Improving SNAP and WIC utilization and operations

- What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?
  - Ways to make it easier to apply for SNAP and WIC. Example: 1) quickness 2) renewal process 3) amount of things you have to come up with 4) more people working with you to help in a situation
  - SNAP outreach workers going to DHS to assist. Parking is difficult. No access for the disabled. Step down as far as the office space. Maria reply: Closed on Elmwood with intent to open two Prov offices. Presented with challenges in opening Reservoir Ave space. Fountain Street is not compatible for the population. Trying workarounds - need to check with Maria on what those are. Advocate for Gov. budget this year.
  - Bills within GA requiring DHS to adopt a streamlined application for 60+ and disabled. Longer recert goes along with that, as well. Michele Mitchell: What about moms with young families who are undernourished. The process needs to be easier for them, as well.
  - How can we advocate to get DHS more support? Advocates can encourage Gov. Office to ensure they are properly staffed.

- What assets do you bring that could help that work get done? Also, what assets exist that you are aware of that can help this work to get done?
  - Advocacy. Can the task force write a letter to the Gov? Individual orgs can and RIFPC can help to draft the letter.
  - Language line within SNAP at present time. This question was asked, so I jotted the answer. @ allison: can you please send me the chat, as there is information there around pain points that we can try to address (Brady Dunklee chat). Can possibly address through CHW grant.
  - WIC: 90 days passed the PH emergency for waivers. So now they have until July.
  - When changes are made, please communicate to the AEs through Medicaid.
  - When HC Emergency ends, what can be done? Changes will happen: three month time limit to receive benefits (not good); college students with family with zero on the FAFSA won't be eligible. In RI, if we do away with the state emergency, clients will go back to their baseline SNAP level. We currently have flexibility in how we process apps. Will need to start doing interviews again in April. Recert process will change that can end benefits. @Maria plans to write up these buckets for this group. Have requested some of these new rules be permanent versus them ending. Pursuing internally within DHS.

- Would you want to have a working group meeting within the next 1-2 months?
  - What would we do? If we are going to advocate, then we need to meet to push the bills across the finish line. Don't duplicate meetings for the sake of meetings.

Food access and insecurity among students
● **What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?**
  ○ Universal school lunch - year round
  ○ Snack and supper options in addition to lunch, more summer access
  ○ College kids are not eligible for school meals - kids who are hungry also have hungry older siblings, parents, etc.
  ○ More education about learning environments and how they are tied to good access/hunger
  ○ Child nutrition sponsors
  ○ Broader support in advocating for funding
  ○ Meeting people where they are / identifying where need is (outdated data from 2019 is no reflective of current times)
  ○ Combat misinformation about funding “who is funding what?”
  ○ Easier forms / streamlined processes
  ○ Stronger collaboration w/ state agencies and CBO’s for benefits process
  ○ Dispel misinformation/stigma associated with access programs - reach out to families

● **What assets do you bring that could help that work get done? Also, what assets exist that you are aware of that can help this work to get done?**
  ○ Legal council for policy-side of things
  ○ Communications related to education
  ○ Relationships (admin, parent groups)
  ○ Advocacy with professional organizations
  ○ “Keeper of data”
  ○ Knowledge of regulations
  ○ Knowledge of sources of funding
  ○ Grants
  ○ Partners
  ○ K-12 and higher education

● **Would you want to have a working group meeting within the next 1-2 months?**
  ○ n/a

*Serving aging populations (in partnership with Age-Friendly RI)*

● **What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?**
  ○ There are limited Access to resources in certain regions of the state (Gaps) for congregate meals or episodic resources for people
  ○ Addressing regional Gaps - how do we do that in partnership with those that know their community best? Meals on Wheels has had success engaging local groups
  ○ It's Important to have seniors in the conversation, many don't know what's out there. Maybe a focus group, or general conversation so we can find out what they need and want
○ reduction in homecare was a big problem the last few years (shopping for food, preparing meals, dinner meals) extreme shortage in staffing, affecting food for seniors especially those who are homebound (Child and Family Service in Newport has noticed that)
○ Reaching homebound seniors important
○ Access to farmers market and or cooking classes is important. For fresh food but also socialization

