

Memorandum



To: Town of Carrboro Mayor and Town Council
From: Rebecca Buzzard, Housing and Community Services Director
Date: March 20, 2020
Re: Food Distribution during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Several questions, comments, and requests for additional information regarding food distribution for those with the greatest need have been made by Council Members since the spread of COVID-19 to North Carolina. This memo provides detailed information regarding the resources available to the Carrboro community.

Orange County is the lead jurisdiction for emergency events. According to the incident organization chart, the Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS) is in charge of coordinating feeding services in the County through their Human Services Workgroup. Carrboro staff are in contact with lead County staff. The message from the County is that they provide food services during regular operations. They know how to do this efficiently and effectively, and during times of emergency they work diligently to ramp up service delivery.

They are accepting non-perishable food donations in anticipation of distribution for future needs. DSS is partnering with the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina to host a food distribution in the parking lot of Social Services in Hillsborough on Friday, March 27th. Staff has inquired as to whether future sites could include Carrboro.

The County has established a call center for residents with questions about COVID-19 and its impact on services in Orange County. The number is 919-245-6111 and it is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Please direct resident concerns to this hotline. Their website is also serving as the regional information clearinghouse: <https://www.orangecountync.gov/2332/Coronavirus-COVID-19>

Additional information on local community resources follows. It is organized by provider because many of the providers serve more than one community group (such as children, refugees, the homeless, seniors, and low income families). The following organizations work together to connect individuals and families to community resources.

1. Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools

A community coalition consisting of local Churches, non-profits and the CHCCS Child Nutrition team are distributing meals to children throughout the school district. They have identified over 20 sites where meals are available. These sites and food pick-up times are being widely circulated.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1shWnK9t1Gc0r0-N7LXVeKd1nWyoagoSph4-OoL5nM/edit>

2. TABLE

They are delivering a bag filled with healthy non-perishables and fresh food to the homes of as many of their 727 kids as possible once per week. Food is left by the door to prevent any potential spread of the virus. Depending on their food supply, they try to include additional food to sustain the kids through the closure. They need donations of food, items, and money. They have also developed a wait list of children whose families need emergency assistance due to COVID-19. For more information on their efforts please see: <https://tablenc.org/about/updates/tables-plans-amidst-covid-19/>

3. Farmer Foodshare

Farmer Foodshare has modified their programming by putting their farmers market-based Donation Stations (in Carrboro and elsewhere) on hiatus, as they require volunteers to be in close proximity with others. However, their Wholesale Market remains open (having made staffing/process adjustments to minimize the spread of germs) and is available to source produce from farms statewide and deliver to customers.

Farmer Foodshare has seen orders canceled by institutions that are closed or have scaled back their operations. These weekly sales provide much-needed income for several of the farmers they work with, and as yet, they have not uncovered opportunities to replace it.

They are partnering with all 3 school districts in Durham and Orange County to ensure that fresh food is included in the meals those students receive. They've been able to serve CHCCS and OCS for the first time as a result of the pandemic, with plans to make additional deliveries over the coming weeks:

- Next week, Farmer Foodshare will deliver large shipments of apples to both CHCCS and OCS to be included in the meals that students are receiving.
- They are also supplying produce for 500 family boxes to support CHCCS families. These will include a variety of fresh foods -- apples, yogurt, eggs, sweet potatoes, collards, milk -- in addition to foods supplied by other organizations. Each box is designed to last a family 2 weeks.

One area where the Town of Carrboro can help is to point organizations in need of fresh food to Farmer Foodshare. They help ensure that NC farmers have a way of selling what they grow, and as more outlets close in order to limit the threat of exposure, the more challenging it will be for these farms to find outlets for their produce. The supply is there, and Farmer Foodshare welcomes the opportunity to connect organizations / institutions with the food they need. The best number to reach the Wholesale Market team is 919.695.3102. For more information please see: <http://www.farmerfoodshare.org/farmer-foodshare/2020/3/12/coronavirus-response>

4. Chapel Hill-Carrboro Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels has moved to delivering shelf-stable food about once a week to help make deliveries as safe as possible. They need to “surge” volunteer capacity on delivery days and as a result, they need additional volunteers. Meals on Wheels has had a wait list of seniors since January and need donations of shelf-stable food. For more information please see:

