

COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Santa Clara County
Senior Nutrition Program



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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused Senior Nutrition Programs to adapt to continuous changes of guidance recommendations by federal, state, and local governments.

In response to COVID-19, social distancing protocols completely changed the food service delivery model and increased the demand in meals served. Public health mandates required the Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) to transition the service model providing to-go meals as well as limited home-delivered meals prepared by a congregate meal provider. The goals of this program are to reduce food insecurity, hunger, and promote health through nutritious meals. These goals have become more vital during the pandemic as over 17,000 meals are served daily at 37 sites. Strong partnerships and dedicated staff have been essential in providing more meals to older adults during the pandemic. Over the last fiscal year, SNP has responded to the crisis of a pandemic with dedication and determination to serve older adults in our community. Our challenges and creative solutions are learning opportunities that will strengthen the program in the coming years.

RESPOND

1. Eligibility & Assessment for Home-Delivery Meals



BACKGROUND

SNP is a Santa Clara County program that administers nutrition programs for older adults (age 60 years or older) and their spouse, and disabled individuals living with a senior enrolled in the program. Most Home-delivered meals (HDM) assessments have been conducted by phone to minimize social contact during the COVID-19 crisis. To expand congregate and HDM services, SNP received Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) from Sourcewise (March 20, 2020 - June 30, 2020). SNP was awarded \$100,432 to expand meals provided to congregate meal services and \$240,000 to expand HDM services.

RESPOND

1. Eligibility & Assessment for Home-Delivery Meals

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Sites Expanded Home Delivery

Services while Sheltering in Place

Yu Ai Kai, Morgan Hill and POSSO

As congregate dining sites suspended onsite dining, clients who were receiving transportation to the site via a site sponsored van were transitioned to the HDM program.

Expanded Home-Delivered Meal

Programs to Assisted Living

Salvation Army, La Comida and ICC Milpitas expanded their programs to accommodate the increased demand of home delivered meals and delivered meals to assisted living facilities in their vicinity. Salvation Army delivered meals to Shires Memorial Assisted Living, La Comida delivered to Lytton Gardens, and ICC Milpitas delivered to Priya Assisted Living. SNP created and implemented new policies and procedures for HDM's.



Model Switched from Hot Meals to Cold Meals for Reduced Contact

AACI changed service model from 4 days/week to 2 days/week serving a hot meal and up to 3 frozen meal options.

Alviso and Vista Blind center switched from hot daily meals to frozen meals and in addition, grocery items were delivered once a week.

SNP HDM Program

TRIO Home Delivered Meals- Weekly meal service delivery to eligible older adults who have been sheltering-in-place during COVID-19.

Approximately 1,300 additional sheltering-in-place participants received home-delivered meals.

RESPOND

2. Promoting Health and Well-Being

BACKGROUND

Promoting health and well-being is one SNP's goals and requires the creation of programs that address healthy lifestyles, including physical, nutritional, and emotional support. Methods used to approach the health concerns of older adults have been through wellness calls, surveys, videos, nutrition education handouts, and vaccination clinics.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Telehealth Survey

In May 2020, when four nutrition sites closed their doors due to the pandemic, SNP collaborated with San Jose State University, School of Nursing to initiate a Telehealth survey to check the well-being of participants who regularly attended these sites. This survey identified older adults who were food insecure, socially isolated, and connected them with available community resources. These students provided customized nutrition education approved by the program dietitian and conducted follow up calls if the participant requested. This telehealth survey was conducted on



- 30 respondents (17%) were not able to shop for their own groceries
- 60 respondents (34%) did not know that they were still eligible to pick-up meals at other SNP locations.

participants who went to sites that closed in addition to some newly enrolled COVID MOW clients. There were 174 surveys collected. 30 respondents (17%) were not able to shop for groceries on their own and 60 respondents (34%) did not know that they were still eligible to pick-up meals at other SNP meal locations.

In addition, SJSU nursing students were able to complete their course requirements and graduate in May.

