



Q&A Follow Up

“Food Security and Access Across Cape Cod”

VIRTUAL FORUM #1, FEBRUARY 25, 2021

PANELISTS:

Christine Menard, Executive Director, The Family Pantry of Cape Cod; Co-Chair, Cape Cod Hunger Network
Tammy Leone, Executive Director, Cape Kid Meals
Maryanne Ryan, Director of Community Services, Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands

Q: Do you think the House and Senate need to continue funding MEFAP at the current level? The budget submitted by the Governor rolls this back to pre-pandemic levels.

CM: I doubt it; he was clear it was a one-time gig.

TL: Do I think they should--yes. Do I think they will--probably not as they used Federal COVID funding to increase it.

Q: Have our local organizations signed up to support the Feed Kids legislation that Project Bread is backing?

TL: Cape Kid Meals has signed and sent in letters supporting the Feed Kids legislation-- to provide school meals to all (Universal School Meals) to allow every child to be fed while at school.

Q: Does anyone have accurate data on the number of students facing food insecurity by district? It is a constantly changing number, but I am hopeful this data is available. Where is it located?

TL: The most reliable data at this time is on the Department of Education Website. Average number of students facing food security across Cape Cod is approximately 33%.

HIGHEST % AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS GRADES PK-12 IN THE FOLLOWING DISTRICTS

Barnstable, 42%	1976 students	(total student pop 4713)
Provincetown 41%	55 students	(total student pop 133)
Dennis/Yarmouth 48%	1315 students	(total student pop 2739)



Q: Can food banks reach students in special ways or are the traditional distribution models the way they are reached most effectively?

CM: Food Pantries feed the families as a whole. As you know there are several other avenues of getting at the kids, including the school lunch program and the weekend backpack programs. I think it takes all of these and more to try to make sure none fall through the cracks.

Q: In what new ways are districts being helped to address this growing crisis?

TL: I would say right now having the government-funded free meals for all at every school is a huge step that is helping. It helps so much in two ways. The obvious piece is providing meals; but the not so obvious one is, if it is available to everyone, it reduces the stigma surrounding taking the meals. We know older students would rather be hungry than be embarrassed, so if everyone is getting them, it removes that issue. Also, some of the districts have been using school busses to get the meals out to the remote students' neighborhoods/homes which has been incredibly helpful.

Q: Are social workers in districts used by the distribution networks to get the food directly to families unable or unwilling to use the food banks?

CM: We have a number of outreach workers who work with The Family Pantry. They help get the families registered and at times will pick up the food for the families. The Family Pantry will allow anyone to pick up food for a family once they are registered.

MR: At ESCCI we would find a way to have food delivered to elders; often our protective services workers buy a few days supply of food for elders when they are in crisis. If older adults cannot get to a food pantry, we would work with them on finding transportation or a volunteer to help pick up food.

Q: What are the most effective ways to resolve this crisis on the Cape?

CM: I am not sure there is a simple answer to that question. The Cape has a very strong network of pantries and organizations trying to meet the needs. We fortunately do not see the lines that we see in Lawrence, Brocton, and other places across the country. I think that speaks to the strength of the services offered. There is always a need for more, but we are certainly better than most.

TL: I agree there is not a simple answer to the question. I think the best way to work towards resolving this is to build on what we are already doing--intentional partnering with pantries and organizations, identifying ways to remove barriers to access--like qualifications (which Chris Menard covered in our discussion that qualifying for services was already removed) and transportation, finding additional ways to get the food out into the community.

MR: Educate the whole community about resources that can help those in need and educate those who can help by volunteering time and/or donating money. Promote opportunities and listening/learning sessions. (Just like this program did!)

Q: Along the lines of "senior isolation" issues exacerbated by the pandemic, what are you seeing as significant "unmet" needs for your constituents (beyond but potentially related to food insecurity)? (Think this was answered)

MR: Technology gaps are huge for the lower income individuals and some older adults. Affordable internet, devices and training on how to use devices are key to resolving many issues. If you are an older adult and need a food pantry, how can you look that info up without the internet? You have to ask or call someone for help. (You may be hesitant to let another know you are in need). Transportation is also a huge need throughout the Cape.

Q: Do any of you partner with farms or local growers?

CM: The Family Pantry partners with several farms and organizations across the Cape. Capabilities, Chatham Bars Inn Farm, Tim the Farmer, and several others. We also partner with several of the Town Gardens for excess produce.



MR: Yes, we partner with Cape Abilities Farm for produce and local farmer's markets for a food/coupon program.

Q: Do you think people would want to come inside if it was private?

CM: I am not sure a pantry could be private enough. They have to shop for the food, and there is no way you could do it just one client at a time and make it efficient. I think the best alternative is to give them the choice to come in our wait outside.

Q: Do you own your spaces/buildings?

CM: The Family Pantry does.

TL: Cape Kid Meals does not have their own space.

MR: We were gifted our Main office at 68 Route 134 in South Dennis. We have 72 employees working there. Our building is 50 years old, and we are working to replace/fix things e.g. our windows, carpeting; this year we scrambled to put on a new roof as it started leaking. We pay rent next door at 50 Route 134 in South Dennis. We have 51 employees working there. (\$60,000/year in rent). Our Nantucket & Martha's Vineyard offices are provided to us rent free/very low cost.

Q: Wondering if any of your panel members are working with the Healthcare System in the realm of "Patient Health Care Population management". In specific, are any of those groups who presented this morning receiving prescriptions from healthcare providers for food?

CM: The Family Pantry had a pilot program with Outer Cape Health where we partnered with the clinician. The difficulty we had is that most patients seen do not have a relationship with the provider other than a once a year physical or sick visit. Families, especially moms, were very hesitant to tell a person of authority via a verbal and written survey that they were struggling to put food on the table. They were afraid their children would be removed etc.

Q: Is there any centralized platform where information about all these programs is available?

CCF: Barnstable County Cooperative Extension and Human Services maintain a list of food pantries and food programs, hours, eligibility, etc. and are updating it weekly:

<https://www.bchumanservices.net/2021/02/all-food-resources-now-thru-the-holidays-3-3-2-2-2-2/>

Q: Is there a centralized/online way for volunteers who are available to help to get matched with an organization?

CCF: Cape for Good, which is a partnership with Cape and Islands United Way and Massachusetts Service Alliance: www.capeandislandsforgood.org. Organizations can post their volunteer opportunities, and community members can search for opportunities.

MR: Also: <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>; <https://www.mass-service.org/> and matching@americaletsdolunch.org

Q: What resources are available in Orleans?

LOCAL, which is a church-based soup kitchen; Lower Cape Outreach Council; St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Joan of Arc Church

