

Partnering with Families to Build Economic Security During Emergencies



Partnering with Families to Access Food Assistance

Families may experience food shortages during an emergency or natural disaster. Head Start and Early Head Start **family services staff and home visitors** can partner with families to:

- Access food assistance
- Track progress and celebrate successes

Partner with Families to Access Food Assistance

You can provide families with information about different types of food assistance. You can help them determine their eligibility and navigate the application process.

- **WIC and SNAP:** Programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help families meet their food needs.
 - The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 adds \$500 million to the WIC program to cover increases in program participation.
 - The federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is also approving states to issue emergency supplements to SNAP households that normally receive less than the maximum benefit, to address temporary food needs.
 - Use the WIC State Waivers and the SNAP State Waivers online search tools on the FNS website to learn about specific waivers that your state is using to address temporary family food needs.

- **Food banks:** You can refer families to food banks and meal distribution programs in your community. Use Find Your Local Food Bank on the Feeding America website to locate programs and food bank locations.
- **National Hunger Hotline:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Hunger Hotline is a helpful resource for people seeking information about meal sites, food banks, and other local social services. Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479) or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273) for Spanish.
- **Food shopping tools:** You can share with families tools from the USDA on budgeting for healthy meals, meal planning, and reading food labels. You can find the tools on ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- **Food assistance for families with school-aged children:** To meet the needs of school-aged children, the USDA is coordinating several efforts that may apply to older siblings of children in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
 - Participating rural school districts are enrolling families in the Meals-to-You program. Meals-to-You boxes contain 20 nutritious meals—10 breakfasts and 10 lunches—to cover the meals children would normally receive at school over two weeks. Visit the Meals-to-You website to learn more.
 - Use the Meals for Kids Site Finder tool on the FNS website to help families access free meals for their school-aged children. This website provides information on nearby school meal distribution sites, as well as hours of operation and contact information. The service is available in English and Spanish.
 - The Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program gives some households an EBT card with the value of the free school breakfast and lunch reimbursement rates for the days that schools are closed. Schools must close for at least five consecutive days for families to receive a P-EBT card. Eligible households include those whose children are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals and who attend schools that offer free school meals. The P-EBT program is currently available in 19 states. You can learn more on the FNS website.

Track Progress and Celebrate Successes

Follow up with families to ensure they are finding the food assistance they may need. Celebrate their successes!



Staff Tip

You may also benefit from the information in this tip sheet. Use the resources described here to address any needs you may have related to food security.

Check out the other tip sheets in the *Partnering with Families to Build Economic Security During Emergencies* series for staff. Review and share the Family Tip Sheets in this series with families. These tip sheets include valuable information families can use to improve their family economic security during emergencies.

Related Resources

- **Learn More.** All of the resources mentioned in this tip sheet are available on the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website. To learn more about how to support parents' and families' goals for economic mobility, explore all of the resources in the Building Foundations for Economic Mobility series available on the ECLKC.
- **Join the Economic Mobility Learning Community.** Engage with your colleagues around the country in the online Economic Mobility learning community hosted on the MyPeers platform. You can network, share, and learn from each other about partnering with families to achieve their financial security.
- **Subscribe.** The Building Foundations for Economic Mobility (BFEM) E-newsletter is produced quarterly by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE). It is dedicated to staff working with families.

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0014 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and Office of Child Care, by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

For more information about this resource, please contact us:
PFCE@ecetta.info | 1-866-763-6481



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement