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HSAN: Exploring Food Insecurity Among Seniors

December 8, 2020

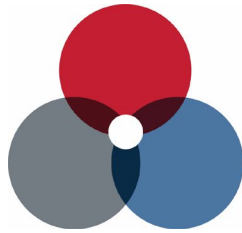
John Corlett: I am so happy to welcome you this morning to this human service advocacy network meeting on program and seeing your hunger. We are really, really, really grateful to be joined by such a panel expert panel of presenters. You know all folks that I think we know and admire for the work they do. That includes, you know Tiffany Scruggs, my good friend Tiffany Scruggs from the Cleveland Food Bank, Director Doug Beech from Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, Director Tracey Mason from the Cuyahoga County Department of Senior Adult Services. And Rachel Cahill who knows more about SNAP than any person I know.

So, we're just grateful to have all of you here with us today. I'm turning over to Kate, but before I do that, I also thank Will Tarter my staff for help you organize this event. You know Sheila Lettsome who's always extraordinary and everything that she does. And helping us stay organized. You know Eboney Thornton is on from our communications staff and she is sort of shepherding us all through this. And finally, I'll introduce my colleague Kate Warren from our research department and she is going to moderate and guide us through this session today. OK. I'll turn it over.

Kate Warren: Thanks John. And thanks to everyone out there who's joining us. It's so different to not be in person together. But also, exciting because I think maybe we've expanded our HSAN footprint and so maybe we have folks from around the state joining us this morning. Thanks for spending time with us. So we have a really important panel for you this morning. Senior food and security according to a feeding America report that was released in May senior food and security rates have yet to reach prerecession levels. And that report looks at 2018 so that's data from before the cover 19 pandemic and it found that seven point 9 percent of older adults in Ohio were food insecure and in the Cleveland Metro area that rate is even higher.

Nine-point-five percent of older adults were food insecure. We know that older adults are at higher risk during this COVID-19 pandemic. So things that may already pose barriers for older adults such as going to the grocery store or getting on a city bus are increasingly risky during the pandemic and layered on top of that is the issue of social isolation that many older adults are facing as congregate meal programs have shifted to home delivered meal programs and most senior centers have closed or limited their service offerings. So, in many ways food insecurity among older adults is a silent epidemic of its own.

We hear stories of seniors splitting home delivered meals and to stretch them or trying to make the most of the minimum monthly SNAP allowance of sixteen dollars per month. So, it's a really



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grim issue. And we have four experts here to talk about it with us today. And I want to introduce you to them, even though many you may know them. Tracey Mason was reappointed by County Executive beautician 2019 as the administrator for the division of senior and adult services a post she previously held for four years from 2011 to 2015 She oversees nearly one eighty employees and twenty-five-million-dollar operating budget providing supportive services to older adults and adults disabilities.

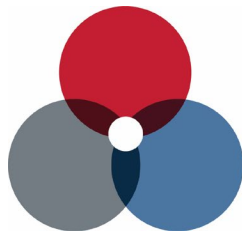
Prior to returning to DSAS, Tracey spent time working for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank University Settlement and many other distinguished organizations. Doug Beach has been the chief executive officer of the Western Reserve Area Agency on aging since 2014. Western Reserve is Ohio's largest Area Agency of service for five Greater Cleveland counties and prior to Western Reserve, Dr. Beach was CEO of Lucia County's Council on Aging a Premier care provider in Florida. Tiffany Scruggs brings more than 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector connecting families to community resources she currently serves as the director of benefits outreach and client services at the Greater Cleveland food bank where she oversees both outreach and help center teams to lead efforts to connect individuals to apply for SNAP public benefits and other valuable resources.

And Rachel Cahill is a nationally recognized expert in public benefits eligibility and enrollment policy specializing in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Rachel currently serves as a consultant for the Center for Community Solutions leading the benefits access partnership in Cuyahoga County. During the COVID-19 pandemic Rachel has provided statewide leadership on opportunities to expand access to snap including advocating for a streamlined and inclusive pandemic EBT program. So, we have a great lineup of panelists really some experts in this area and we're gonna jump right in with some questions. So first, I want to ask just as we've seen COVID-19 exacerbate other issues in the community.

I expect that it's had a noticeable impact on senior food and security. So, can you talk about what you're seeing from your vantage point. Tracey. I would love to start with you

Tracey: Thanks Kate. I just want to welcome everybody for taking the time out their morning to join us. But it's important and much needed conversation I think is no mystery that food insecurity for older adults was an unmet need prior to the pandemic. And now that we are knee deep to cultivate which many of us thought we'll be past this this point of time at this point.

But when you think about food insecurity social isolation on top of the digital divide. Computer literacy and mental health. I think all of you would agree that older adults have been hit the hardest and according to a...social isolation is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. So, can you only imagine what this pandemic has done to older adults. And we have been focused on not only with food and security. But I want a little bit of time to talk about social connection



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how we partner with senior centers and other community organizations at sea and adult services as many of you know we provide a host of direct services to older adults in the community.

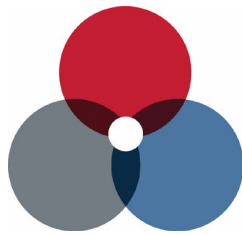
And we also work with a host of senior centers throughout Cuyahoga County. And so, one of our you know responsibilities that we have taken on is to survey our arms constituents, the people that we serve and so while we have done that you know there is a comment that was provided to us that has set with me for the past month. And I think about it every day. And I want to share that with you This person say that this was one of the worst times of my life. With the exception of my husband and my two children's death, my apartment has become a jail with nice furniture and that has set with me. And I think about that every day... so you know we d and I'm sure all of you in the community. I have called on senior centers to say those well check calls are critical those home visits are critical. We need to make sure that everybody is reaching out her older daughter to check in or their health and well-being. We already know that you know food insecurity is an issue. So, on top of that, we're dealing with social isolation in addition to everyone has pivot to virtual program which is great is another platform that's another opportunity to promote social connection.

But we know that many of our older adults do not know how to navigate some of these resources. They were not tech savvy prior of it. And certainly not now. And so, so the divide has only gotten broader. And so, I would say here at seeing adult services. We are focused on all of those aspects of food and security. What can we do to get meals out and to the community, who do we need to partner with? Who have we not had a conversation with. We were meeting with Ohio Department of Aging which Doug would talk about more.

We met with the Ohio Association of Senior Centers. We're continuing to have the conversation about closing and reducing the food security gap that many of our older adults are experiencing So I'll end with that. Thank ...

E. Douglas Beach: Next time I volunteer to follow Tracey tell ...no. Where do you go with all the I thought maybe I'd give everybody? Rachel being a USDA..., knowing the USDA fairly well those. And I think most people know that the food insecurity is a USDA definition dating back probably to the 1960s and what it is a household level economic and social condition of limited insurance certain access to adequate food.

And as Tracey said we've had an epidemic of food insecurity Cuyahoga County's been the number one food insecure county in the state Ohio for a long, long time only second to Athens County down around you It's a clearly an issue that many of you may know about. But have never experienced the thought that you wouldn't have a meal on a given day sends a lot of people into crisis mode. And the thing that we know from our food insecure process is of those



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folks that are food insecure are three times more likely to suffer from depression or 60 percent more likely to report congestive heart failure 50 percent more likely to develop diabetes and 30 percent more likely to have at least one ADL.

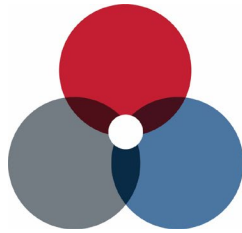
And this doesn't include the impacts of malnutrition. So like Tracey said we with many of our provider agencies are in the process right now of doing telephone calls to many of our clients. But the whole way that the Older Americans Act to set up and hung deliver meals or set up the advantages from home deliver meal perspective is that you have that contact between the person who delivers the meal and the client so many people will tell you that I've done these routes for a long time that they've gone in and seen something that was unusual call the paramedic and save somebody's somebody's life because we're dropping not only what used to be covered in meals from senior centers and homes deliver meals on people's front porch and wait to see them pick it up.

But we don't see what's going on inside is very, very difficult for those that want to start and stop problems when they first show. So, it creates all these issues like Tracey was talking about the biggest one is, of course, social isolation. But the other thing that it creates is people staying at home who probably need to be out getting services at hospitals or doctor's offices. I walk in the neighborhood quite regularly and there's one couple that I used to see out and about all the time. They're not out and about at all anymore quite afraid that they haven't seen their doctor in a while.

You know people delaying cancer treatments people are delaying diabetes treatments. And so, all of this has come at one time and the ability to help people through this process is more complicated when you can't communicate on a daily basis All right. We're happy Tuesday.

Tiffany Scruggs: Thank you Tracey. Thank you, Doug. Happy Tuesday everyone really glad to share some experiences that we faced in terms the Greater Cleveland food banks and our vantage point. I'm as everyone mentioned food security has existed amongst seniors pre COVID. When we talk about how we responded to call it, and what we've seen in terms of our older adults we have almost served five times the amount of seniors who have not known where their next meal will come from.

When Doug talked about the definition of food and security for us, we look at a 30-day timeframe where individuals may not know where their next meal is coming from. Well when you talk about 30 days, most seniors have said, I don't know where my next meal is coming from tomorrow let alone looking at a month timeframe. So, having the opportunity to lead efforts through our call center that's been coined as a best practice in terms of our senior population. When you talk about social isolation individuals have made it very clear that they're struggling not only financially, but with food and security and also access to public benefits. So



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in addition to helping individuals access those critical resources we help seniors enroll in snap and become because of some of the snap waivers that we've had the opportunity to help describe to our seniors.

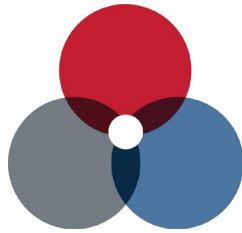
There's been a lot of confusion for our senior population around access to public benefits such as food stamps. We've served 25,000 more seniors between March in November of this year than we did in 2019. We've also know that a two-generation household is on an up-rise households are joining together so that they can make sure that they thrive and sustain. We also know that because of culvert we've had to not be reliant on some of the partners that we would have had access to. So, we know that organizations like Western Reserve has stepped up to help us do home deliveries increase our congregate meals.

And we will continue to partner with their partners in the community. So, when we think about this 62000 on duplicate household with seniors that we've served we're also trying to figure out what other supports can we offer over the phone. But also, at their doorstep. We're looking to partner with health care organizations to make sure that telehealth appointments is something that we can help to streamline. We're always looking for over the phone opportunities to connect to our seniors because that is where their comfort zone lies. And we want to keep those individuals safe. When we talk about on the ground.

Our team continues to provide food hard to reach places. Many of our seniors are leaving their homes. So, while they're a group of individuals who are afraid to leave and we understand that there are many seniors that are out on the streets to try to find their next meal Wow. Well you guys are the right people to be talking about this. Doing the work in the field thing and talking to seniors every day I am just happy to be here with you all.

Rachel Cahill: My name is Rachel and I as John said consulting with The Center for Community Solutions. And I am a food stamp nerd. You know, I like to start by just reminding everybody what food stamps are. That's the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP is the acronym we use. But it's federal food assistance one percent federally funded money that pays for nutrition and the biggest part of that money that we leave on the table is actually money that eligible seniors aren't getting. So, this has been a passion of mine for a long time Doug and Tiffany and John and I were around the table several years ago kind talking about this as a core issue to be tackling and I think I'll start though with the good news when it comes to snap and the pandemic.

So, one of the first things that Congress did when it comes to snap was they boosted the benefit level for every household on SNAP. And seniors typically you know if you talk to seniors about why they don't enroll in SNAP they'll tell you, oh, it's only sixteen dollars or oh it's such a you such a hard thing to do for such a small benefit. And you know usually myth busting and I



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say, oh, you know only about a quarter of seniors get the minimum benefit most get to get more than that. Most give the average of about **one dollars**.

Well right now everybody on staff is getting the maximum benefit for their household size. So for one person that's and four dollars a month. You can buy some real groceries with two four dollars a month. And so, if you just first thing I'll say, if you leave this webinar in two minutes or any senior you know that struggle with food insecurity you're not accessing snap when their income is low enough below 200 percent of the poverty line. And you know one and thirty percent of the poverty line is where they will certainly be eligible, but there's a lot of room about that as well.

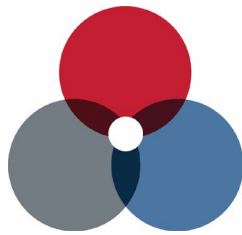
Those folks should be getting enrolled in SNAP. Then you go to the question of can they spend it. And so if you can get the resources to them as Tracey and Doug and Tiffany were saying, you know do they have the physical ability to safely get those groceries and that's where I think I'd love to have a conversation today, because we know that some of those folks probably enrolled in SNAP but to have a balance of SNAP benefits accruing because they don't have a shopper they don't have an authorized representative to go to the grocery store for them online shopping is still very limited.

I can come back to that. But we know that you know the dollars are there for some folks and we need to figure out a way to be leveraging amazing community resources that we have to match those with folks who can shop for them. So those maximum benefits are not going to expire at least for the next couple months so. So at least that's a resource that everybody should be looking to. Stop there.

Kate Warren: Thanks to all of our panelists for sharing your different vantage points and perspectives. Our next question. I think I would like to kick to Tiffany first and that question is, what adjustments have senior centers food pantries and other service providers made to meet the need during this pandemic.

Tiffany Scruggs: Well I think we spoke slightly about our ability to offer at home delivered options to individuals to prevent them from having to leave home. For example, in terms of food banking perspective, we did not offer home deliveries. But we immediately knew that that was a great way in order for us to get food out to the community. So, we quickly worked with organizations like Western Reserve and other senior serving organizations to prioritize our seniors and make sure that we are delivering a five to seven-day quantity of food twice a month. We realized that still is not enough.

When we talk about adjustments we have quickly worked with our network under the guidance of Feeding America to incorporate a no touch drive thru distribution model for our seniors that



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hopefully have access to transportation. But for those that, don't we allow for individuals when they're we have to come to our weekly drive through distributions that currently take place every Thursday down at the Browns tailgating lab, Go Browns. But therefore, individuals could come and access a week's supply food no touch pre-registration for individuals that have access to the Internet. And for those that do not can call our Help Center to register to ensure that those individuals receive the food in terms of increased product.

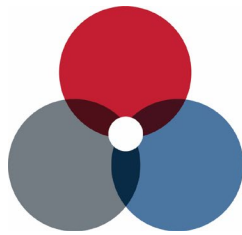
We know that we were working with lower a lowered amount of organizations within our network because they simply did not have the capacity. And so, they were also fearful. Many of those organizations are senior level that we partner with. And so, there was great health risk in terms of them being operational. So, we quickly reached out to our volunteer network to not only increase volunteers here at the food bank as appropriate. But we also because we have access to the National Guard. We allowed an and coordinate the National Guard to serve and work with some of those partners for example, in Parma where we've been able to increase services there by 500 additional seniors being served per month. So those are just some of the ways that we've responded and quickly adjusted. And we'll continue to make those adjustments as we respond to COVID 19.

Kate Warren: Thanks Tiffany. Doug can you talk about some of what you're seeing at senior centers and other service providers.

Doug Beach: Let me give a shout out to the food bank First of all we got much of the stimulus funding through the triple a THE FAMILY FIRST MONEY AND THE CARES THAT money and what these funds have essentially done. It's doubled our budget in the meals program. So, we've gone from 4,000 meals a day to 6,500 meals a day.

Many of those meals are produced at the Cleveland food bank. They go from the food bank to our providers who used to run senior centers and because covered many of them are doing senior centers anymore, but they're still delivering hot meals to our clients on a daily basis. So, the federal funding has been essential in trying to service. Many of these people who are homebound like Tracey and Tiffany and probably everybody many of the people in the audience. We also have a phone we call out too many of our clients on a daily basis to about 200 clients a week.

And this is help less than some of the impact. But the problem is that you see and see it in some of the policies for nursing homes where they're starting zoom and face time and all that stuff in nursing so that seniors can see their families or many of our clients don't have those capabilities and aren't Annabelle able to see their families and we're being told not you know not to congregate with families. So, it's become quite an issue. But without our partners be very hard



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to do this. The thing that I lament most is the fact that senior centers have always been the focal point of what we do and because of covered.

We're not using senior centers. In fact, Tracey and I are on a little committee to try to figure out how we can start to open senior centers up again. And it's gonna be difficult.

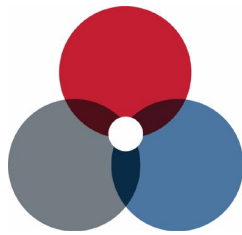
Kate Warren: Thank you. Tracey do you want to add anything to shared.

Tracey Mason: Oh absolutely. You know someone who was a previous senior center director, and also worked at the full bank and saw firsthand the impact of food pantries we knew immediately we had the pivot we had to deviate from our contract. So, we work closely with our law department as well as county councilmen and county executive to modify our contract.

So, we could support senior centers through this pandemic. We know that you know food insecurity has been an issue. The digital divide in sustainability is a real issue for many of our senior centers. So early on, we were able to pivot from congruent to home delivered meals for more than thirty seniors throughout Cuyahoga County. Also, we were fortunate that during a budget process we received a slight increase in our options program for independent living that allow older dogs to remain in their home by providing some additional supportive services. And we were able to remove individuals that was on our waiting list for our options program.

So, we're happy to be able to add nearly three to four seniors into that program. And also, we have played a role of a convener we had the convening with senior centers for a number of years but clearly, this is different right. And so, we have added a lot more individuals a lot more organizations to the conversation. I know I referenced earlier that we're meeting with the Ohio Association of Senior Centers to also identify best practice to be ad support or resource to many of our partners. Also, I would just say lastly is that, you know, the county executive have allocated in additional one point three million dollars not only to the Hunger Network Greater Cleveland but also to Western Reserve Area Agency or agency for their circle of food program. In addition to the Greater Cleveland food bank. So so. So overall, you know within our department, we have been flexible. We had to adapt like everyone else has. And we want to make sure the resources that come into our department that comment to the county overall is getting into the community. That is one of our top priorities. And you know in our last they say that, you know collaboration is key. And I know you all already know this. And if you have been collaborating in the past as much as you would like now is the time to do that.

And also, to think about those non-traditional partners you know for the first time, you know we to our meeting with the federally qualified health care centers to talk about how they could maybe partner with some of the senior centers for testing. We don't know what that's going to look like. But at least we're having the conversation and we have to figure this out because in



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addition to the pandemic. We know that older dogs are going to outnumber young people. So. So by 2030, the data suggests and so for the first time in history. We will outnumber young people so we have to continue to work differently.

Be more innovative. Be creative to meet all of our needs because we're all going to be you know that older dog that may be in need of services.

Doug Beach: Tracey, you're not in that group yet.

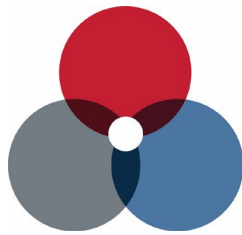
Tracey Mason: I'm on my way. On my way but I think about my mother my aunt and my father you know you think about your family you know. So, this is not about you know those older adults. This is about us each and every one of us.

Kate Warren: Yeah, those are great points Tracey and I love how you talked about sort of nontraditional partners coming together to think creatively about how to solve some of these issues because we know that none of this exists in a vacuum and in some ways, the cup the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to be really creative about how we how we get things done. So, so thanks for that point. Rachel, what about What are you seeing in your world as it comes to service providers and how they're adjusting or adjustments to snap or.

Rachel Cahill: I love Tracey's theme of collaboration. And I think this is a conversation that we're doing right now right. We're all tackling food insecurity and sort of in our own lanes. And I think that we need all of the above strategy right. And so, when I talk about SNAP I think complementary You know Tiffany, you mentioned sixty-two thousand served by the Food Bank that are older adults, we know about thirty-seven thousand older adults are on SNAP.