RESPOND

2. Promoting Health and Well-Being

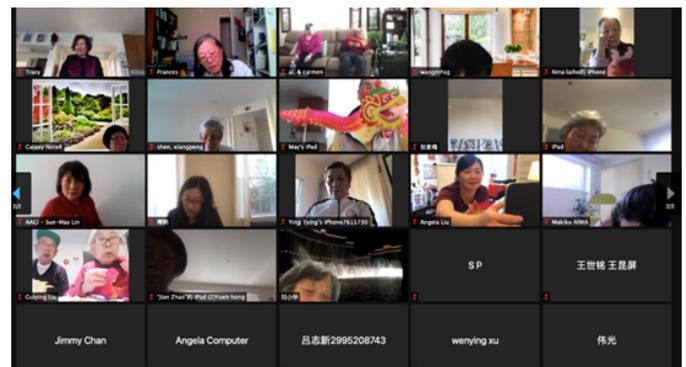
Vaccination Clinics

AACI, Gilroy and Mt. View opened their doors and hosted several vaccine events to ensure a widespread vaccination effort in the older adult community. The vaccination site at the Mountain View Community Center provided up to 1,000 shots per day.



Virtual Nutrition Education, Cultural Celebrations and Physical Activity

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AACI, KACS, Vista Blind center, Self Help, ICC, Sunnyvale moved the older adult wellness classes virtually. Topics ranged from ESL, Smartphone, Zumba, Yoga, and Health Seminars were offered. AACI- Cultural events were held through zoom including, a Holiday party and a Lunar celebration.



Senior Nutrition Program on Social Media

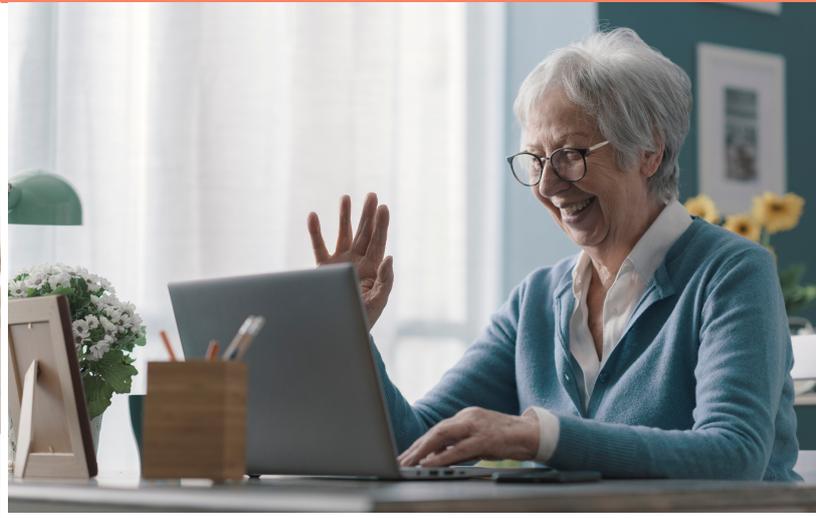
Times called for the Senior Nutrition Program to make a presence on social media. SNP staff created informational videos on precautions to take during COVID-19 and another video promoting the importance of vaccination. These videos were translated in 4 languages to reach maximum number of participants.

**SNP Response to COVID-19:
[Click here](#)**

**The Importance of Vaccination:
[Click here](#)**

RESPOND

3. Socialization: Fostering Human Connection



BACKGROUND

The Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) has been offering older adults a place to eat and socialize for over 45 years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person congregate dining transitioned to a to-go model service and home-delivered meals. The transition provided older adults with healthy meals; however, the older adults are at risk of loneliness due to increased social isolation. Loneliness is strongly correlated with increased risk of mental health issues as well as restricted physical ability and multi-morbidity in older adults. SNP's congregate meals program helps decrease the risk of loneliness by increasing social isolation through fostering friendships and providing events such as exercise and nutrition classes. Also, by offering creative solutions for socialization through phone calls or digital technology.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Food, Friends, and Fun Pilot Program

To help prevent an increase in social isolation that could lead to loneliness, SNP implemented the Food, Friends, and Fun pilot program as a way for older adults to virtually socialize through conversation. The goal of the Food, Friends, and Fun program was to increase social interaction among older adults while reducing social isolation and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Televisit is a non-profit who helps connect older adults through phone or tablet/computer using a portal system. They provided the teleconference phone call portal that allowed the participants to connect to Food, Friends, and Fun virtual meetups.

RESPOND

3. Socialization: Fostering Human Connection

There were three different groups in the program- an English, Spanish, and Chinese speaking group. Participants were from 4 different sites: Mayfair, Eastside, Blind Center, and Self-Help for the Elderly. Topics discussed included food trivia, and quizzes, travel, falls prevention, emergency preparedness, and more. A question of the day was included for each session, a few examples were: Where was your favorite vacation? Who was your best friend and how did you meet him/her? And if you had a chef for the day- what would you have them make for you? No diets involved! After the program, some of the participants exchanged phone numbers and met at their sites for lunch which provided more opportunity for socialization. Comments from participants were:

"The program makes me happy about learning new things."

