Dear Vermont Foodbank Partners,

As you were made aware via email on Monday, the Foodbank has assembled and convened a cross-departmental COVID-19 Task Force. In our meeting today, we discussed the need to provide some more guidance and recommendations to the Foodbank’s network partner food shelves and meal sites. We are focusing on how we can meet the needs of people facing hunger in light of COVID-19. We are closely monitoring the situation, putting contingency plans in place, and planning for increased and shifting community needs. We have created a special page on our website to house COVID-19 resources for network partners. Please continue to check back regularly.

Please note: Evolving guidance provided by the CDC and Vermont Department of Health will take precedent over the information provided here. We recommend monitoring these authoritative sources regularly.

General guidance/recommendations:

1. Consider putting preventative measures in place similar to those that Vermont Foodbank is putting in place (see Monday’s email). In addition, attached you will find a sample daily cleaning program that has been put in place by one of our sister food banks in Washington state.

2. If possible, install additional hand sanitizing stations at all entrances and throughout your facility. Make tissues boxes readily available. The best method for preventing contamination is hand-washing with soap for 20 seconds rinsing with hot water. Hand sanitizer stations should NOT be used in lieu of hand-washing. If you do not have access to soap and water, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain 60%-95% alcohol can be used as an alternative, but soap and water is the first choice. It is especially important to clean hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. If you cough or sneeze, please cover your nose and mouth with a tissue and throw tissues away in trash baskets.

3. Consider posting the flyers provided by Vermont Department of Health (see Monday’s email) and also attached you will find a flyer created by Boston Food Bank that you may consider posting to remind staff and visitors of personal hygiene practices.

4. Consider asking volunteers to confirm that they have neither traveled to impacted regions in the last 14 days nor are experiencing symptoms of illness. (If they have traveled to impacted areas, it is recommended that, out of an abundance of caution and food safety concerns, they not volunteer that day. They could volunteer after they are symptom free for 14 days since their return date.)

5. Consider suspending “sign-in” protocols so that multiple individuals are not sharing the same pen and paper. Assign a staff person or volunteer to writing down any necessary information that is needed from guests.
6. Put contingency plans or a continuity of operations plan (COOP) in place. See attached COOP template created for food banks. This could help you to act quickly in a rapidly changing environment.

For food shelves specifically:

1. Consider pre-bagging groceries, including produce and bread, for food shelf visitors.
2. For social distancing, consider asking households to only have 1 representative from each household line up/wait for food to decrease the number of people and interactions in line/waiting room. Other family members could wait in cars or outside in the parking lots away from others.
3. Consider alternative distribution locations. Is it feasible and dignified to provide food outside of your building?
4. Is it possible for you to delivery groceries if the need arises?

For meal sites specifically:

1. Please see attached memo from Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living regarding a screening tool to potentially use at congregate meal sites for older adults.
2. Here is an example of what one meal site in New Jersey is doing to adjust their meal service: https://toniskitchen.org/update-on-tonis-kitchen-changes-in-practices-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19/
3. Is it possible to provide to-go meals if the need arises?

For all of our Network Partners:
Please keep the Foodbank apprised of the situation in your communities and within your organizations. The Foodbank is a part of a statewide disaster preparedness and response team; it will be important for us to be informed in order to call on this team as needed. Please reach out to jdauscher@vtfoodbank.org with any updates.

A few more important reminders:
- Continue to treat everyone who visits with respect and dignity. Coronavirus does not target specific populations, socioeconomic status, ethnicities or racial backgrounds.
- Please continue to follow Vermont Department of Health and CDC guidance. Here is the most recent update from Department of Health: https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus
- Know the facts, don’t panic, don’t spread rumors.
- Check the Foodbank’s website regularly for updates and also check the resources for network partners page.

We would welcome your suggestions and guidance as you/your organizations may have information or ideas that would be of use to us. Please contact jdauscher@vtfoodbank.org.