Date: 3/16/20  
Subject: COVID-19 Update  

Dear Network Partners,

As you know, the Vermont Foodbank is in the throes of response to COVID-19 and its implications for those we serve—those who can’t afford to protect themselves and those most affected by the school closures, business slow/shut down and isolation that may come in its wake. Food will continue to be a critical need in the coming weeks and months, and your food bank stands ready to serve. The Foodbank’s COVID-19 task force is meeting daily to respond to a changing situation.

As a Foodbank partner, we want you to know the initial ways we are stepping up:

**We are working in partnership with our network and with Vermont emergency officials.** We are secondary emergency responders and as such are actively planning alongside state and local officials, our food shelf, meal site, school, hospital and housing site partners, and fellow non-profits. We are preparing for increased and shifting community needs.

**We are working to keep our network of food shelves and meal sites stocked with essentials.** We have been communicating frequently with our partners, providing safety guidelines and recommendations. Recommendations include pre-bagging/boxing food and meals for guests. To support this safety measure, we have already purchased a truckload of boxes, and are now sourcing sanitation supplies, to-go containers and plastic bags, all of which we'll provide to our partners at no cost. We will let you know as soon as these become available.

**We are planning for increased stress on children, families, and older adults.** In addition to maintaining our usual food distribution across the state, we are purchasing the equivalent of an extra two months’ worth of nutrient-dense, pantry staples for the 12,000 people we serve monthly at schools, hospitals and low-income senior housing. We are still working out distribution details—securing food is our first step. We will also double up on our monthly distribution of free, nutritious foods to low-income older adults through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Next month, 2,200 seniors will receive two boxes of food to cover both April and May.

One in four Vermonters turns to the Vermont Foodbank and our network for help at some point every year. Our food insecure neighbors are now under increasing stress and employers, parents and caregivers—all of us—may be challenged in new ways we cannot anticipate. In the face of uncertainty our work remains the same, to bolster communities and serve any one in need of food with caring and dignity.

**We have a vision where everyone in Vermont has access to enough food every day.** This is a bold vision during the best of times, and we recognize that “every day” feels different right now.
now. Please know that we are only in a position to take immediate steps today because of our incredible community partnerships.

Please stay tuned for more...And please keep in touch with us about what changes you are making, what needs you are seeing in your communities. Send an email to jdauscher@vtfoodbank.org.

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