

The Food Security Task Force (FSTF) was established by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and charged with making recommendations to the City to improve food security. The task force requested input from members and community stakeholders on:

1. **Immediate threats to food security,**
2. **Innovations to food security during the response to COVID-19,**
3. **Policy recommendations to improve food security.**

This document summarizes the FSTF recommended response to the unprecedented need for food in San Francisco during this crisis.

Background: Prior to COVID-19, food insecurity in San Francisco was a pressing and widespread issue. At least 1 in 4 San Franciscans experienced food insecurity and its negative impacts, including poor health, elevated stress, exacerbation of mental health conditions, and impairment to child development and academic achievement. Previous reports from the FSTF (2018, 2019) highlight San Francisco's residents most vulnerable to food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a severe and rapid growth in food insecurity across San Francisco.



FSTF

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FOOD SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID -19
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2020 • The Food Security Task Force
FOOD SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 Impact on Food Security and Community Response

Many individuals and families are facing food insecurity due to unprecedented unemployment as well as the closure of organizations that previously offered food programs. The widespread impact of COVID-19 has required immediate solutions to minimize hunger and support residents to safely shelter in place. Many food programs pivoted their models to support their clients' food and household needs, and innovative models emerged led by public agencies, community organizations, and newly formed spontaneous feeding groups. Food providers have been lifelines to the community, and these efforts have played a key role in supporting FSTF vulnerable populations to shelter in place and minimize the community transmission of COVID-19.

With the current surge in cases of COVID-19, we must be even more vigilant in sustaining support for vulnerable populations to shelter in place, especially those at highest risk of serious illness from COVID-19. These populations include communities experiencing health disparities and structural racism: African Americans, Latinx, immigrants who are undocumented, people with disabilities, and people who are experiencing homelessness. People living in congregate settings and in multigenerational households including many children are also of concern, as well as essential workers who have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Mayor Breed's budget includes \$45.8 million to support food security as part of the City's response to COVID-19. This historic investment is critical, and the food security crisis in San Francisco will likely require additional public and private investment.

Immediate threats: Economic uncertainty and heightened racial inequities exacerbate existing food insecurity. Below is a summary of some of the most immediate threats to food security.

Economic Distress

- Wealth inequality;
- High rates of unemployment;
- Expiration of enhanced federal unemployment benefits;
- Increasing lack of health insurance for the unemployed;
- High cost of living combined with workers earning above the income threshold for federal nutrition benefits.

Community Trauma

- Violence, trauma, and mental health crisis;
- Increased homelessness;
- Suspension of Muni lines leave gaps in access to foods and jobs.

Inadequate Government Support

- Budget cuts at the federal, state, and local level;
- Lack of comprehensive federal COVID-19 relief package;
- Immigrants are often not eligible for federal benefits;
- Changes to the federal COVID-19 Food Assistance Relief Farmer to Family Food Box program and its early expiration.



Immediate Threats (continued)

Economic uncertainty and heightened racial inequities exacerbate existing food insecurity. Below is a summary of some of the most immediate threats to food security.

Access

(ability to obtain food safely and conveniently)

- Food support interventions for the entire household;
- Culturally and religiously appropriate food;
- Higher quality food;



Food programs underfunded and face mounting challenges as need increases

- Limited, short-term, and unstable funding for food programs;
- Closure of schools and child care increases food insecurity among children and their families;
- Expiration of USDA waivers that have allowed SFUSD and DCYF to serve all children in San Francisco for free;
- Food service providers address holistic community needs in addition to food (mental health, etc.)
- Increased operating costs due to COVID-19 (food, staff, facility, packaging, etc.)
- Anticipated loss of some locations of pop-up pantries;
- Volunteer and staffing shortages and increasing rates of staff and volunteer burnout;
- Limited and underutilized public space for urban agriculture.

Sustain Innovations: In the immediate response to COVID-19, innovations in improved food security helped to mitigate widespread hunger and should be sustained and scaled to meet the ongoing need.

Examples include:

Resources (ability to purchase food)

- Direct cash benefits;
- Gift cards;
- Food vouchers; Market match
- Rapid enrollment for CalFresh/SNAP and WIC through administrative waivers;
- Pandemic EBT.

- Include household needs such as personal protective equipment, baby formula, diapers, adult incontinence supplies;
- Increased access points to pick up free groceries and meals;
- Increased home delivery of meals and groceries;
- Meals and water for unsheltered residents delivered to encampments;
- Food for households isolating and quarantining;
- Meals for medically vulnerable people without kitchens living in SROs;
- Programs that provided a hybrid of groceries and prepared meals to meet food needs over time;
- Localized, high quality, and culturally appropriate food from neighborhood groups, stores, and restaurants.

Consumption

(ability to prepare and store food)

- Reduced frequency of delivery and pickup of food to eliminate unnecessary physical contact;
- Updated equipment and storage needs for pantries and distribution centers.



NOW MORE THAN EVER OUR COMMUNITIES NEED RESOURCES BRIDGE THE GAP!

Recommendations: San Francisco needs a sustained commitment to end systemic racism and address structural barriers to health including food insecurity.

Federal/State

- Advocate for the extension of enhanced unemployment benefits;
- Federal/state waivers for meal programs;
- Advocate for increased funding for SNAP/CalFresh and WIC through administrative waivers;
- Advocate in support of Universal School Meals for all school children regardless of family or community income;
- Expand Medi-Cal coverage for medically supportive food and nutrition services, beyond medically tailored meals.

Local

- Maintain and expand city investments in food through a health equity framework;
- Ensure food delivered to all communities is high quality and appropriate to cultural and religious needs;
- Food programs should provide for the food needs of the entire household including unsheltered populations;
- Ensure continued funding for programs serving families with children at risk due to the loss of waivers;
- Housing providers should coordinate with food providers;
- Target economic stimulus recovery through direct cash support, jobs, and business development, with a focus on food for vulnerable communities and provided by businesses owned by communities most impacted by COVID-19;

- Funders and city contracts should be flexible to allow grantees to reallocate funds to respond to needs;
- Maintain and improve integrated food referral and resource list through 311, 211 and city website;
- Expand localized solutions such as neighborhood to coalitions and increase utilization of outdoor public spaces for pop up pantries, food distribution, and urban agriculture;
- Conduct a consistent and ongoing food security assessment and implementation plan with regular public updates to the Board of Supervisors and Mayor.

