



FOOD FOR LANE COUNTY COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATUS REPORT – APRIL 2020



FOOD for Lane County (FFLC) is an essential provider of emergency food assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This status report describes how we and our partners are providing food to those in need in this challenging and fast-changing environment. COVID-19 has affected our food supply channels, disrupted our food distribution network and inspired special emergency food distribution efforts.

HOW IS FOOD FOR LANE COUNTY'S FOOD SUPPLY?

- Both Fresh Alliance (picking up donated food from local grocery stores) and FREX (Food Rescue Express, picking up prepared food from cafeterias, primarily at the University of Oregon and PeaceHealth hospitals) have been suspended. During the current COVID-19 challenge, the process of collecting, sorting, processing and distributing these frequently handled food items has an unacceptable level of risk.
- Numerous local food collection drives have been canceled, including the University of Oregon football program spring scrimmage, which normally brings in close to 50,000 pounds of food. The Letter Carriers food drive scheduled for May 9, which typically generates close to 100,000 pounds of food, has also been postponed.
- We still have a good supply of food in our warehouse, and the Oregon Food Bank has more food to send our way. However, the loss of local grocery, cafeteria and food drive donations represents a loss of highly valued variety. We hope to be able to address this loss of variety with emergency funding for emergency food purchases.

HOW IS FOOD FOR LANE COUNTY DISTRIBUTING FOOD TO THE COMMUNITY?

- We are focusing our efforts on maintaining the flow of food to pantries, meal sites and shelters because these programs reach the largest number of people in the safest manner. In order to minimize contact among pantry staff, volunteers and clients, food pantries have temporarily switched to pre-packed food boxes (instead of the preferred shopping style). For the same reason, meal sites are providing carry-out meals only, and most shelters are feeding unhoused clients on site and permitting them to stay in place 24/7.

- We have temporarily suspended food distribution at all but one Produce Plus site and all Extra Helping sites. At these sites, produce and bread are set out on tables in offices, clinics and affordable housing complexes. Anyone patronizing those particular locations help themselves. The one Produce Plus site still open (Bethel) reaches a large number of people and has a distribution system that controls access and maintains social distancing.
- FFLC operates the Meals on Wheels program in Eugene, with volunteers delivering meals to homebound individuals who are at particularly high risk during the pandemic. We have implemented a “no touch” delivery system that involves setting the meal by the door and watching from a distance while the client or someone in the household retrieves the meal. When possible, we have also started delivering batches of frozen meals once a week to many clients to reduce the frequency of contact.

EMERGENCY INITIATIVES

- To meet the increased demand for food assistance at this time, FFLC has launched mobile “pop-up” food pantries in four communities. Working with the NAACP in Eugene, Willamalane Parks and Recreation in Springfield, the high school in Oakridge and the community center in Cottage Grove, we are distributing emergency food boxes out of the back of a truck one night per week in each community, serving 80–100 households per night.
- Lane County has contracted with FFLC to help provide food at three temporary COVID-19 response shelters for persons who are unhoused (two in Eugene at the fairgrounds and one in Springfield at the Memorial building). Persons using the shelters will be allowed to stay on site 24/7 and receive three meals per day. FFLC is providing food for these meals. We are also managing payments to local food vendors who are preparing the meals, providing much-needed business for local food vendors affected by COVID-19.
- FFLC is working with Oregon Food Bank and regional food banks throughout Oregon to coordinate our statewide emergency response, support each other and communicate food assistance needs to legislators and local authorities.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Unfortunately, FFLC is not able to welcome as many volunteers at this time for multiple reasons. Many people are unable to volunteer either because of their own risk factors or because of temporary changes to the way we are operating. Also, in this moment we’re unable to accept most household food donations because of the potential risk of exposure.

The best way to help right now is by making a financial donation to FFLC. Our expenses have increased in response to this emergency, and our regular fundraising events and activities have been disrupted. To make a safe and secure donation online, visit us at www.foodforlanecounty.org/covid19fund, call FFLC Development Director Sally Dougherty at (541) 343-2822 extension 143 or mail a check to FOOD for Lane County, 770 Bailey Hill Road, Eugene, OR 97402.