

## **New Information-Maximizing Food and Non-Food Benefit Services**

We want to provide you with current information to help minimize the impact of the coronavirus COVID-19 by providing updates, as well as other important and timely information regarding feeding and non-feeding programs and services.

Please note some of these updates include information from the 2 Trillion Dollar Federal Stimulus Package agreed to this week by congress.

### **Updates for Community Members:**

- **Food Assistance Through SNAP.** To maximize food assistance help for individual and family households, you may apply for SNAP through normal SNAP assistors located in community partner locations in your county. Individuals and families can either apply in person if organizations are open, online through [www.YourTexasBenefits.Com](http://www.YourTexasBenefits.Com) or by calling HHSC's Information and Referral Service Help Line, 2-1-1. HHSC is the only agency that can determine eligibility.
- **Benefits Extension for 3 months for SNAP Recipients.** USDA has approved a SNAP waiver for Texas to automatically extend the certification period for an additional three months to households whose benefits are scheduled to end in April, May and June 2020 in all Texas Counties. This would allow HHSC to also waive the periodic reporting requirements during the extension and allow the State to more effectively use staff to timely process the influx of new applications during the Covid19 emergency.
- **Food Assistance Through Schools.** Schools Nutrition Programs have emergency flexibilities already approved by congress to provide student meals when schools are closed. **Pro-Vision Charter School District will begin serving meals on March 30, 2020.**
- **Unemployment Assistance.** To maximize food and household assistance needs for individual and family households, individuals who recently became unemployed due to the coronavirus emergency may apply directly for unemployment benefits through the Texas Workforce Commission. They can apply online at Unemployment Benefit Services by clicking the link [Submit an application for unemployment benefits](#). This service is available seven days a week, 24hours a day, or they may call a Tele-Center at 800-939-6631 and speak to a customer service representative. \*\*Assistance has been expanded from 26 weeks to 39 weeks. Maximum weekly amounts have been increased by \$600 to further assist household with bills such as utility, car payments, rent/mortgage, etc.
- **Direct Payments from Federal Stimulus Package for Individuals & Families.** The federal 2 trillion dollar stimulus package may allow individuals

making under \$75K to receive \$1,200 and married couples earning up to \$150K to receive \$2400 with \$500 additional per child in family.

- **America's Pantry System**-Under the previous stimulus package approved by Congress, the nation's 200 food banks will receive \$400 million dollars to purchase, store/deliver food and to ensure that pantry agencies in their communities continue to be stocked. Clients can access their local pantry agency by calling the states information and referral service line 2-1-1.
- **Meals for Low-Income Seniors**-\$250 million was previously approved for States. As a result, Texas just received \$16.2 million dollars for home-delivered and prepackaged meals to low-income seniors. Seniors should contact their local Meals on Wheels provider or Area Agency on Aging for more information. This can be done by calling the states information and referral service line 2-1-1.

#### **Non-Feeding Information for Low-Income Families, Seniors, Veterans, and those with Disabilities:**

- **Keeping Communities Informed on coronavirus Public Health Information.** Many cable and communications companies are now offering free tv channels for households to stay connected with public health updates from news outlets. As a result, some households may also receive other non-news outlet channels since many people are stuck at home during this time. We encourage you to look through your channels to see if new channels have been added. You can also contact your cable provider to see if channels can be made available without subscription. This may help alleviate some of the boredom families may experience while at home or during quarantine.

Please note that many organizations are closed due to the coronavirus emergency so online services or phone lines for families is going to be the best way to apply for these benefits programs. SNAP or Unemployment Assistance agencies are currently extremely busy with persons seeking assistance so please continue calling if phone lines are busy.

**As always, please stay healthy. Stay informed. And stay connected to Pro-Vision Academy.**