

Accessing Food During COVID-19: Experiences of Families with Young Children Findings from the Family Strengths Research Study

Food for Families with Young Children: Many families face challenges safely getting the food they need during COVID-19. In particular, single parent families with young children struggle with getting food because they must bring their children along. Food pick up or delivery services are often not available or too expensive for families. Families with food assistance benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) still face challenges with food availability, transportation, and limited hours.



How are Families with Young Children Doing in Western PA?

Based on the [Family Strengths Survey](#), **increasing** numbers of families are using food assistance programs **more** than they did pre-pandemic:

- Over **20%** of families have used food assistance programs at a higher rate than before COVID-19.
- Over **10%** of families report needing **more** help from food assistance programs than they are receiving.

Families describe the challenges of accessing food that is available: *"I need help with food and I had to work and have no means of getting to food banks when I get off at 5pm. I have 4 kids in the house."* Families also struggle with getting food with their food assistance benefits due to restrictions: *"It is difficult to be a single, working from home mom... I have found that it is very hard to be able to get our WIC benefits. You have to go into the store to purchase WIC which I don't want to do with the kids... I wore both kids into the store so they couldn't touch anything. I wanted to get all of our benefits for the month so that we wouldn't have to go back. I found that there were many WIC items that were unavailable, especially the bread."*

These Great Programs Can Help:

PA 211 Southwest is a resource hotline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Trained Resource Navigators can refer individuals to appropriate food resources and delivery via phone, text, or chat. Call 2-1-1, text your zip code to 898-211, or webchat at pa211sw.org.



The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank has a COVID Concierge Hotline to assist individuals with accessing food benefits, food distribution sites, and home delivery. The hotline can be reached at 412-460-FOOD, extension 655. Additional food access resources are available at the Food Bank's website: <https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/get-help>



About this Study: The Family Strengths Study is a weekly survey of parents or expecting parents in Western PA. The study is a collaboration between UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP), University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), United Way, and the Allegheny County Health Department and Department of Human Services. This survey is part of the Pittsburgh Study and made possible through support from the CHP Foundation, Pitt Department of Pediatrics, The Grable Foundation, and The Shear Family Foundation. For more information, visit <https://www.pediatrics.pitt.edu/family-strengths-survey>



Who do I contact for more information?

For more information please contact: Family Strengths Survey team at PGHstudy@pitt.edu.