So, you know more than half of those folks are probably enrolled in SNAP or if that means snap can't do it by itself. But neither can the direct service programs and the home blurred meals right. So, we need all these resources to come together. And I think we also the health care partners that we know some of you already work with. But I think also need to be at this table. We know they have a direct including the insurers have a direct interest in tackling senior food insecurity. We know that nursing home admission goes down when seniors have access to snap We know that hospitalizations go down when seniors have access to snap.

So, so I think that that's exactly right. And when it comes to kind of what we need to be what we've been trying to do with SNAP lands to respond to it. And support those on the ground providers one of the things that I think somebody mentioned this in the chat is that online shopping is something that has taken off right in the pandemic for folks who are shopping with cash or credit. And it has come along very slowly for SNAP shoppers One of the sort of core



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principles of SNAP is that folks who are using SNAP should have all the same access to food quality and food choice and ways of shopping that everybody else does.

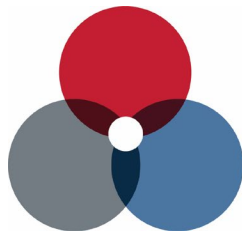
And so, one of the divides we've seen happen is that even though the intent is there still snap shoppers are left behind right now. We did. There is an online shopping pilot that went from just a couple of states to almost every state during the course of the pandemic so around the summertime Ohio became part of the online purchasing highlight is what it's called for snap. Unfortunately, right now, it's still only limited to Walmart and Amazon are the only two retailers that can take online shopping and they don't serve every part of Ohio. So, I know in my area when I try to try to see those two vendors at Wal-Mart doesn't deliver to my zip code and I can only deliver it through Whole Foods from Amazon, which you know in some cases might be an option and sometimes it's going to be out of the affordability reach.

So, we need this collaboration table and others to kind of push for much going much further with online shopping options. We need our local retailers. We need our Dave's market. And you know we need our local grocery chains to be able to come onto that platform and be able to make those to make their products available to seniors not every senior is going to be able to shop online on their own. But again, it would give yet another tool to allow folks to shop safely and get that quality product to their home. And right now, the technology barriers to local brochures are too much for the tip for them to really do it on their own.

It's really expensive and complicated So I think that having them at the table with all of us to figure that out. And soon. Right. I don't think we can manage another year or two of waiting for that technology to catch up for SNAP shoppers. You know it's something that we can prioritize together.

Tiffany Scruggs: Kate if you don't mind me supporting what Rachel just said I think a lot of that is going to show. It's shows up and advocacy as well. We need. We've had a partnership with the food bank for a long time with Tracey for a long time in trying to push issues in Columbus and trying to push issues in D.C. and I will tell you that when we got the stimulus funds we planned so that we, we were expecting a third stimulus package sometime in August.

And as all of you know that didn't happen. The nine-billion-dollar stimulus package. They're looking at now does have some nutrition moneys in it. So. for those of you that are close to your congressman close to your local state representatives please reach out and tell everybody how important these dollars are to keep people in their homes safe and keep them with nutritious foods for a long period of time. It's something I just want to share. Since we've talked about SNAP you know for those of you who aren't aware SNAP provides nine times the amount of food that any food bank.



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So regardless of the close to fifty-seven million pounds of food that we distributed not a SNAP provides nine times that amount. And so, we continue to bring awareness and connect our seniors. But you're right looking at pilot we've talked with Metro to have preliminary conversation about the opportunities for individuals to become almost a snap secret shopper because our seniors will need help making sure that they can access those benefits.

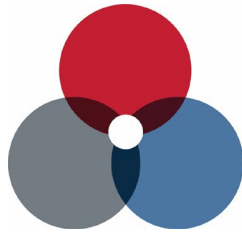
Kate Warren: Thanks to everyone, those are such great and important points. I want to shift a little bit and talk about what are the pain points where do service providers need additional support right now to meet the need that's in the community. And maybe Tracey could, could you address that for us first.

Tracey Mason: Yeah you know, I thought a lot about this question and pain point pressure point. You know we have all every single person. Have you know have endured a lot over these past nine months. And so, you know we stay close to our partners and to our staff to understand the issues and concerns You know, we early were able to provide, you know protective personal equipment for many of our senior centers and you know, we're talking about a network of organized patients who have who were under resourced prior to code.

So, when you think about sustainability as we get through this pandemic that we have to continue to figure out how we help sustain our partners. So, our older adults are seniors and adults with disabilities, which we haven't talked too much about have a platform have a vehicle again to promote social connection you to enjoy a meal. What their what their friend that they met at the senior center you know those are very, very important. But what I can tell you at these says we're going to continue to prioritize home delivery meals we're looking at expanding our funding to provide more meals in the community to cover long weekends and holidays.

We are also we have our onsite Food Pantry which I'm so proud about. And so, we're looking to expand our onsite food pantry to have some refrigeration as well, because we have a host of social workers and nurses and home health who are going directly to client homes. And so, they are in a position to take a bag of groceries to those older adults that are in need of services and also advocacy Doug mentioned advocacy. We all pull together our resources you know get a consistent message and continue to advocate at the local county level is quite critically important as well as state and federal levels to you know I am proud to say that at DCF we have put in place a food security task force so.

So, we're taking a deeper dive and we know that food insecurity. You know it is real. It is an issue. But more importantly, what do we doing about it. You know I don't want to just be given a phone number to someone to call someone else. But to have a real linkage put plays are critical. And so, I'm excited about that. So, food and security have changed the dialogue and



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how we program here at DC as and that's real important to us. We're going to continue to do it. And you know we're looking at telehealth too.

But more importantly, I think we got to figure out how we continue to build on strong collaborative partnerships

Kate Warren: Thanks Tracey. Doug can you talk about any additional pain points that you're seeing and what support is needed.

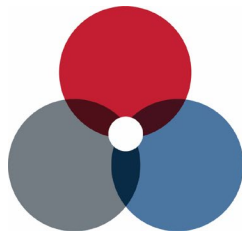
Doug Beach: Yeah, we are. Contractor for state government for the Mike care program and the passport program. And we do the case management in those programs and since the executive order came out the stay at home order came out. We have been doing most of that virtually. Now for those of you that deal with seniors and health issues on a daily basis.

You know that having doing things virtually has been a godsend. But sometimes you can't figure out what the real issues are unless you get into that house unless you see that client on a not necessarily daily basis. But on a regular schedule to make sure things are what they should be. Many of our clients are refusing aids that we have picked out for them to come into their house because they're worried about it. And rightfully so. So, it's, it's just a real difficult time right now to make sure people get the right services. As Tracey said along with that came issues with PPE we seem to be fairly stocked up with PPE right now, but everything that we've talked about today comes back to two things.

It comes back to social isolation and the link between social isolation and mental health as many of you know senior men who just lost their spouse have one of the highest suicide rates in the United States. And we're starting to see some of that spill over into some of our client relationships. And we just need to figure out a way that we can reduce some of these solutions to more people so that they can stay at home safely.

