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**GREAT PLAINS FOOD BANK - COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)
PARTNER AGENCY FAQ AND MEDIA RESPONSE**

**OVERVIEW**Each partner agency of the Great Plains Food Bank is unique in the fact that each serve a different client base and face different circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Partner agencies should always be encouraged to visit with media outlets when they are contacted to spread the word about the important work that you are doing. When appropriate, be honest about your situation, speak kindly of your volunteers, staff or the Great Plains Food Bank and if there is a way the public can help you please make this plea to the media audience. Discuss the challenges that you face without throwing anyone under the bus and remember that the public wants to help during these difficult times.

Below are some key talking points to assist with any interactions with the media.

**How is the Great Plains Food Bank working with its partner agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic?**
The Great Plains Food Bank has been in consistent discussions with its partner food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens to determine how to best fill the critical needs of its clients during this difficult time. The Great Plains Food Bank remains the chief source of food for many of its partner agencies and the abilities for all organizations to work together is crucial. The Great Plains Food Bank has dedicated staff having regular communication with its partner agencies along with hosting weekly calls with all agencies to communicate concerns and solutions.

**Are food donations lacking due to COVID-19?**As is the case with many food banks and food pantries across the country, food donations have been lacking due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of food donations coming into the Great Plains Food Bank and many food pantries are supplied by the food industry. With more of this product being purchased from the shelves, retail stores have less to donate. This leads to needing to purchase more food when available, which has also has been limited at times.

**Are partner agencies seeing an increase in those in need of food assistance?**While each partner food pantry may be different, a number of partner agencies across the state are seeing an increased demand for food assistance during this time. This is also true for the Great Plains Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry, which has seen increases in the number of households at recent distributions. As long as we continue to fight this pandemic, we expect this to continue to be the case.

**Is the Great Plains Food Bank and its partner food pantries continuing to host volunteers during the pandemic?**Now more than ever volunteers are critical to providing the needed food assistance to our clients. The Great Plains Food Bank along with many of its partner food pantries continue to welcome volunteers under heightened sanitary conditions and guidelines. A list of those guidelines can be found [**HERE**](https://www.greatplainsfoodbank.org/covid-19/volunteer-response.html).

**How can the public help during this difficult time?**Both food and monetary donations always make an important difference for those struggling with food insecurity. As many partner food pantries have seen their food donations suffer during this time, both monetary and food donations can help make a difference for many struggling. Partner food pantries and the Great Plains Food Bank will be asked to make additional food purchases when the opportunity exists to do so and having funding for food purchasing is important. Volunteers are also of critical importance at this time (see question above).

**What happens if a representative of a partner agency, volunteer or clients tests positive for COVID-19?**
At any point in time that a representative becomes infected or show symptoms of COVID-19, the individual will be removed from the situation and required to seek necessary care.

**What is your partner agency doing to protect against COVID-19?**While the Great Plains Food Bank and its partner agencies continue to provide a crucial service for those in need during this difficult time, necessary precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Operations continue under heightened sanitary precautions and all safe social distancing practices need to be maintained. If any volunteer or food pantry or food bank staff have traveled outside of the country or any areas considered hot spots for COVID-19, they are asked to remove themselves from the situation for the necessary 14 days.

**With schools currently being closed, how are the needs of children being met?**
The Great Plains Food Bank continues to serve children and families through its BackPack Program, Mobile Food Pantry and network of partner food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens, which are all continuing operation. A number of schools across the state, which includes schools in Fargo, West Fargo, Bismarck and Minot among others, are offering lunches served to students in spite of the current shut down.

**Is COVID-19 transferable through food product?**
According to Feeding America, the virus is not transmitted through food or water. It is transmitted primarily through close personal contact.

*From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):* Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Before preparing or eating food, it is important to always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety. Throughout the day, wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, or going to the bathroom. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.