<https://www.chcmow.org/coronavirus-response>

5. Orange County Senior Centers

Registered Lunch Program participants are encouraged to pick-up a carryout lunch Monday-Friday between the hours of 12 – 12:30 pm. For more information please see:

<http://orangecountync.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10130/Press-Release-Orange-County-Department-on-Aging-suspends-activities?bidId=>

6. RENA Community Center

RENA’s Food Bank provides meals to 70 families twice a month on Fridays. The food is donated by PORCH. <http://www.renacomcommunitycenter.com/program-descriptions.html>

7. Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC)

IFC is maintaining service levels, but has modified operations and service delivery:

- The Community Kitchen is still doing lunch every day and dinner on weekdays. They are pre-packaging meals and distributing them to go in the dining room. People are generally taking them off premises to their homes or other places; a few people are eating them outside the building and practicing social distancing.
<http://www.ifcweb.org/services/community-kitchen>
- The Food Pantry and Emergency Financial Assistance Program is operating by appointment only. They are pre-packing grocery bags and meeting members in the parking lot so they don't come into the office. Financial assistance appointments are being done solely by phone.
<http://www.ifcweb.org/services/food-pantry>;
<http://www.ifcweb.org/services/crisis-intervention-emergency-services>
- The Shelters are encouraging residents to limit their coming and going, and they've put in place precautions and practices around cleaning, sanitizing, handwashing, distancing, etc. They are developing plans to isolate and quarantine residents as needed.

At this point, IFC generally has enough food and supplies needed to operate. Although, they are concerned that their food supply will get depleted over time because they rely on donations that come through congregations and food drives. Because congregations are not meeting and events have been cancelled, their source of food is reliant on individuals dropping off groceries or sending them to the organization. Meals that are usually provided by meal groups through churches and civic groups have largely dropped off as well, which means the shelters have less food coming in than usual.

Volunteers largely run the Food Pantry and prep and serve food at the Community Kitchen and Shelters. However, the majority of the volunteers are high risk and therefore have had to stop coming for the time being. This leaves a skeletal staff to maintain the usual level of services.

8. PORCH

PORCH has maintained their support for 463 Chapel Hill-Carrboro families participating in their fresh food program and have provided additional resources to fill in gaps on an as needed basis. PORCH has also been able to meet requests from Orange County Department of Social Services, Club Nova, and The Jackson Center.

<https://chapelhill.porchcommunities.org/our-programs/#families>

9. Club Nova

Club Nova continues to reach out to all members they can. Every day they are doing check-ins on welfare, supplies for medicine, food, and other provisions. Club Nova is delivering meals to members who request meals. Their culinary unit prepares one nutritious meal each day and they have been able to deliver meals seven days a week. They are also delivering nonperishables. They are continuing to provide supports needed by their members on a daily basis. Club Nova, stated in an email that they do not have a directive from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding flexibility in policies related to Medicaid and state funding. They have impressed upon them the need for flexibility in policy that would help Clubhouses in North Carolina. Their Medicaid and state reimbursement is based on the hours that members attend Club Nova and supports they provide in the community. However, the amount they will be able to bill and receive reimbursement for has been dropping over the past two weeks. Club Nova has stated they are worried about running out of funds.

10. Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina

The Durham branch of the regional Food Bank serves Orange County. They distribute food to local churches and non-profits. More information on locations and times can be found here:

<https://foodbankcenc.org/find-help/food-finder/>

11. Transplanting Traditions

The Share a Share program uses donations from community members to purchase traditional Burmese vegetables and herbs such as bitter melon and lemongrass grown by Transplanting Traditions farmers. This traditional produce is then donated to PORCH who distributes it to refugee families from Burma with limited food access. Transplanting Traditions farmers have reported that access to traditional vegetables is limited and very important to their health, and they remember the difficulty of resettling in NC and beginning to build a home here.

<https://www.transplantingtraditions.org/What-We-Do>

12. State/Federal Aid

Governor Cooper has made a request to the Federal government for more flexibility for low-income residents who receive SNAP or WIC benefits. SNAP is North Carolina Food and Nutrition Services and WIC is Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Staff will keep the Council updated on this assistance.