



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

Emergency Food Assistance Program

Closeout Report for State Fiscal Year 2017

· Executive Summary ·

Each year, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Food Assistance (FA) programs, collect various data from Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) participating food pantries, including tribal food pantries and voucher programs, to develop an overview of statewide trends in the emergency food system. We are committed to developing partnerships and data-driven strategies to alleviate hunger and increase access to healthier food options available in the emergency food system while supporting the agricultural community.

WSDA plays a critical role in developing coordinated, responsive and strategic solutions to the issue of hunger in our state. The Food Assistance programs work collaboratively with contractors, partners and stakeholders for continuous improvement within the emergency food system to serve the 1 in 6 Washingtonians that used the services of their local EFAP food pantry this year.

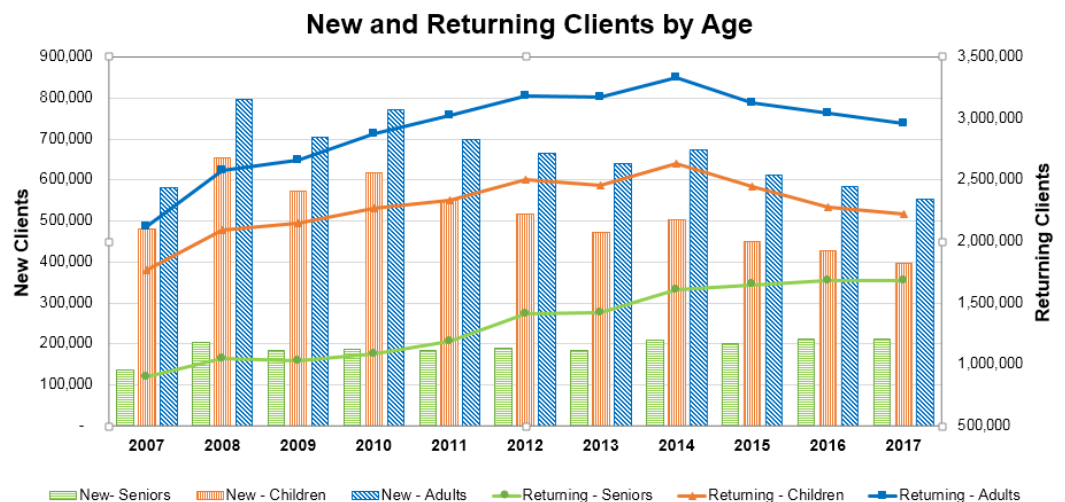
In State Fiscal Year 2017 (SFY17), food pantries provided a pound of food for an average cost of 29 cents. When we compare this to the \$1.73 assessed fair market value for a pound of food, it means that a 6:1 return on investment is benefitting communities by providing more critically needed food to low-income families struggling to put food on the table. This benefit is the direct result of an incredibly dedicated and efficient emergency food provider network, working together with engaged community partners.

Food pantries distributed 140.47 million pounds of food to 1.16 million clients in FY17. On average, clients visited a food pantry 6.91 times per year and received 17.51 lbs. of food per visit.

New Clients: EFAP food pantries experienced a 5.25% decrease in the number of new clients, from 1.22 million in FY16 to 1.16 million in FY17. There was a decrease in new senior clients for the first time in 4 years, of nearly 0.98%, down from last year's all-time high.

Returning Clients: In FY17, food pantries saw a decrease of 1.95% in returning clients, 6.86 million, down from 6.99 million in FY16. Despite the decrease, clients visited food pantries more frequently than in the previous year. Clients averaged 6.91 visits per year in FY17 compared to 6.71 visits per year in FY16. This is the highest number of average visits per year ever recorded.

Returning adults and children were down just 2.65% and 2.51%, respectively, compared to FY16. The number of returning senior clients increased by 0.09% as compared to the previous year. This suggests that this population continues to rely more on these resources. Likely due to the typical fixed income of so many in this age group experience.



All Clients (New and Returning): In FY17, there were a total of 8.02 million client visits to emergency food providers. This figure represents a drop of over 200,000 total visits from FY16. This is the third consecutive decrease since FY14's all-time high of 8.94 million total client visits to EFAP food pantries.

Tribal Food Pantries: Several tribes use some or all of their EFAP funding in support of their food pantry activities. Total client visits decreased by over 6% in FY17. Both the number of pounds per client decreased as well as the total pounds distributed, 0.09% and 7.52% respectively, compared with FY16. The pounds of food per client distributed remained nearly constant with a small drop from 7.43 in FY16 to 7.34 in FY17.

Tribal Voucher Program: Tribes provided food vouchers to 8,349 new clients. This represents an 8.92% decrease from FY16. Conversely, there was an increase of 3.53% in returning clients, from 8,976 in FY16 to 9,293 in FY17. The number of total vouchers also decreased by 2.76% to 17,642. Tribes allocated a similar amount of money towards their vouchers this year, indicating that voucher totals would have gone up slightly as compared with the previous year.

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, among 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.

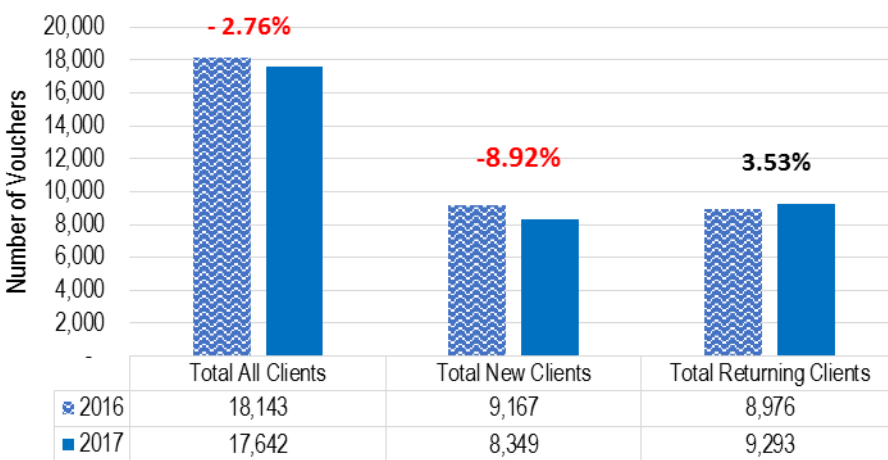
Seniors continue to struggle as their numbers among clients have not dropped at the same rates seen in the general population. Washingtonians 55 and older were the only age group that experienced an increase in returning food pantry clients this year. This population also experienced a smaller decrease of new senior visits (0.98%), as compared to the general population which decreased by 6.15%. Seniors also averaged 8.96 visits per year to food pantries. This represents nearly two and a half more visits annually than any other age group. Simply put, seniors have shown greater need over this past year while the rest of the population has shown a greater improvement.

Like their non-tribal counterparts who saw decreases nearly across the board, tribal food pantries saw similar trends. During this time, the general population saw decreases of over 10 percent. The one demographic that saw an increase were seniors visiting tribal food pantries. This group saw a considerable increase of 11.35% as compared with the previous year.

The WSDA Food Assistance programs' key projects over the next year include a focus on increasing the availability of healthier foods by continuing the Farm to Food Pantry initiative and increasing access and enhancing collaborations with private and public sector partners. We will be working with our Food Assistance Advisory Committee and tribal partners to develop strategies for addressing the increased need in specific segments and regions where the need remains disproportionately deep.

To see the full report: agr.wa.gov/FoodProg/

**Tribal Voucher Clients
Percentage of Change 2016 - 2017**



Food Safety & Consumer Services Division

*Defending the safety, integrity,
and availability of our food system.*

For more information:

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