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## **UPDATED: Foodbank Launches SAFE Food Net Providing “Essential Services” during California Lockdown**

***211 HOTLINE IN EFFECT; NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT APPROVED; New emergency food distributions open from Carpinteria to Santa Maria; Senior SAFE Home Deliveries Under Way; Countywide Disaster Feeding Plan Task Force Activated***

(Santa Barbara/Santa Maria, CA) – The **Foodbank of Santa Barbara County** continues its work to provide enough healthy food to everyone who needs it in Santa Barbara County as the Covid-19 crisis unfolds. The Foodbank’s initiative is called **Safe Access to Food for Everyone (SAFE) Food Net** and includes the **“SAFE Home Delivery” program for seniors**.

Since Covid-19 safety measures took effect, the Foodbank has tripled the amount of food it normally provides to community members facing food hunger and food insecurity.

**211 SAFE FOOD NET and SAFE HOME DELIVERY Hotline:** In collaboration with Community Action Commission and the City of Santa Maria, the Foodbank’s 211 community hotline is active as of today.

County residents may call 211 for information about ALL Foodbank emergency food resources, including **SAFE Home Delivery – twice-monthly free home delivery for seniors 60+ or 55+ with a disability (People may self-certify their disability status; no doctor’s note needed.)**. The Foodbank has provided 3,000 home deliveries in two weeks as part of its Covid-19 response.

At 211, the community can also find information about the Foodbank’s 50 SAFE Food Net food distribution sites, and Foodbank Frequently Asked Questions. For people calling from outside Santa Barbara County: 800-400-1572.

Those in need of Covid-19-related assistance of any kind may reach out to the [Santa Barbara Public Health Department](http://www.publichealthsb.org) at [www.publichealthsb.org](http://www.publichealthsb.org), [www.211santabarbaracounty.org](http://www.211santabarbaracounty.org), or by calling 211.

The Foodbank is grateful to [Route4Me](http://Route4Me.com) for providing free access to their platform that supports home delivery scheduling.

**NATIONAL GUARD:** The Foodbank's request for National Guard support has been approved. The Santa Barbara County deployment, which begins Friday, March 27, is the first to take place in Southern California since the opportunity became available.

Initially, 20 National Guard personnel will join the Foodbank for two weeks to provide skilled labor support to meet increased operational volunteer/staffing needs. Number of personnel and length of deployment will be re-assessed as the crisis unfolds.

"These 20 National Guard members will offer an immediate benefit since we recently doubled our space with two temporary warehouses," noted Paul Wilkins, the Foodbank's chief operations officer.

"As our Covid-19 operations continue to expand, we expect we'll need to ask for another 20 to 40 troops and a longer deployment to assist with ongoing food distributions and resupply hubs we're establishing throughout the county to support our increasing senior home deliveries."

Under supervision by Foodbank staff and partner organizations, the troops will serve in the Foodbank's two permanent warehouses, two additional temporary warehouses, at SAFE Food Net emergency food distribution sites and as part of SAFE Home Delivery, the Foodbank's comprehensive senior food home delivery initiative.

### **END 3.26.2020 UPDATES**

**SAFETY:** With notification from Governor Newsom that all of California is on lockdown, the community may be assured that all **Foodbank distributions and volunteer service fall into the sanctioned category of "essential services"** and community members may participate with the full support of the State of California, and the Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center, Public Health Department, and Sheriff's Department

"We established the SAFE Food Net to emphasize to the community that all Foodbank operations are conducted under impeccable safety protocols, with strict adherence to CDC and County Public Health recommendations," explained **Erik Talkin**, Foodbank of Santa Barbara County CEO.

"The health, and most immediately the **safety**, of community members receiving food, our volunteers and partners, our drivers and our staff, is our utmost priority. The community can be confident in the safety and accessibility of all Foodbank operations."

Hand washing, sanitizer, disposable gloves and social distancing are all employed meticulously in all Foodbank interactions.

Of the 50 SAFE Food Net distributions the Foodbank is operating, nearly 20 brand new emergency **drive-thru food distributions** make receiving healthy food fast, easy, discreet and **extremely safe**. Visiting community members answer three brief questions at the first stop: name, number in household and whether this is the first time they're receiving food this month. At the second stop, volunteers load food bags into the back of the vehicle, and recipients drive away with healthy groceries and fresh produce.

**HOME DELIVERY FOR SENIORS:** Annually, the Foodbank serves 20,000 low-income seniors across the county. All of those enrolled in the Foodbank's Brown Bag programs will receive food delivered to their homes.

Due to senior quarantine recommendations, all seniors (60 and over, or 55 and over with a disability who self-certify, no doctor's note required) may call 211 the Foodbank to sign up to receive SAFE Food

Net healthy groceries and fresh produce at home. If calling from outside the area, people can call 800-400-1572.

Individual volunteer drivers may sign up to for home delivery routes; bags are left on doorsteps.

In addition to its corps of individual volunteer drivers, the Foodbank is partnering with the following local organizations to implement home deliveries: Community Partners in Caring in Santa Maria, Family Services Agency in Lompoc, and Easy Lift in Santa Barbara and other areas.

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**INCREASED NEED FOR FOOD:** A visible, and staggering, increase in need for food is evolving throughout the county.

“The increase in demand was unbelievable last week. We normally host a monthly mobile food pantry that serves 125 families at Santa Rita apartments,” detailed Jamie Diggs, Foodbank partner services manager. “Our new emergency food distribution right next door at Lompoc Boys & Girls Club was due to begin at 1 p.m. on Friday. At 10 a.m., 200 families were already lined up waiting for food.”

“I was giving an interview for KTAS Telemundo in Santa Maria today where we normally serve 75 families and they couldn’t even get any action shots of the distribution because it ended in 15 minutes,” said Genesis Gutierrez, Foodbank community programs supervisor. “Starting Wednesday, we’ll be serving 200 families three times a week there, reaching 600 families in one week.”

Late last week, the **Disaster Feeding Plan Task Force** convened for the first time. Member organizations reported the response they’ve seen to food distribution.

Carpinteria Children’s Project usually provides food at a distribution to 120 families, but served 280 families last Wednesday. Salvation Army reports seeing more families in one day at its Hollister Ave. location than they usually see in a month. Community Action Commission, serving lunch at 13 sites, reports that while they normally serve 150 people a day, they saw 260 per day last week. Santa Barbara Unified School District served 3,600 lunches in its first four days of operation since schools closed.

Other participants at the Feeding Plan Task Force activation include County of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Management/Emergency Operations Center and Public Health Department, Red Cross, Southern Baptist Church, City of Carpinteria, City of Santa Maria Fire Department and Community Long-Term Recovery Group.

**ADDITIONAL WAREHOUSES:** The Foodbank has signed lease agreements for additional warehouse space in both Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, doubling storage space and expanding volunteer service space to ensure greater numbers of volunteers can maintain social distancing at their shifts to enable the Foodbank to keep up with demand for pre-packed bags of food.

Last week, to meet growing need, the Foodbank purchased \$100,000 in food that is difficult to source by donation. Nonperishable staples cost \$70,000. Additional produce needed cost \$22,000; \$7,000 was spent on eggs; and \$2,000 went to purchasing tortillas/bread.

USDA and TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) emergency food is on its way and the new facilities allow for the Foodbank to process and store more community donations as well.

Individuals may drop off home-grown produce or non-perishable foods at either of the Foodbank's regular warehouses. Institutions and businesses with food to donate should call (805) 967-5741 to arrange for drop-off or pickup.

Local updates and recommendations regarding COVID-19 are available from the [Santa Barbara County Public Health Department](#).

**About the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County**

The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County is transforming hunger into health by eliminating food insecurity through good nutrition and food literacy. The Foodbank provides nourishment and education through a network of more than 300 nonprofit community partners and more than 1,500 volunteers. In Santa Barbara County, one in four people receive food support from the Foodbank, which equates to more than 190,000 unduplicated people, 40% of whom are children. Last year, the Foodbank distributed 10 million pounds of food – nearly half of which was fresh produce. The Foodbank is assuming a major leadership role in countywide disaster preparedness with initiatives including disaster food boxes, disaster feeding plan, establishing a new south county warehouse and updating our trucks for safer food storage and transport. For more information, visit [www.foodbanksbc.org](http://www.foodbanksbc.org).

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