● What assets do you bring that could help that work get done? Also, what assets exist that you are aware of that can help this work to get done?
○ ASSET: Meals on Wheels - currently in a Strategic Planning Process, we are evaluating current gaps and how we can help fill those gaps
○ ASSET: on site kitchens to cook for people who are part of our center (Joan Kwiatowski - PACE)
○ Senior Centers + Libraries + sometimes they are very close by ASSET: (Maria West - West Warwick Public Library is interested) The library is currently collaborating with HEZ. We have hosted farmers markets on site, use to host Food on the Move. Making food accessible. Confidential referrals Libraries can help spread the word about services
○ NEED: How to FIND the people that need help, it can be hard (Meals on Wheels agrees)
○ NEED: Refrigeration and storage
○ NEED: Partnerships that help us find the individuals that need help. For example, MOW can partner with Visiting Nurses Association but the healthcare system is strained right now

● Would you want to have a working group meeting within the next 1-2 months?
○ n/a

Connecting with municipal governments
● What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?
○ List of initiatives, programs, services to address food insecurity for towns and cities.
○ Getting impacted communities more involved.
○ Create a more formal relationship/better communication and planning between state and municipalities. State is often unaware of what's happening at the municipalities.
○ Identify policy priorities - expand SNAP benefits. especially for fresh fruit/vegetables. Need to make sure those in power understand the economic and social inequities that are contributing to food insecurity. We need to address underlying conditions which lead to food insecurity (pay equity, economic empowerment)
○ Increasing local food production and farmers and making sure that they are paid a fair wage. Education/advocacy on how we value food. ‘food is not too expensive, people are poor’
○ Food education and institutional food outlets are avenues for improving nutritious and culturally appropriate foods. Better understanding of policy and programs that eliminate hunger (school food, Belo Horizonte)
○ Pilot to build on. 6 week program with SCLT (partnership between SCLT youth employment and city parks dept. free meals) but there was a disconnect between what they were learning and the food they were receiving.
○ Explore opportunities to create more engagement with school food service management companies and communities to improve school food nutrition and food education programs. Can be difficult to engage with FSMC. The state (RIDE) could play a role in helping to improve this dynamic

● What assets do you bring that could help that work get done? Also, what assets exist that you are aware of that can help this work to get done?
● Would you want to have a working group meeting within the next 1-2 months?
  ■ n/a

Improving emergency and supplemental food delivery for homebound people

● What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?
  ○ Need better referral information and a way to share info across network
  ○ Annual state the state report on hunger statistics was helpful

Getting more local food into the emergency feeding system

● What would you like to see this working group accomplish this year?
  ○ Help for farmers who want to connect but have language barriers.
  ○ Help with the challenges around logistics.
  ○ Reframe question from emergency feeding system to the general food system.
  ○ TA for farmers who are trying to provide food to the emergency food system - addressing communications challenges and distribution challenges.
  ○ Land access for growing - making it as easy as possible - less paperwork and more help with access to growing areas, and larger growing spaces.
  ○ Financial support from the Federal and state government.
  ○ Funds going directly to folks going directly to the local growers so they can make steady consistent income.
  ○ Robust seafood distribution program. Expand it!
  ○ Get better connected with the local emergency feeding system.
  ○ HEALTHY food - more good food as well as affordable.
  ○ Fund community-led food sovereignty initiatives. How it gets there, what gets there, grow their own.
- Reach all age groups.
- Cooperative community growing and sharing programs.

- **What assets do you bring that could help that work get done? Also, what assets exist that you are aware of that can help this work to get done?**
  - USDA LFPA program presents an opportunity focusing on growers who are people of color. Currently working on an application for $1.2M. Putting pieces together now. Concern is to make it sustainable - not just a flash in the pan but to cultivate lasting change.
  - Emergency feeding system - churches as well as pantries
  - Challenges are in distribution and coordination. For seafood will be purchasing a box truck - will help to transport product to the people in need.
  - Pandemic has made it difficult for seniors. Senior centers are important assets. Many are homebound.
  - Library system e.g., Olneyville Lib urban ag workshop series.
  - National Library of Medicine grants
  - Local chefs
  - Should do an inventory of assets leading to resources. Identification of capacity and investments in capacity where needed. Transportation and logistics networks are a section aspect.

- **Would you want to have a working group meeting within the next 1-2 months?**