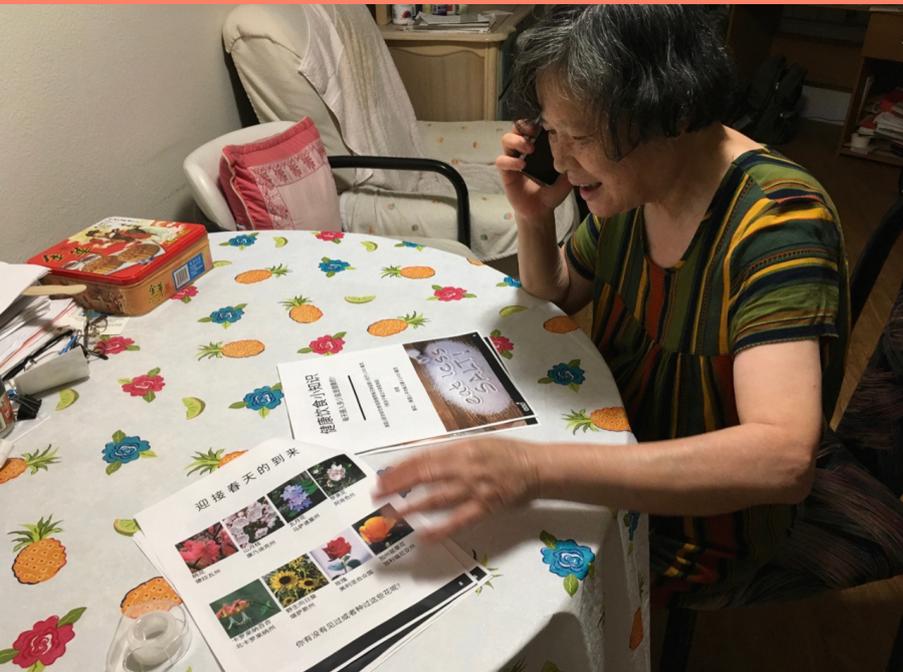
"Gives me a chance to be social."

"Very informative."

"Gives me the opportunity to meet others and be interactive."

RESPOND

3. Socialization: Fostering Human Connection



Collaboration between AACI and Televisit

With the concerns of social isolation with older adults sheltering-in-place, AACI in partnership with Televisit, offered phone-based interacting programs and emotional wellness sessions to home-bound older adults on a weekly basis. This program has been connecting over 120 older adults where 85% live alone, 80% are monolingual, and 68% have mobility issues.

La Comida/First United Methodist Church at Palo Alto

Older adults sing and play musical instruments during meal service and provide entertainment while people enjoy their meals or pick one up to-go. Many participants sing along and move to the music while waiting to pick up their meal which creates a delightful mood.

RESPOND

4. Local Community Food Coordination and Nutrition Partnerships

BACKGROUND

In addition to SNP meals, community food programs help provide meals and nutrition assistance either on a temporary or on-going basis for participants that qualify. Meals provided through the Older Americans Act, or emergency funding may not be enough to meet an individual's nutritional needs. During the pandemic, in addition to traditional food assistance sources, faith-based and civic organizations have stepped up to support the community demands by providing food pantries, grocery deliveries, distribution of disposable meal supplies, and non-food supplies.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Second Harvest Food Bank and the Distribution of Groceries

Participants of Vista Blind Center received groceries from Second Harvest Food Bank. Vista Blind Center were provided two boxes of food items, twice a month, with two kinds of fruit and three kinds of vegetables, dry and canned products, a gallon or more of



milk and snacks (popcorn, multigrain chips, or breakfast bars). During the pandemic, participants received approximately 660 boxes.

Collaboration with Google and the Distribution of Shelf Stable Meals (SSM)

11,160 shelf stable meals were provided to the City of San Jose participants. With the support of partners such as Google, our SSM's were stored at a Google warehouse until distribution was complete.



RESPOND

4. Local Community Food Coordination and Nutrition Partnerships



Partnership with Salvation Army and the Distribution of Non-Food Supplies

When COVID-19 forced a shelter-in-place order, the congregate meal sites stopped all indoor dining and activities for the foreseeable future. All meals were pre-packaged using disposable products. To ensure the sites had the products needed for meal distribution,

SNP partnered with The Salvation Army-Silicon Valley and used its existing congregate meal site as a central supply hub. The Salvation Army's staff were highly skilled and capable of taking on the task of receiving and distributing purchased supplies.

Through coordination with SNP staff, the congregate sites were able to request and pick-up to-go containers, bowls, cups, and personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and hand sanitizers. At the helm of the supply hub was Debby Reynolds, the site manager for The Salvation Army. Debby and other essential staff were instrumental in ensuring that the supply hub had adequate supplies for distribution.

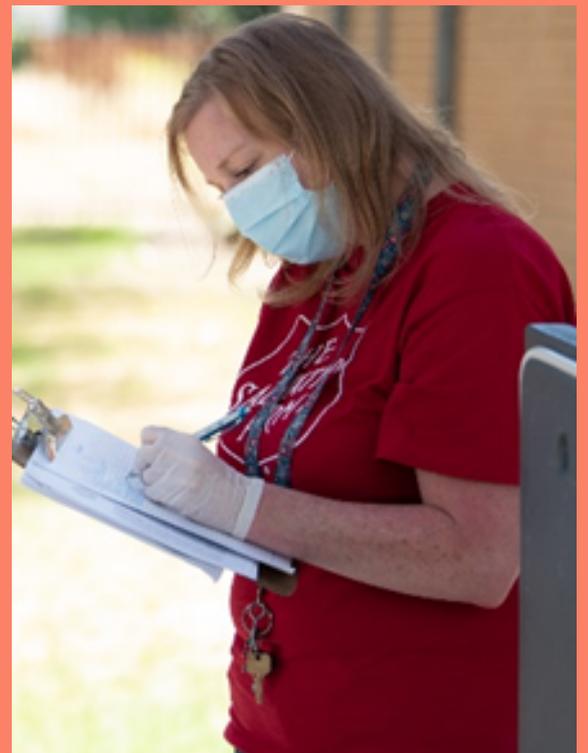
RESPOND

4. Local Community Food Coordination and Nutrition Partnerships



Through their efforts and collaboration, to-go meal service continues for the older adults throughout the community during COVID-19. Debby was awarded the President's Medal for exemplary service during the COVID-19 pandemic from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.

Debby Reynolds Awarded President's Medal for Exemplary Service During COVID-19 Pandemic, by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Debby, the Site Manager for Salvation Army-Silicon Valley, has been honored for organizing the Central Supply Warehouse when SNP sites switched from congregate meals to a to-go service model. Debby and the Salvation Army staff received and distributed to-go containers for packaging meals and personal protective equipment.



***"The staff here at the Salvation Army truly love what we do every day. We are all very grateful that we can serve and provide the essential services our community needs during these uncertain times. We work as a team, take care of one another, and serve our community with lots of love and laughter."
(Debby Reynolds)***

RESPOND

5. Program Operations Emergency Response



BACKGROUND

Meal distribution was never interrupted during the beginning of the shelter-in-place order when sites were abruptly forced to change from congregate dining to a to-go model. If a kitchen was closed suddenly due to a potential positive COVID test of an employee, meals were received from approved catered vendors, such as Big Tree BBQ, Di Lac Vegetarian Restaurant, Milan Sweets, Moon Chef, and Trio Community Meals. Emergency funding has been provided by FEMA, the Family First Care Relief Act, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), General Fund, Contributions, and Donations.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

SNP Launched Geographic Information System (GIS) Map

In early 2020, SNP launched a searchable Geographic Information System (GIS) map found on the SNP Website that clients can access online and be able to search nearby meal locations and determine best transportation routes. This has been an asset to the community to provide the most current information about meal service locations, days served, and cuisine offered as we have changed to to-go meals and curb side pick-up. During the first months of shelter-in-place, so much changed rapidly, and this platform made it easier to broadcast changes to a large audience.



RESPOND

5. Program Operations Emergency Response



Data Tracking

A process to track the total number of meals served was implemented to determine the increase in demand for meals and funding requirements during COVID-19. In addition to meal totals, the number of unique clients has been tracked and reported.

Response to Positive COVID-19 Cases

A protocol was implemented by the SNP to provide guidance to our sites when employees, volunteers, and others who work at the facility test positive or are exposed to a positive COVID-19 individual. Pivoting the Meal Service Program to Meet the Demand and Promote Food Access Adhering to government directives for

social distancing, SNP created a to-go protocol to offer increased safety to our older adults when picking up their meal. This included sanitizing registration areas, standing 6-feet apart while waiting and walking up to receive a meal, and driving up to receive a meal at curbside. Catholic Charities switched from a cook-on-site to a catered meal site and ordered meals from MoonChef Restaurant. Participants of ICC Milpitas shifted from picking up meals at the site to directly picking up meals at Milan Restaurant which is located 1.2 miles from the site.



