COVID-19 General Focus Check-In Meeting Notes
Tuesday, June 21, 2022
Participants: 54

Agenda

- **Schedule:** Tuesday – General Focus Meeting – Once per Month
- **Presenters:** Northwest Harvest Updates – Thomas Reynolds, CEO; DOH WIC Formula Shortage Update – Jen Mitchell, MS, RD
- **Updates** (if time allows):
  - WSDA Focus on Food & We Feed WA & LFPA: Katie Rains
  - Washington Food Coalition – Trish Twomey
  - Harvest Against Hunger – David Bobanick
  - Advocacy Update – Aaron Czyzewski, Christina Wong, Claire Lane

Next Meetings.:

- Friday: July 8, 9:00 am – Contractor Only
- Tuesday: July 19, 9:00 am – General Check-In Meeting
- FAAC: July 22, 9:30 – Food Assistance Advisory Meeting

Minutes

**Northwest Harvest: Equitable Access to Nutritious Food for All in Washington – Thomas Reynolds, CEO**

I. Vision of Northwest Harvest: End hunger in Washington state by achieving equitable access to nutritious food for all.

II. Specific Goal – Set in 2018
   a. Cut food insecurity in half by 2028.
      - Rural communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected by food insecurity.
   b. What this meant: Reduce the ratio from 1:8 (2018) food insecure Washingtonians to 1:16 (by 2028).

III. Theory of Change – What is it?
   a. Theory of Change (ToC) is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used in the philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote societal change. Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions.
   b. Old vs New
      - O: Pounds distributed is the key metric.
      - N: Number of food insecure people is the key metric.
IV. Centering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color experiences
   a. Historically, resources flow to a limited set of well-established organizations.
   b. First-person experience has no substitute.
   c. Northwest Harvest’s own shift
      • 80% of leadership team identifies as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color.
      • Strategies explicitly focus on Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color.

V. Conclusion
   a. “It always seems impossible until it’s done” – Nelson Mandela
   b. “Success has 1000 authors, failure but one scapegoat” – Chinese Proverb

VI. Questions posed to WSDA with answers following NWH presentation:
   a. Q: Is this shift going to occur in primarily the west side of the state rather than east side?
      • A: This is a strategy being implemented statewide.
   b. Q: How are NWH gift cards being distributed?
      • A: Currently only about 18% of the gift cards distributed are getting used, which makes it challenging to actually increase the quantity of gift cards available to food pantries. If you have gift cards, give them to anyone who could use one as quickly as possible. This year, gift cards were distributed prioritizing smaller, non-traditional organizations such as schools, community-based organizations, and BIPOC led organizations.
   c. Q: How can people stay up to date on this type of information? This was new to many people and has caught several communities off-guard.
      • A: NWH will try to improve communication strategies. People can sign up for their quarterly newsletter and keep an eye on their website. This information has been on their website since roughly 2018 when the plan was developed. Also Instagram and Facebook are good ways to stay updated on their priorities.
   d. Q: What will happen to the organizations traditionally receiving food from NWH?
      • A: They have been doing a lot of work to identify who most needs support from NWH and have found that well-resourced organizations are lower priorities for them to be receiving food from NWH. Those that are well-resourced will be invited to partner with NWH for advocacy, education, and system-change efforts. NWH will be prioritizing sending food to organizations determined to have very little resources (food and/or money).
        1. Determinations will be made by financial stability, how much product an organization is getting from NWH, and whether or not they receive EFAP/TEFAP commodities. Will also be looking at whether an organization aligns with NWH’s Theory of Change in terms of who they serve and who is leading the organization.
2. More information will be shared soon in their Quarterly Newsletter about the timeline for implementing these partnership changes.
e. Q: Why has there been a significant decrease in the frequency of NWH representatives at food coalition meetings? Several coalitions have mentioned not having someone from NWH attend in quite a while.
   • A. They will work on getting someone to attend those meetings more often. Carmen Mendez is a great person to reach out to and invite to those coalition meetings to get someone there.

Infant Formula Shortage Updates – Jennifer Mitchell, MS, RD

I. What Happened?
   a. COVID-19
      i. Supply chain issues have worsened due to COVID.
   b. Abbott Laboratories
      i. Manufacturer that Washington WIC contracts with to provide formula through the WIC program.
      ii. They are 1 of 3 major formula makers in US.
      iii. Pre-recall Abbott was meeting ~40% of national formula need.
          1. On 2/17/2022 there was a voluntary recall on formulas.
          2. Shutting down Sturgis, MI plant.
          3. Allegations of Cronobacter bacteria contamination in formula, getting infants sick.
          4. Exclusively made powder alimentum, powder Similac for spit-up and powder Similac total comfort. All three are used in WIC.
      iv. 1 of 3 Abbot plants are making Powder Similac Sensitive, and Powder Similac Advance.
      v. The recall did not include any metabolic formulas.

II. Responses:
   a. Federal response: FDA announced a public health advisory
      i. Occurred right after Abbott voluntary recall.
      ii. USDA provided WIC waivers
          1. Allow stores to treat WIC families like all other families.
          2. Provide exchange, cash refund, store credit/gift card.
          3. Waive need to use medical documentation form for non-contract standard formulas.
          4. Waive Maximum Monthly Allowance requirements.
   b. State response: Department of Health. Recall huddles:
      i. Daily for 3 weeks.
      ii. Twice a week for 2 weeks.
      iii. Once a week currently.
   c. Department of Health provided resources located here.
i. Available in 17 language formats.
ii. Partner toolkit, including: Talking points; Links to resources; FAQ; Social media posts; Email template for sharing information with parents and caregivers.

d. WIC response:
   i. Went from 13 formulas in the formulary to 60 formulas.
      1. Currently adding 13 more formulas from other countries.
      2. All formula offerings are identified on the Authorized Infant Formula website.
   ii. Communicating directly with participants using the WIC shopper app.
      1. 90% of WIC families use this app.
      2. Push notifications get sent out through the app.
      3. Banner with links informing parents with what is going on.

III. Current state
   a. Access to Infant Formula Act: Allows for USDA to respond in an emergency, even non-COVID situation.
   b. Operation Fly Formula
      i. USDA is working with the Biden administration to provide formula from other countries.
      ii. We still don’t know:
         1. When the formula will be available.
         2. Where the formula will be available.
         3. How long the formula will be available.
      iii. Available to all WA families, not just WIC families.
      iv. Waivers for foreign-made formulas – some have a little less iron and a little less protein.
   c. Abbott update (OUTDATED – THERE WAS MAJOR FLOODING & DAMAGE AT THE STURGIS PLANT)
      i. Sturgis, MI plant reopened 6/4/22
         1. Focus is to produce EleCare & Alimentum (metabolic formulas).
         2. Projected 6-8 weeks for supply to reach shelves.
   d. Similac Advance in stores: Encouraging families to use. Families are very hesitant and have a lack of confidence in the safety.

IV. Links and contacts:
   • U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Social media toolkit
   • USDA, Press release website
   • American Academy of Pediatrics. Formula Shortage Response Statement
   • National WIC Association. Social medial toolkit
   • Contacts:
      a. Dept of Health: Eloise Harris: eloise.harris@doh.wa.gov
      b. WIC: Jennifer Mitchell: jennifer.mitchell@doh.wa.gov