Kate Warren: Thanks for that point Doug and that really reminds me of something we haven't talked a whole lot about as part of this conversation but stigma and shame which plays so much into you know older adults especially not wanting to ask for help or reach out when they're in need and how much of a problem that is when folks are so isolated in their homes may not be able to see what's going on. So, thanks for raising that. Tiffany, I want kick it over to you.

Tiffany Scruggs: Yes, I just want to want to interject regarding senior stigma as it relates to accessing public benefits. That is that stigma is real. We, we make strides to help individuals understand their eligibility around snap for example. However, it is tough. Seniors have shared with us that you know they weren't raised that way. That's been a fix if you had you had to have fought in a war. You have to have children in your home. And so, we work really hard and work



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with Rachel and team to really try to help educate and bring awareness to that to try to decrease some of the food insecurity within our communities.

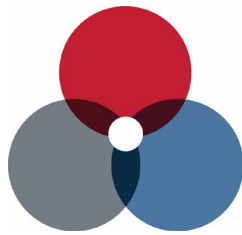
I wanted to respond. Jodi had a question as it relates to addressing sustainability of food giveaways after **Kolbert** cares in some of the government support. I first want to start off thanking the community, the community has been so generous in terms of offering donations. So that we can continue to not only offer support here at the food bank but extend that to our partner network. So, we've been able to contribute a little over five thousand dollars to grants to our partner organizations so that they can continue to remain operational purchase equipment. But I will tell you the top need is volunteers to help with client intake and distribution.

For example, as we continue to offer GCF be led weekly distributions where unfortunately, our nutrient is serving upwards of 3,000 households in a four-hour timeframe. So that equates to about, you know, a little over ten thousand individuals that we're serving on a weekly basis. What we know because of Cleveland's weather the inclement weather will be a challenge. So, we have worked diligently with our city of Cleveland partners and county partners to try to locate and endorse facility. But unfortunately, there's not an indoor facility that can accommodate that amount of visitors. So, we continue to look for sites and try to figure out ways that we can offer the drive through model throughout the winter months.

We recognize we continue to plan to serve the community without the support of the National Guard. We've been blessed that Governor DeWine and others have advocated for the extension of those orders but we recognize at some point, they're going to go away. So, we continue to work with our partner network. And with Feeding America about different approaches and ways that we can continue to get food out safely to the community. And lastly, I just want to share some data in terms of a food insecurity questionnaire left by Feeding America. So, when we talk about seniors, 80 percent of seniors are reported eating unhealthy foods or purchasing unhealthy foods to stretch their budgets.

That also aligns with sixty-two percent of seniors having to choose between paying for their medicine and food. And right now, what we've heard is that individuals are scoring without their medications. Fifty-four percent of our seniors have had to choose between paying for housing and food while 65 percent of individuals have tried to support transportation costs versus eating. And so that's a challenge and those that data point is real. We also know here in Cuyahoga County being the largest county that senior citizens reside. We continue to have an issue right here at home. When we talk about statewide being one of 12 food banks.

We talk about the issues in how we can continue to safely get food to our seniors and the collaboration. So, home deliveries is really that best practice. I want to give a shout out to feed



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the soul collaboration who have stepped in to help us as a newer partner get food to seniors in a safe way.

Kate Warren: Thanks for sharing those really sobering statistics. Tiffany you know, I think that issue of trade and realizing that folks who are struggling to make ends meet are making choices every day. And sometimes that might mean their they are going hungry or eating less nutritious food than they should. There is a follow up question. Tiffany in the Q and A about where can we go to sign up to volunteer and support your work. Would you be able to put a link in the chat for participants? If they're interested in getting involved.

Tiffany Scruggs: Absolutely. I will put our website. You can go to the Greater Cleveland food banks Website to sign up for volunteer opportunities. And we have instilled all of the safety guidelines temperature checks social distancing. We provide PPE and so we're doing a very great job and working with our CDC to ensure that when you volunteer here.

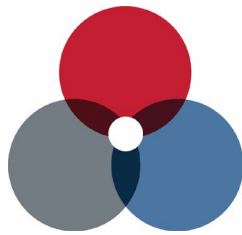
You're doing so in a safe way, but also then working out reaching out to our network to see who needs that volunteer support as well. So, I would do that now.

Kate Warren: Thank you so much. And Rachel I want to kick it over to you to talk about pain points. What you're seeing.

Rachel Cahill: Yeah, I think so. We know we haven't really close partnership with our Cuyahoga Department of Job and Family Services. Kevin Gowans the administrator there and it works closely with Tracey and you know over the last year and a half or so, we've really honed in on barriers to access to snap across the population.

But with a particular interest in seniors and we're always talking about seniors. And I just want to say, you know clear pain point that I think we. JF S. and universally recognized is the renewal process is a real barrier for folks because you know that food security as Doug said the definition is not knowing where your next meal is coming from right state of unknowing and that state of stress and anxiety that comes with not knowing where your meals are going to come from. And so, when you have a renewal coming up. If anyone who's been enrolled in the SNAP program could tell you it's an extremely stressful experience because there's a lot of paperwork involved.

You have to do an interview you often have to wait on a kind of on a phone line for quite a while to be able to do that interview, and it can be really confusing. And so, one of the solutions that we think is sort of very apparent and is a no brainer. It was to take some federal options to simplify the renewal process for seniors and for individuals with disabilities. If you don't have



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earned income, you don't have on a fluctuating income, then the county really doesn't need to check in with you and have an interview with you as often as they are doing right now.

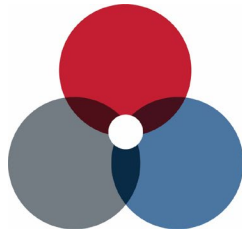
So, there's you know that we saw the county take some really excellent options that were made available through the Families First Act early in the pandemic. What that did is it suspended renewals for a period of time. And so, we didn't kick people off snap and you know that had the result of those families on all of the other chefs that they were facing at least not having stress that they had to face as well. But those renewals did come back in July that was required by the federal government. And we've seen our phone lines in Cuyahoga County and around the state go from you know a two minute.

Wait time 1 minute. Wait time in the early months of the pandemic. Now they've reached all the way back up to a very long wait times. You know seniors can wait or anyone can be waiting anywhere from 30 minutes to a couple of hours to get through on that phone line right now. And so that makes getting that renewal done all the more difficult. So, going back to the advocacy opportunities we think that some a couple of streamlining options, including waiving those interview requirements for the renewals not requiring the paperwork check ins every year we could actually connect seniors for a full three years without making them do all these checks.

