



RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK

IMPACT REPORT

COVID-19 RESPONSE CONTINUES

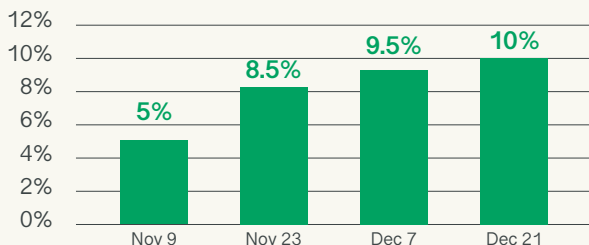


A guest at the newly reopened John Hope Settlement House Food Pantry in Providence leaves with a supply of healthy, nutritious food.

Survey Shows Food Insufficiency Rose Throughout 2020

The U.S. Census Bureau conducted a weekly Household Pulse Survey last year, ending in December, asking households whether they had enough to eat in the last seven days. The results revealed that food insufficiency rose steadily through the end of 2020.

Percent of Households Reporting Food Insufficiency



COVID-19 Continues to Devastate Rhode Island

One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Islanders struggle to cope with a myriad of challenges. The economy has stalled and many of those who lost their jobs are now permanently unemployed. Federal assistance programs provide some relief but much more will be needed to achieve long-term recovery.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank has ramped up food purchasing and distribution to meet the increased demand in the community. With no immediate end in sight, the Food Bank is preparing for the future by stocking the warehouse with healthy, nutritious food for our neighbors in need.

Pandemic Causes Chaos for Low-Income Workers

Like many working Rhode Islanders, when Tonya doesn't work, she doesn't get paid. As she explains, "I had to be out of work for a week because I thought I had COVID. I fell behind on my rent."

To get some help for her and her daughter, she reached out to the Jonnycake Center for Hope in Peace Dale, a member agency of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, where she received support from the food pantry.

"The food is always good healthy things like tuna or soup and even though it might not be everything you need, you know you can make a dinner from it."

We all need support sometimes

After she went back to work, Tonya continued to rely on the Jonnycake Center to feed her family. The dry cleaner where she works has suffered like many local businesses and struggles to keep Tonya and other staff members employed.

"With the help from Jonnycake, I'm back on track. **COVID has made things really hard**, job hours have been out of whack, and cut back. Everything is chaos and everybody has to deal with things as they come up."

In addition to food assistance, the Jonnycake Center has helped Tonya find support to pay her rent and other resources for her family. She wants everyone to know that it's important for people to reach out.

"We all need support sometimes. Some people are working hard and just can't cut it. It's for hardworking people who can't get by, for anyone struggling."



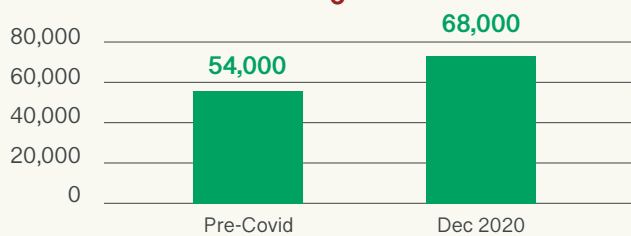
The Food Bank distributed 22% more food in the 2nd half of the year due to the increased need caused by the COVID pandemic.

Number of People Served Remains at Record High

During the past year, the number of people served at member agencies and emergency food distribution sites remains higher than in recent years. Many of the guests visiting food pantries and meal sites lost their jobs due to the public health crisis and were seeking assistance for the first time. They were frightened and unsure what was ahead for them.

Before the COVID pandemic hit, the Food Bank was serving 54,000 people per month. At the end of 2020, the number seeking food assistance was over 68,000 people per month.

Number of People Served by Food Bank Member Agencies



Member agencies like the North Kingstown Food Pantry rely on volunteers to meet the increased demand.

Federal Assistance Makes a Difference—More is Needed

Federal assistance through the CARES Act and other relief programs provided essential supports to many households, which helped them to weather the crisis. Resources include an additional \$600 per week in unemployment insurance, economic stimulus payments and an increase in SNAP benefits. As these benefits expired throughout the fall, we saw the need increase. In the Food Bank's Status Report on Hunger released in November, we recommended that Congress continue to support these initiatives. The Coronavirus relief package passed in December included a renewal of many of these benefits which is a huge help for low-income workers and those who remain unemployed.



A volunteer at the Better Lives Rhode Island pantry in Providence works on preparing food for distribution to guests.



Staff at New Beginnings meal site in Woonsocket, prepare lunch in takeout containers for contactless delivery to hungry guests.

Investing in the Strength of Our Agency Network

In 2020, the Food Bank distributed **13.8 million pounds of food through a network of 159 member agencies**, located from Westerly to Woonsocket and everywhere in between. Right on the frontlines, these pantries and meal sites are where Rhode Islanders experiencing food insecurity come to receive food assistance. Without this network, food would not get to families in need.

Throughout the pandemic, the Food Bank has provided resources beyond food to ensure that emergency providers are able to maintain their operations, safely and effectively.

