

University of Vermont

ScholarWorks @ UVM

Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects

Larner College of Medicine

2020

Food Security during Remote Schooling

Julia Lane Clemens

University of Vermont

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk>



Part of the [Medical Education Commons](#), and the [Primary Care Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Clemens, Julia Lane, "Food Security during Remote Schooling" (2020). *Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects*. 588.

<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk/588>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Larner College of Medicine at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact donna.omalley@uvm.edu.



FOOD SECURITY DURING REMOTE SCHOOLING

JULIA CLEMENS MS3

MENTORED BY MICHELLE DORWART MD, COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS OF BURLINGTON

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2020

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND NEED

Opening status of K-12 public schools ³	Count of school districts
1 day remote, 4 days in-person	4
2 days remote, 3 days in-person	1
3 days remote, 2 days in-person	26
4 days remote, 1 day in-person	1
5 days remote, 0 days in-person	2
Varies by grade and/or school	18

- During the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic, food insecurity in Vermont increased by 33%¹
- On average in the state of Vermont, 38% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school²
- At the time of this project, most schools in Chittenden county were open 2-3 days per week in person and the other days remote³
- Many schools and the state of Vermont continue to offer food for pickup or delivery for students to eat at home during the pandemic, but were families able to access this and was it enough food?
- **This project aimed to see how remote schooling due to the coronavirus pandemic affected families' food access and security**

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

- **Heather Torrey, MS, RD, SNS; Assistant Director of the Burlington School Food Project**
 - During the pandemic, the food service department has been offering free meal kits for pickup that include enough food to provide a child with breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks for the week
 - The meal kits include some food that is ‘heat and eat,’ some fresh produce, some bulk pantry items that could be combined to make a meal, and snacks. There are vegetarian options as well.
 - Production cost per kit is \$35-40
 - They distribute 200-250 kits twice a week
 - “The mission still remains the same – to feed all students in the area, and to make sure we are doing everything to expand food access and remove barriers for people to access good nutrition.”
 - “The feedback we’ve gotten has been overwhelmingly positive.”

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

- **Christa Russell, BSW; Case Manager at Community Health Centers of Burlington**
 - Food insecurity has worsened during the coronavirus pandemic: patients have “much more limited resources...a lot more folks are on unemployment and they have much less food and money to buy food.”
 - Increased barriers to healthy food: “more transportation issues...their mental or medical health could be really compromised with the virus”
 - Telemedicine as a challenge: “if they can’t read or write in English and we are working over the phone that makes it really challenging to fill out applications and we can’t give them in-person help.”
 - Screening for food security is beneficial: “If they say yes this triggers a referral to us...We can capture more people in that way.”

This survey is designed to see how COVID-19 and remote schooling have impacted peoples' access to food. All information will be kept anonymous and confidential. Thank you!

1. What grades are your child/children in? (e.g. 1 child in 8th grade, 1 child in 4th grade)

2. How many days a week does your child go to school **in person**?
 0 (all online) 1 2 3 4 5
3. Does your child/children receive food when they are at school?
 Yes, breakfast and lunch
 Yes, only breakfast
 Yes, only lunch
 No, my child/children does not receive food from school
4. In the past three months, have you worried that your food would run out before you could get more?
 Yes, I was **often** worried (more than half the time)
 Yes, I was **sometimes** worried (less than half the time)
 I was **never** worried
5. In the past three months, did you ever run out of food and not have money to get more?
 Yes, **often** (more than half the time)
 Yes, **sometimes** (less than half the time)
 Never
6. Thinking back to previous years, how has remote schooling changed your food situation?
 It is **harder** to have enough food for my family with remote schooling
 It is **easier** to have enough food for my family with remote schooling
 Unchanged from previous years
7. How has remote schooling changed your ability to **access** food? (e.g. going to the grocery store)
 I am **unable** to access food due to remote schooling
 It is **harder** to find time to access food
 It is **easier** to access food now than before
 Unchanged from previous years
8. With winter coming, will you be able to access enough food for your family?
 Yes, I will be able to get enough food
 Yes, but it will be harder for me to access
 No, I will not be able to get enough food
9. How many people live in your household?
 1-2 3-4 5-6 7+
10. What extra supports have you used to access food in the past three months? (e.g. WIC, food stamps, community food shelf, school food pickup, etc.)

11. Other comments (e.g. what is harder/easier with remote schooling, what would be helpful for you):

INTERVENTION AND METHODOLOGY

- Surveyed adult patients who had children in school and parents of pediatric patients
- Received 10 completed surveys
- Survey consisted of standard food security questions as well as questions specific to food access related to remote schooling⁶
- Designed informational pamphlet for providers and staff detailing findings of survey and recommendations

RESULTS

Days per week at school	Percentage of children attending
0	0%
1	0%
2	43%
3	7%
4	43%
5	7%

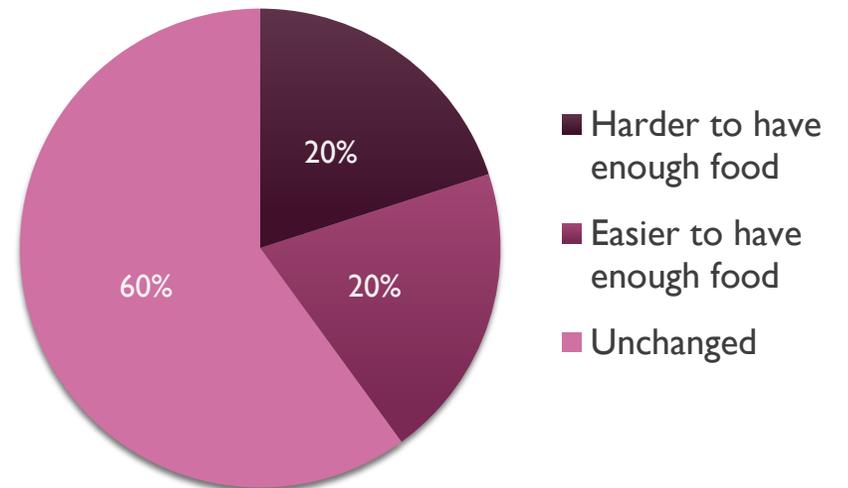
Patient comments:

“Helpful for me to know resources in the community.”

“I would like the school [to] make a strong schedule for PE at home on zoom because most kids become lazy with their computer at home.”

“My son snacks throughout the day and has added weight. Plus no PE class.”

How has remote schooling changed your food situation?



EFFECTIVENESS AND LIMITATIONS

- Potential ways to assess effectiveness
 - Continue to survey patients on access to food
 - Survey staff on their knowledge of the problem
 - Compare survey results before and after staff education on available resources
- Limitations
 - Small sample size due to patient population, willingness to participate, and short time period of project
 - Survey limited to English-speaking patients
 - Did not survey patients on demographics such as income

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

- Continue to monitor patients for food insecurity
 - Share information about resources in the area if patients screen positive for food insecurity
 - Post flyers of local resources in patient rooms
- Encourage pediatric patients to exercise more at home if they are not able to at school
- Collect more data and recommendations from patients, especially with local coronavirus rates increasing and potential for schools to revert to all online learning

REFERENCES

1. Niles, Meredith T.; Bertmann, Farryl; Morgan, Emily H.; Wentworth, Thomas; Biehl, Erin; and Neff, Roni, "Food Access and Security During Coronavirus: A Vermont Study" (2020). College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Publications. 21.
2. 2020 Eligibility Report Intro (vermont.gov) https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-nutrition-2020-free-and-reduced-eligibility-report_3.pdf
3. Reopening Status of Vermont Public Schools | Agency of Education <https://education.vermont.gov/news/covid-19-guidance-vermont-schools/reopening-status-of-vermont-public-schools>; retrieved November 2020
4. Berkowitz SA, Basu S, Gundersen C, Seligman HK. State-Level and County-Level Estimates of Health Care Costs Associated with Food Insecurity. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2019;16:180549. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd16.180549>
5. Meal Prices and Payment - Burlington School Food Project <https://www.burlingtonschoolfoodproject.org/meal-prices-and-payment/>
6. USDA ERS - Survey Tools <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/#household>