 | 17,536 | 19,258 | 18,143 | 17,642 |
| New Client Vouchers | 7,292 | 7,947 | 8,222 | 9,791 | 9,064 | 8,712 | 8,503 | 9,526 | 8,508 | 9,167 | 8,349 |
| Returning Client Vouchers | 9,142 | 7,170 | 8,889 | 7,768 | 12,817 | 6,985 | 11,462 | 8,010 | 10,750 | 8,976 | 9,293 |
| Total New Households | 2,304 | 2,772 | 2,672 | 3,474 | 3,123 | 3,404 | 3,083 | 3,661 | 3,461 | 3,434 | 3,027 |
| Average # of Vouchers Per Client per Year (Vouchers/New Clients) | 2.25 | 1.90 | 2.08 | 1.79 | 2.41 | 1.80 | 2.35 | 1.84 | 2.26 | 1.98 | 2.11 |

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