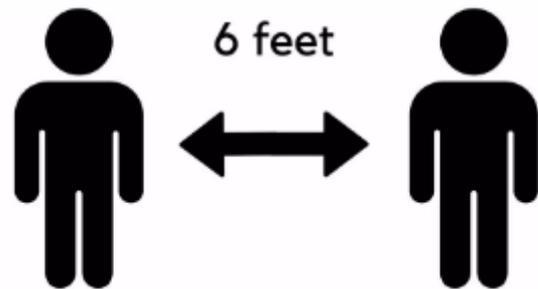
RESPOND

6. Food Preparation and Safety Protocols

BACKGROUND

Throughout the pandemic, SNP sites have been provided with protocols and procedures on how foods can be prepared and distributed safely to our older adults. Creating new food safety protocols was important when the model service changed from congregate to a to-go distribution. To provide a safe work environment for kitchen staff and volunteers, best practices based on CDC or local SCC mandates were communicated to the sites as soon as they were announced. Site Managers were given updates as they continued to evolve throughout the pandemic. The Site Managers attended training on reopening strategies provided by SNP. While continuing to serve an increased number of meals, nutrition requirements were met providing 1/3 of the Dietary Reference Intakes, including Vitamin A and C. Keeping older adults and site staff safe have been amongst the highest priorities during this time. Sites have created several strategies and procedures to limit social

**KEEP YOUR
DISTANCE PLEASE**



contacts, such as, reservations for meals, a drive through model, expanded hours to allow more pick-up times, contactless meal delivery, and home-delivered meal for some older adults who chose to shelter-in-place. Reopening guidelines were created by SNP to assist sites when reopening is safe, again. Establishing these protocols and guidelines will help support the sites and define a "new normal" for SNP.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Labels with Multilingual Instructions

The Senior Nutrition Program provided labels with multilingual instructions on how to safely reheat to-go containers. Insulated thermal bags were provided to sites offering home delivery services to safely transport and deliver meals.

RESPOND

6. Food Preparation and Safety Protocols



Social Distancing Protocol

Throughout the pandemic, the SNP has followed the latest safety guidance protocols from the CDC or Santa Clara County Public Health Department. Site managers were kept abreast of all the new orders that were mandated by the county.

To-Go and PPE Supplies

Throughout the pandemic, SNP provided all sites with face masks, gloves, sanitizing solutions, and other PPE supplies. For additional safety, plexiglass barriers were installed at registration tables.

Reopening Guidelines and Toolkit

The reopening of SNP sites and returning to a “new normal” required implementation of recommended measures which included, but not limited to, monitoring the health of employees and participants and sending home individuals who display any symptoms of COVID-19. A checklist was also provided to ensure sites are following mandatory safety standards for hygiene, staffing and operations, cleaning, and disinfecting.

plexiglass barriers were installed at registration tables.

BACKGROUND

The focus of this report has been on the emergency response from the Senior Nutrition Program during the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans and current solutions to support our staff and participants have been created to safely deliver meals while options for hybrid meal services expanded. Some participants have been cautious as we resume social interactions.



Developing online classes to limit social interactions has been a safer method to provide interaction. Communication through this technology will remain and grow as we navigate through the recovery phase. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to close the digital divide for older adults. SNP will collaborate with the Senior's Agenda to pilot innovative programming to address and attempt to close this digital and equity divide.

Challenges will continue as the pandemic surges forward; senior nutrition emergency funding resources may be impacted as the number of adults requesting meals increases. The commitment and resilience of our staff and older adults have reinforced strong partnerships in our program. Resuming "normal" operations will require that funding is adequate to continue current levels of service.



SNP will continue to slowly recover the process of dine-in services as it becomes safe to congregate and older adults feel comfortable resuming social activities. SNP created a transition plan to address site opening in a phased, slow approach and will consider the following as we move forward:

- Sites first resume programming for older adults.
- Based on site staff, the site may continue to-go meals as they transition back to dining-indoors.
- Spring 2022- more sites will be offering indoor dining as the COVID cases remain stable and continue to decrease.
- Site opening will be guided by local government regulations.
- Identify technology solutions from the response phase that can be continued. Going forward, use online portal websites to scan barcodes and continue to offer online registrations.