But that is an option that are our state or Ohio Department of Job and Family Services needs to opt into. So, I have a little one pager that I'll send around to participants after this to let you know what to ask but we call it the acronym is that. But if the elderly and disabled simplified application project and you think that's a quick thing that the state could do that could really make a difference on that point.

Kate Warren: Thanks, Rachel and I want to thank our audience members who have been typing questions chat and the Q and A already and some of them ee've been responding to in real time. But now we're going to shift to all audience questions for our panel and I do want to say because I've seen it a couple of times yes. This recording ends and resources will be made available on our Website later today. And Eboney can post that link again in the chat if folks joined late and are unable to see that. But absolutely all of this will be available to you later. And I want to ask the panel a question that came in from Hannah, which is, can the panel discuss ways that they have worked with seniors or partners about how to get seniors connected to Internet as well as increased seniors understanding of technology to increase the access to online food supports.

She says, I work in a rural community and I'm finding access as a major barrier. And I know, that's always the balance our older adults are. We have all of these technology resources. But it



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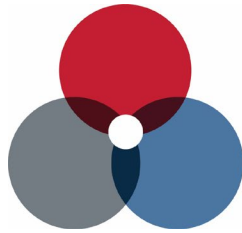
can be such a challenge for some folks to access them. And so, I'll let the panelists jump in if they have an answer to that question.

Doug Beach: I don't think the access issues necessarily are limited to seniors. You know we have food deserts here in Cuyahoga County, where seniors as well as kids can't get on the Internet because there's no internet access. I know a lot of people are trying to figure out why it's that way. And why can't we make it more accessible every place in the United States rather than just certain areas. So, I don't know that we'd necessarily answer that question. But one of the things that I always talk about when someone says Well seniors aren't necessarily computer savvy. Well most people most seniors are a little bit older than me so grew up in the 70s and 80s. And we were part of the technology Revolution, most of us use computers at our desks for a long period of time. So, it's not that they're necessarily that they're not computer savvy it's just that they may not have access to the Internet or the right equipment.

One of the things that we push or I push really hard is trying to get people iPhones with face time on or cell phones with face time OK. We think that will solve a lot of the contact issues with family. And then if there's any way you know I know that some of the triple A's across the state have been using their access using their surplus it's not surplus using computers that they've used for a long period. And they're turning over and then giving that to seniors throughout the community. That's something we need to get of with as well up here and claim I wish I could add more to that conversation.

Tracey Mason: I mean Dr. Beach is correct me there is a real digital divide in all across multiple counties and you know we know that more and more grant parents are, you know, taking care of grandchildren whose home you now and do our own online classwork. and the challenges there and how older adults you know needing to be a resource to their grandchildren is I mean there is a real issue. And unfortunately, I wish I can give you a host of resources and organizations to call you as I've had a conversation with the many senior centers some of them are doing small you know group workshops and trainings trying to help older adults learn how to use the computer. And so, it is a major, major major concern Yeah.

Rachel Cahill: You know I'll just add something we recently did for Community Solutions We did a survey of SNAP and Medicaid participants folks who use the job and services offices. And it looked at a number of barriers to accessing and we did ask about access to technology. And you know this is just a sample of a sample. But I did look at this sort of technology access by age and Doug makes a good point that we you know it was it's not that the seniors especially those you know younger seniors the seniors who are in their 60s and 70s don't necessarily have a lot of them said they have computers at home Some of them said or some of them said they I have a phone with internet.



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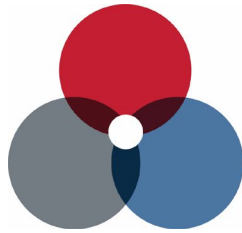
But one of the big problems they face was just the usability of the Websites you know becomes the barrier you might have the line into your house. But if you can't read the print on the screen or it's just not intuitive. We know that the Ohio benefits Website that the state created is difficult for anyone to navigate. But especially for seniors navigate. So, what do they do. They you know, they spend 45 minutes on the site. It doesn't work or they get stuck. And then they go back to calling the county and that's what drives up that wait time.

So, we think that we can't abandon you know we can't assume that seniors aren't using the Internet and abandon those pathways we actually need to make them more accessible and think about you know visual ability and think about, you know, the list size buttons My dad has really bad neuropathy in his hands from diabetes and so like even just getting the clicker to click on both either pull off on an iPhone and on a computer being able to kind of aim is really something that we have to functionally think about when we're trying to be inclusive in all ways for seniors and for individuals with disabilities and shout out to the senior centers and the libraries across our region because they have access for seniors to go ahead and get on the Internet and actually people that will show them what they need to do.

Unfortunately, as all of you know most of our senior centers close right now. But I think that libraries are open. And so that may be a place to start. You know I was who sends our clothes. They're still staying in close contact they're not physically open, but they are open remotely. So they are making those home visits. They are delivery you know activity baskets. So they are doing all that they can continue that engagement. So, everybody is physically not open. They're still really active and trying to engage older adults. Tracey thanks for setting that straight.

Tiffany Scruggs: I appreciate that. I also wanted to add up in point as it relates to just our job in helping to educate and still bring awareness to the seriousness of **Colbert 19** know being out in the community still we have a group of the population. It's we've hit hard in our rural counties with various groups that truly don't believe in science or the medical system. And it's almost become a debate with some individual about the seriousness of wearing masks doing their part, particularly for those who have older individuals in their homes over the summer. We did a mobile Outreach Unit to help serve youth.

And we had many grandparent caregivers to do either drive through a walk-up style and many of their children didn't believe that they needed to wear a mask didn't believe in it regardless of the number of cases in the increase. And So, I'd just remind ourselves being in this network to just continue to spread education and awareness about COVID-19 and itself as we continue to hopefully get to a postcode 19 state, which might happen next year and might be the year after. So, I just wanted to reiterate that because that misconception about COVID-19 still exists yes,



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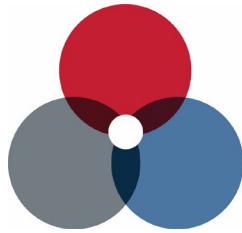
Kate Warren: Thanks to such a great point Tiffany And just the importance of reiterating at message with anyone that someone may come into contact with how important it is for service providers to be not just providing the service.

Doug Beach: But providing true good information to folks about what's going on in the community. And let me go ahead. If you don't mind. Get on top of what some of the things Tiffany just said or Tracey just said. Many of the senior centers are doing phone call. They do call downs on a regular basis so they're directly trying to reach clients and make sure that they have whatever they need to do. I know Benjamin Rose has evidence-based phone reinsurance program that if any of you are interested, you may want give Benjamin Rose a call to see how they set it up.

We call as I said earlier about people a week. I know Tracey's calling more than with her senior centers the senior centers do have staff that are still working. So, they're reaching out on an hourly basis to a lot of these folks trying to make sure their home homes are safe and they're OK. So, we want to tip my hat to the senior centers that are doing everything they're doing. And we just need to figure out a way to make sure that we can connect it with many the things that have been said here today and get more disseminated out into the community

Kate Warren: Thanks for that Doug. I have a question for Tiffany that came up in the chat earlier, but before I go to that we have someone who's asked Would it be all right for our panelists to share their email addresses if folks want to follow up with questions. And if you wouldn't mind putting some contact information in the chat. That would be really helpful for our audience members. Tiffany the question is, can you address sustainability of food giveaways. **Tiffany Scruggs:** How can we build accessible sustainable food system Post covered cares and government funding. So, we've had all of this influx of funding and attention to this issue. But what can we do to ensure that these supports stay in place going forward I referenced this slightly just in terms of that being a pain point and thinking about plans for us, particularly as we think about not having access to the National Guard for example, that we've extended to our partner organizations And so this is the time that we're planning in terms of those contingency plans. We recognize that the most favorable model is is talking about home delivery but what other ways, looking across the country and looking at other opportunities to connect. We know as I mentioned earlier on the call that having a call center is been coined as a best practice.

So really that over the phone support and really connecting the dots and so those collaborations you know looking at three way calls I've been talking to other food banks across the state to see how we can begin to have those three-way connections. And so, you know when Tracey talked about linkages it's really linking the individuals to those supports. And so, you know, we don't have an answer for that right now. What I will tell you was that having that



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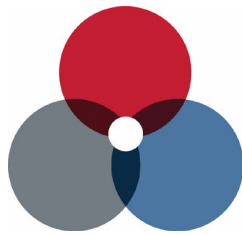
plan reaching out to our partner organizations making sure that we have access to foods reaching out to our food resource partners to make sure that when we do lose access to those dollars we can still acquire the same amount of food to share with our community and to get to our partner organizations is critical.

And also looking at the data, data will always change in terms of communities that need food support And so we're being very intentional doing our own mapping and Gap Analysis to better understand what communities that we need to focus on in terms of getting food to those places that still have food deserts to those places that don't have that online ordering. And so that is just some of the things that we're looking to do as we move forward and 2021. Yeah. And I'll just kind piggy back on the sustainability question because you know we all have just like a food bank.

Everybody's got a cliff that's going to come if it's not. And you're already when it comes to federal support when it comes to snap you know those maximum allotments that I mentioned that folks are getting right now. Those will come to an end when the Declaration of emergency ends and we know, we saw this at the end of the last recession when the for the hour a boost to snap ended and families felt a real cut and snap. We saw food insecurity spike in that moment right. So, we know that that sort of cliff is coming again, whenever these emergency allotments end first on top of kind of the pain that folks are already facing, I think one we need to make sure that that doesn't end arbitrarily soon.

And we know that it becomes a broken record if you're in the advocacy universe but like, as Doug said, the federal resources really can't arbitrarily cut off in the springtime we need that work for all of these programs. But the other kind of longer-term way to think about supports I think someone mentioned Medicaid contracts in the chat is there's some really innovative things happening among Medicaid insurers. So, for individuals who are supported by Medicaid, you know there's an increased understanding of the social determinants of health and that food, especially for seniors is so connected with someone well-being and reducing their health care costs.

So, there is some innovative things happening in Pennsylvania with health insurers actually paying providers paying community partners like food banks to enroll people in SNAP and to keep them connected to those food sources, as well as some of those around home delivered meals that are supported by Medicaid. Doug mentioned that they do some they're a contracted provider in some cases so I do think that the health care arena is a place for real sustainability in the food world. Once we get past sort of the crisis that we're in which really has to face that really is going to need to get federal support is going to need to last.



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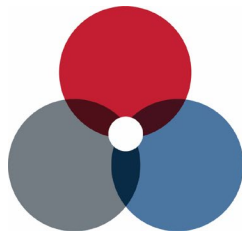
Kate Warren: If we're not going to see a big cliff for all of the programs that we need thanks for that Rachel and Tiffany there was a question earlier from someone who I believe had to leave the call. But she was asking about possibly starting a food pantry through her employer and I'm wondering if folks have advice for people who are thinking about that is that needed in the community we need more food pantries and more locations.

Tiffany Scruggs: And if someone were wanting to do that where should they start. I mean, I'll definitely start with that is we continue to increase our partnership network. You have to go to our Website if you want to go to give help. And if then we can go through the process in terms of what style of partnership that you're looking for. So, whether that's a pantry location where you house food whether shelf stable or the fresh produce at your organizations there is also some stipulations that the federal government has offered. So, we look at unique ways in how you can potentially collaborate with a partner that's already operational but may be close by your place of business and so, but the first step is doing that application.

I've also provided my direct email and phone number in the chat box. You can feel free if you're just eager to Get it. Get a start as soon as possible. We can think about some short-term solutions. But also get you possibly to acquire you into our partnership network Many of the providers that we have probably many providers that Tracey has as well have food pantries they were usually connected to senior centers but some of them are still running and you can't call for appointments and get food there. We think pantries are essential in hard times.

So, anything we can do to support food pantries we're gonna do I have I have thought of just another thing that comes to mind when I think my I just got to spend some time chatting with my sister who is finishing up medical school and she. We were talking about the concept of do no harm in the medical world. And I think that another opportunity for this network to weigh in is to make sure that our state letters legislature does no harm when it comes to food assistance in the next state budget because we know it's going to be a tight state budget.

Rachel Cahill: We know that every program is going to have to fight for any state resources that they've had. And we also want to make sure that. There we sort of do no harm from a stigma and policy perspective to make it harder to access federal food assistance and just a flag for folks, if you aren't someone who watches the legislature or hasn't watched what snap conversations remembering that families are. You know this Tiffany said intergenerational we have families of working age and older adults. And young children all in the same households And, when we stereotype a program like SNAP and who receives it even if you say, oh, no, no, we're not talking about seniors and seniors and individual disabilities children are all harmed by policies and efforts to restrict or stigmatize snap.



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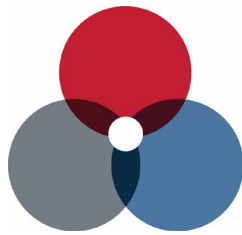
So, things that we've seen in our legislature in the past that we need to collectively make sure never come back again, are things like photo I.D. bills to try to put it to try to stigmatize the use of that EDT card We know from research in other states that that disproportionately harms seniors even if they exempted. They still find themselves, making it very difficult to ask someone to shop for you if your picture is on the card or if. Now retailers think Oh, I have to check the photo I.D. before I can use this card that ends up having the biggest burden on older adults.

And then just not using their benefits as opposed to you know the sort of imaginary person that might that you might be thinking of when you try to think of the purpose of a food photo I.D. bill to prevent some kind of fraud that isn't happening. And also, with sort of work reporting requirements. Right now, we have a waiver that allows folks to be able to continue to get SNAP while they're looking for work but, in the past, we've had very harsh work reporting requirements. And again, it affects whole families. When you cut the benefits of you know a person that's of working age just because they're between jobs because then that affects all the other people in the household and they all face food insecurity.

So, I just want to if you think as an older adult advocate that those are issues that kind of don't affect do they actually they affect all of us. And I think we could use a lot partnership and support in the state legislature as our next budget cycle heats up in January. I just want to underscore a food pantry is a good fit for you. You consider it as a government organization. We're probably the only government organization that has onsite food pantry and and many of our like I said, many were social workers are nurses home health aides are using our food pantry on a daily basis because they are right there in the client's home and they see firsthand what the need is.

And so, it has been extremely value added to the programs, the services that we offer here with a D as an I have thoroughly enjoyed this conversation, and I look forward to this conversation continuing because I think there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. And so so thank you for inviting me to participate on the panel. Thanks. Tracey. We do have one more audience question actually, which is can Sanders partner on funding opportunities to support and encourage provider partnering. And I think we've heard some about that. But wonder if our panelists can expand on ways that we can encourage more partnerships in the community I'm sorry, could you reread that question.

I don't see it can funders partner on funding opportunities to support and encourage provider partnering from our perspective. That depends because we do have certain funding that is designed for meals that is designed for senior centers. That is designed for transport patients. So, we have some funding that's designed for that However we do like the food bank like everybody on this call do try to raise money outside of those those stipulations lack of a better



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word outside of those stipulations. And we like to partner with people either writing grants or doing collaborative things with our provider partners.

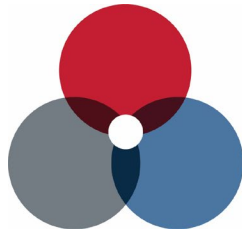
As I've said several times on this webinar we work very, very closely with DRC we work very, very closely with the food bank. And from that perspective if they want to get creative on how to do something like that we'd be interested thanks Doug. And I do want to point out there's been some chatter in the chat about some questions about Lorain County and where services are available in Lorain County And someone did share that Lorain County has Second Harvest for Hunger. I would recommend if folks are around the state going to the website of the Ohio Association of Food Banks to get connected to whoever is the provider in your in your local area around the state.

But thanks for those questions and glad we have folks from around the around the community. And so, to wrap things up. Maybe I would just ask what advice would you have to folks who maybe are feeling overwhelmed by this. Or how can we what are some bright spots in this in this call, which has been a lot of bad news a lot of hard things that we're dealing with in the community. Violence nobody's talking It's been rough on everybody. You know we have we have 300 staff and reaching out each one of them on a daily basis is part of it.

So just human kindness I think is part of it staying connected in whatever ways you can is part of it reaching out to people outside of your usual channels can be helpful. But it's always comforting to me to get people on a program like this who have the same goals that we do and just listen to the creativity that can be put together when we all talk and think about how we're gonna do things going forward. Yeah, and I know I'm a broken record, but I would just say that it has been really. It has been encouraging that this year has broken down some of the stigma around public benefits and snap in particular because you know it's one of those once in a decade moments when people recognize that we are all we might not all be struggling in the same ways.

But everybody is affected by this and touched by this and that empathy and kindness and generosity are the only way forward. And so, I think that I feel really excited that the year gives us opportunities to reimagine our social safety net and all the supports that people provide. in a way that doesn't make anyone feel badly about accessing those supports And I think that we also in the public benefits world, we kind of had this opportunity early on and conveyed to say, how could we reduce bureaucracy and just do it. Just do it fast and just do it now.

And we immediately like flip the switch and Tiffany can tell you their numbers of the food bank help center it went from less than 50 percent of applications getting approved to like 80 percent of applications getting approved because we knew what barriers were there. And there was a political will to remove them. And so that political will needs to carry us forward so that



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we don't go back to the bureaucratic mess that we were in that keeps people from accessing food supports that they need and Rachel, thank you for that. It's a perfect, perfect example.

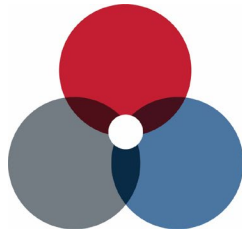
And I challenge for all of us to look at other data points and opportunities to collect and measure success. I will also tell you that when you talk to a senior just let them know try your best to reassure them that things will get better. I will tell you our seniors love to talk you all know that. But having that high-quality customer service has gone a long way. We continue to incorporate what's called motivational interviewing here for our team. And so that really just helps individuals remain inspired and help them get over the hump.

So, as we continue to fight this battle of food insecurity together. So, thank you all again. I'm really excited I hope to hear from some of you who have sent individual messages. Once again, we've provided our contact information. And we love to see our next steps in action items as we move forward. The only thing I would add to the bright spot in all of this is you know where we come out of this. I think we are going to be far more resilient than when we started. And my hope is that some of these best practices that we've been able to identify and develop implement that some of them will continue to happen.

Oh, I think about virtual programming for senior centers. I think that is awesome. I think is cool and so I see that there might be a hybrid model on a **horizon senior cities** continue to function in the future when I think about you know more and more people are working from home and trying to have a work life balance. And you know, I think that has been one of the positives of this and hope that you know some of those things that, you know we have employed will well sustain because some there has been some positive moments during this pandemic.

I know sometimes it's hard for us too to see that when we're also stretched so thin and overwhelm But I do think that we're going to come out is a lot more resilient. You know, I think the networks are going to so much stronger than what they were before. I think people can feel a lot more comfortable collaborating and reaching across the room to establish partnerships and so I think that, you know again, you know I hope that some of the things that have started will continue. And that we continue the dialogue and conversation about supporting each other in a community large

William Tarter, Jr.: Awesome. Thank you so much Tracey and thank you to all of you And I want to thank everyone who attended today and attended this winter meeting of the Human Services Advocacy Network. We hope that you found the information from this webinar to be helpful. I know I did. And as Kate said a copy of this webinar will be available on our Website. This afternoon. I'd like to thank our communications team our Director of Communications and Digital Strategy Dani Carlson and our communications coordinator Eboney Thornton for their assistance in putting this together. I'd like to thank our esteemed panelists Tracey, Tiffany,



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Doug and Rachel for being here I like to think our moderator Kate Warren did a great job and our president executive director John Corlett for openness today.

I really just want to challenge all of us to remember our seniors and to pledge to do all we can to support them through this trying time. I'd like to thank all of you for being here today. We had at one point one and eleven attendees and so I think that speaks to the interest in this topic and the importance of this topic at this particular time. We asked you stay tuned to our next Human Services Advocacy Network which will take place in the first quarter of next year. Have a safe and healthy holiday season and we'll see you all again next year.

Thank you very much. And have a great rest week.