



Pandemic Response Report - March 2021

How COVID-19 impacted CSA operations, programs, and the community we serve:

COVID-19 has profoundly impacted our operations, programs, and community. We have enrolled approximately 1,300 new client households since the start of the pandemic as economic strain has been felt across the board. Our operations have shifted to focus on providing rental assistance and meeting the food needs of our clients. Over 1,000 households have benefited from at least one month of rental assistance, with many receiving two or three months of rent. Food pantry operations have moved to the parking lot to safely distribute groceries. Our Senior Nutrition Program has also shifted to providing senior lunches outdoors and has seen increased numbers of seniors in need of food, now averaging 190 per weekday.

With every shutdown that has occurred, our clients have faced dire economic circumstances since many work in the service industry at restaurants, hotels, and other similar jobs. Many owe several months of back rent, which they will have to pay when eviction moratoriums come to an end.

Significant organizational/project accomplishments during the past year:

Our biggest accomplishment has been processing nearly 2,000 rent checks for first, second and third months' rent since the start of the pandemic, with expenditures now totaling over \$4 million through a partnership with the City of Mountain View and the support of other donors. Nearly all rent relief (97%) has been provided to households earning 80% and below of the Area Median Income (AMI), with nearly 60% going to families at or below 30% of AMI.

Other top accomplishments include pivoting to outdoor food service for our food pantry and Senior Nutrition programs and launching a COVID-19 Positive Relief Team. The latter contacts individuals in the community who have recently tested positive for COVID and offers to deliver groceries, hygiene products, and other needed supplies to their home so they can safely quarantine at home and don't risk the health of others in the community.

Some of the challenges during the past year:

Our top challenges have been meeting increasing need, especially for rent; pivoting operations to meet COVID safety protocols while taking care of as many people as possible (e.g., locating food distributions and case management outdoors), dealing with a diminishing number of volunteers and keeping everyone – clients, volunteers, staff and community partners -- safe.

The largest challenge we have faced is the overwhelming scale of need. To date, we have received 2,740 inquiries about our rental assistance program, and many of these came in the first days of the pandemic. Our phone line and email system could barely keep up. We still have inquiries coming in for first month rent, although we are now processing many second and third month checks.

Another challenge was the logistics of moving operations outdoors and keeping our staff, volunteers, and clients safely masked and six feet apart while continuing service. We have managed this challenge for our food pantry and Senior Nutrition operations; however, in-person case management remains difficult, so case management is mostly conducted over the phone.

We continue to struggle with volunteer numbers since many volunteers are unable to safely come in. Another challenge is forming a plan to bring remote staff back in large numbers.

Summary statistics from the past year:

- The agency gained 1,300 new client households, up from an average of 200 in a typical year.
- Our Food & Nutrition Center and Senior Nutrition Program pivoted to outdoor/drive through services to keep the community safely fed. On average, nearly 200 seniors now pick up lunch each weekday, up from around 130 pre-pandemic. Additionally, CSA is delivering groceries to approximately 70 senior households each week.
- The Rental Assistance Program ramped up quickly, serving over 1,000 households, many with up to three months' rent. Over \$4 million has already been spent, in partnership with the City of Mountain View and other supporters.
- The newly-launched COVID Positive Relief Team, which delivers groceries and supplies to those diagnosed with COVID so they can safely quarantine at home, has already served 96 households.

Top priorities and goals for the next year:

Our top priority is continuing to meet the needs of the community while keeping staff, volunteers, and clients safe. We hope to begin bringing back remote staff and recruiting more volunteers so that we have more manpower for our programs. We are also focusing on new facilities to house our programs, including a new temporary building site. And, of course, to meet increased need, we continue to be vigilant in communicating to our supporters both our appreciation and continuing need for their philanthropic support.

How the Pandemic Has Impacted Specific Programs

Homeless Prevention Services (HPS): In response to the pandemic, HPS has turned more of its focus to rental assistance compared to the past. Rental assistance has always been an integral part of our program, but now - more than ever - we are seeing how important it is to keep families housed for their health and well-being. A significant percentage of HPS clients have lost their incomes or had hours cut due to the shutdowns, especially in the restaurant and other service sectors. Many clients live paycheck to paycheck which puts them at high risk of losing their housing.

Homeless Services Program (HSP): Throughout this pandemic, CSA has stayed nimble in order to provide services to the most vulnerable members of the community. Case management has been offered mostly over the phone. However, many unhoused clients lack access to working phones or chargers. With some creativity, and generators and tents set up in the parking lot, we are back to serving many of these clients with in-person case management. Early in the pandemic, CSA worked with the city of Mountain View to install hygiene stations outside our agency and other parts of the city. We have been giving unhoused clients hand sanitizer, masks and other essential supplies.