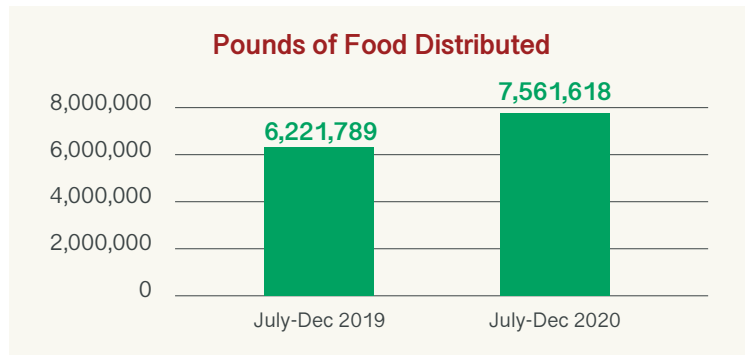
Agencies expressed a need for financial support to cover operating

expenses like additional staffing, utilities, and equipment purchases like heaters and tents to serve guests safely during the winter months. At many sites, the contactless food distribution is entirely outdoors.

Thanks to generous support from our donors, **the Food Bank has provided agencies with nearly \$500,000 in direct assistance grants** in the past six months to help with expenses for everything from facility upgrades to staffing. \$352,000 supported general operating costs and the remainder furnished equipment like shelving, cold storage or supplies to continue programming in the cold weather.

Food Distribution Reaches Record Level

In the second half of 2020, the Food Bank distributed 22% more food than the same time last year, due to the increased demand caused by COVID-19. At the same time, donations from the food industry are down by 17% due to shortages and supply chain challenges.



As a result of these scarcities, the Food Bank nearly tripled its food purchasing. By buying in bulk, we can acquire food at lower prices than consumers and we can select the exact items that are most beneficial to the people we serve. Although food prices continue to rise, we are able to meet the increased demand thanks to the support of our generous donors.

Ninety-two percent of the food distributed by the Food Bank was core healthy food like brown rice, cereal, canned fruits and vegetables, pasta and sauce, peanut butter and tuna. Fresh produce from national distributors, the USDA, local farm businesses and community farms made up 2.4 million pounds of the Food Bank's annual distribution.

Pre-Packed Food Boxes for Safety & Efficiency

To address safety and meet the increased demand, the Food Bank has adopted new methods of distributing food, including pre-packing boxes that can be handed to guests as they walk or drive up to a food pantry or emergency distribution site.



Farmers to Families Boxes

The Food Bank participated in the USDA Farmers to Families program, receiving and distributing boxes of fresh food to neighbors in need. The assortment includes primarily produce, dairy and meat, as well as other items that are not always available at some pantries. Nearly 40,000 boxes were provided through specially scheduled distribution events.

Meals4Kids Boxes

Meals4Kids boxes contain 5 shelf-stable breakfasts, lunches and snacks for kids. In addition to nutritious food, they contain information on resources like local food pantries and SNAP benefits. Last year, the Food Bank distributed nearly 30,000 of these boxes, many of which were funded by corporate partners.

Senior Boxes

In 2020, the Food Bank distributed nearly 20,000 boxes of nutritious food to senior adults who are enrolled in the federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program. Boxes are distributed monthly at food pantries, senior centers, and senior housing sites. Currently, 1,660 low-income seniors are enrolled in the program.



Tasha waits outside the West Warwick Assistance Agency. Without help from the pantry, she doesn't know where she would get food.

Food Pantry Provides Lifeline During Crisis

"I cannot get employment because I had a stroke a couple of years ago. My grandmother just lost her insurance and we're about to get evicted. I can't get food stamps. If it weren't for this pantry, I wouldn't be able to eat every day."

For the past year, Tasha has been relying on the food pantry at the West Warwick Assistance Agency as a lifeline. She's trying to get assistance from the state, like SNAP benefits or SSI, but it's not easy to navigate the complicated social service system.

The West Warwick Assistance Agency serves approximately

800 individuals every month. A member agency of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, the food pantry provides everything from fresh produce to bread for West Warwick residents in need.

Like many who have been impacted by the pandemic, food insecurity is just one of the many struggles Tasha and her family face.

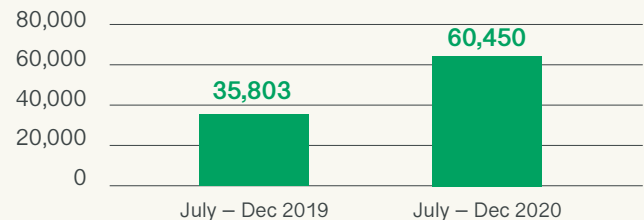
"We're behind on rent and I'm unable to work, so I'm just stuck. With my grandmother on hospice, we can't travel to get what we need because of COVID restrictions. This pantry is all we have."

Huge Increase in Calls for Help

The United Way of Rhode Island's 2-1-1 hotline connects Rhode Islanders to vital social service resources like food assistance. Anyone can call the number and ask for help and trained representatives will provide them with referrals.

During the last six months of 2020, hotline calls for food assistance increased 70% over the same time period in 2019. More than 60,000 Rhode Islanders picked up the phone to ask for help with food.

Calls for Food Assistance



Rhode Islanders Overwhelm Food Bank with Caring and Generosity

Thanks to you, our generous individual, corporate and foundation donors, the Food Bank has made sure that food assistance reaches those most in need. This increase in services would not have been possible without your tremendous support.

"As we defend Rhode Islanders from COVID-19, we must also protect them from hunger. This requires the continued effort of government, nonprofits, and philanthropy that we've witnessed over the past year. If we're in this for the long-haul, we've got to be in it together."

Andrew Schiff, CEO of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank

