

Addressing Food Insecurity/Enough to Eat in a Time of COVID-19

Access to enough healthy food every day is necessary to keep people healthy. This is especially true in this time of the Coronavirus 19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, North Dakotans experienced a low, but slowly increasing rate of food insecurity with about one in nine North Dakotans reporting not having enough to eat every day. Since the pandemic, more than 48,158 North Dakotans have applied for Unemployment Insurance, so we can only assume that the number of food insecure individual will be increasing. Currently, all North Dakota food helping organizations are seeing increased requests for help and are trying to keep up with the rising demand.

If you or someone you know needs help with food, please check out these ND resources:

- The Creating a Hunger Free North Dakota Coalition has links to resources where you can find additional food and support resources in your community. Go to <http://hungerfreend.org>
- Great Plains Food Bank serves all of North Dakota by distributing millions of pounds of food and grocery products to 241 partner agencies through the state. On their website, you can find a list of food pantries and soup kitchens by county. Or maybe you want to help by donating food or funds to food pantries across the state? Go to <https://www.greatplainsfoodbank.org>
- There are to-go meals for people aged 60 and over older adults and adults with physical disabilities through area aging services programs across the state. Check out this website to find meals <https://carechoice.nd.assistguide.net> , select "Find a Service" then search for "meals". Thank you to all the creative senior centers staff who have stepped up to offer meals via drive-up, grab and go and home delivery.
- School meals are available for pick up even when school is out. School nutrition personnel, ancillary school personnel and even some bus drivers across North Dakota are working extra hard to get meals to children. Check out <https://fns.usda.gov/meals4kids>
- The SNAP program (formerly known as Food Stamps) helps eligible participants buy food using EBT cards. Applications for this income-based program are done online now and completed at the human service zone offices (county offices) across the state. Check out <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/foodstamps.html>
- The Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) Program helps get food and education to pregnant women and young children to age 5. All applications, counseling and assessment is done with technology or telephone. Go to <https://www.health.nd.gov/prevention/wic>

SNAP and WIC benefits are used in places people purchase food, including many of our rural grocery stores. More than ever we appreciate all the grocery store workers who help ensure that we all have access to food. Our stores have asked customers to please be respectful and thoughtful when you shop by having only one family member shop, wear a mask, keep appropriate distance, and wash hands before and after shopping.

As North Dakotans we have a long history of neighbor helping neighbor and here are some ways you can help:

- As you are checking on your neighbors, family and friends, ask them if they have food needs. If you can help, please do.
- And as thoughts turn to spring and planting, if you garden, plan to plant a little extra to share with neighbors who cannot. NDSU Extension has resource at <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/food>