Food & Nutrition Center (FNC): The FNC has always focused on helping fill the gaps of food insecurity. When the pandemic began, it quickly became evident that the role of food services like ours would be needed even more. We had to adapt rather quickly to the changing client landscape and new health and safety guidelines in place. Our services went from an indoor market to a pre-bagged food distribution held outdoors almost overnight, pitching tents and tables in our parking lot to ensure we continued to provide food resources to our community members in need. Although donations have shifted to more non-perishables, the program still continues to focus on the benefits of providing our clients with fresh produce, dairy, and proteins. Even with occasional kinks in supply chains resulting in limited quantities at times, the FNC still pushed out over 600,000 pounds of food over the year, with almost 50% in fresh produce.

Over the past year, we have seen the faces behind the masks coming through our gates change as well. We saw a decline in the most vulnerable seniors coming onsite for food pick up, yet still needing food. The FNC joined forces with our Senior Services case managers to increase our food delivery to those homebound clients, seeing the number of deliveries almost double weekly. The number of larger households with children was another segment hard hit by the economic impacts of COVID. We also started to see more people coming to get food for the first time, individuals that prior to this pandemic would not have been counted among the food insecure.

The community response to the pandemic in supporting this program has been overwhelming - from whole neighborhoods setting up ongoing food drives to support their neighbors, continuing emails and phone calls inquiring about how to drop off food donations, an outpouring of Holiday Sharing gift card donations and most recently, increasing interest in volunteering again.

Senior Services: A year ago, when Santa Clara County declared a state of emergency, advising persons 60+ and those with known medical conditions to remain sheltered and use extreme caution, this recommendation impacted every one of our clients. Doctors' offices were switching to phone and video appointments and only doing in-person appointments for medical emergencies. Clients were unable to go to the store for food, and relied on our case managers to bring them groceries from our on-site food pantry. Our case managers switched from doing regular in-person routine check-ins to over the phone check-ins, only visiting clients when it was absolutely necessary.

At the same time, we were inundated with dozens of phone calls from community members referring neighbors, friends, and family for services needed due to COVID. We had to adapt our senior case management services to allow us to best serve the current need from our community, but at the same time, provide safety for both the case manager and the client. We changed our intake process, conducting the majority of assessments over the phone and meeting in person only for important signatures and documents. We were able to address the concern of client transportation by creating a system to effectively sanitize our vehicles every time our case managers transported our clients to only the most critical medical appointments.

Senior Nutrition Program (SNP): Pre-pandemic, CSA's Senior Nutrition Program was an indoor dining environment serving an average of 133 meals per day, Monday through Friday, at the Mountain View Senior Center. When the Senior Center closed due to the pandemic, we were able to arrange to prepare meals onsite and set up an outdoor drive through. This adaptation has surpassed our expectations; we are serving an average of 190 meals per day and some days, as many as 230 meals.

Additionally, we added a temporary new service – delivering the cooked meals from our site at the Mountain View Senior Center – to the homes of the most at-risk sheltering in place senior clients. To do this, we had to come up with new ways to package and distribute the meals. We had some food shortage issues (e.g., our milk supplier went out of business, and we also had to substitute many food options due to supply demands). Since all of our volunteers for the program were over the age of 65 and required to shelter in place, this left our program very short staffed. However, with help from volunteers from the city of Mountain View and the city of Los Altos, we were able to continue operating as close to our new normal as possible.

Volunteers: As a result of the pandemic, our volunteer-driven departments have been impacted in many ways. As mentioned previously, many of our regular volunteers, at least half of our entire volunteer corps, are retired older adults who fall into the high-risk category and therefore are not able to volunteer during these challenging times. Fortunately, a number of new people have reached out to volunteer, and we have made valuable connections with companies, civic organizations and faith congregations. Our numbers are slowly increasing as people are more comfortable and willing to get back into the groove of volunteering while taking all safety precautions. Word of mouth is powerful and we can grow and heal in this pandemic with one volunteer at a time.

Community Navigator Program (CNP): The Community Navigator Program (CNP) continues to help our clients and community members navigate important resources and services during these unprecedented times. The department introduced a weekly video log - “Making it Work Mondays” - to help the community stay updated on current and modified services at CSA, as well as community resources to ensure equity and accessibility during a time of heightened fear for many of our underserved populations.

Life didn’t just pause last March. Many of our clients continue to have real every day fears on top of the pandemic – whether it’s due to their economic, migratory or social status or other issues. The CNP successfully continues to provide educational workshops and legal clinics centralized on economic rights, immigration, and tenant rights on a regular basis.

It is no surprise that COVID-19 has impacted us all. It is visible by the passing of days, months, and *now an entire year*. The CNP explored, expanded, and developed the COVID-19 Positive Relief Team to support the community’s immediate needs for their quarantine efforts by connecting them to rental assistance, and delivering food and COVID care packages.

The CNP remains committed to supporting our community’s overall economic, physical, and equitable health through education and accessibility.

Challenge Diabetes Program: The Challenge Diabetes Program has been modified to fully online due to the pandemic. Despite the difficulties of going virtual, the Challenge Diabetes Program is providing engaging virtual classes, educational material by mail and veggie Rx vouchers.