

Virginia Food Security Status During the COVID -19 Pandemic: An Assessment by the Virginia Family Nutrition Program



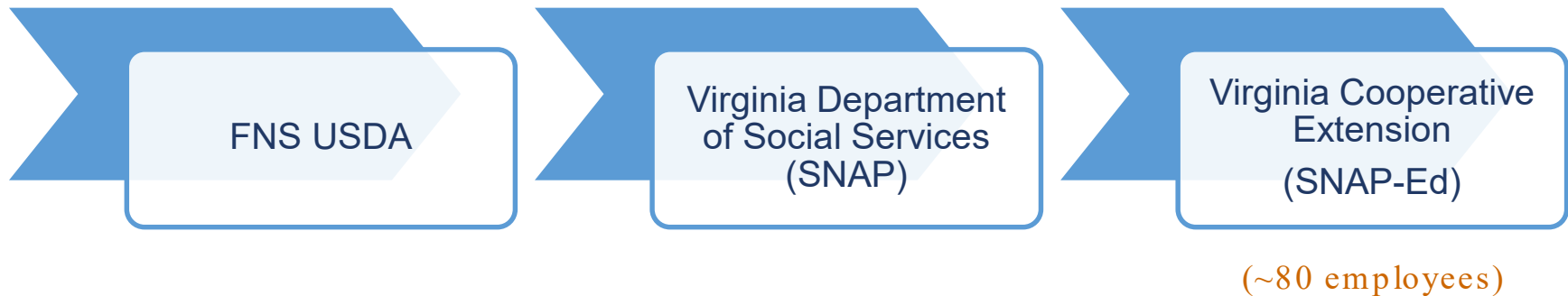
Sarah Misyak, PhD, MPH
September 1, 2021

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program

EFNEP

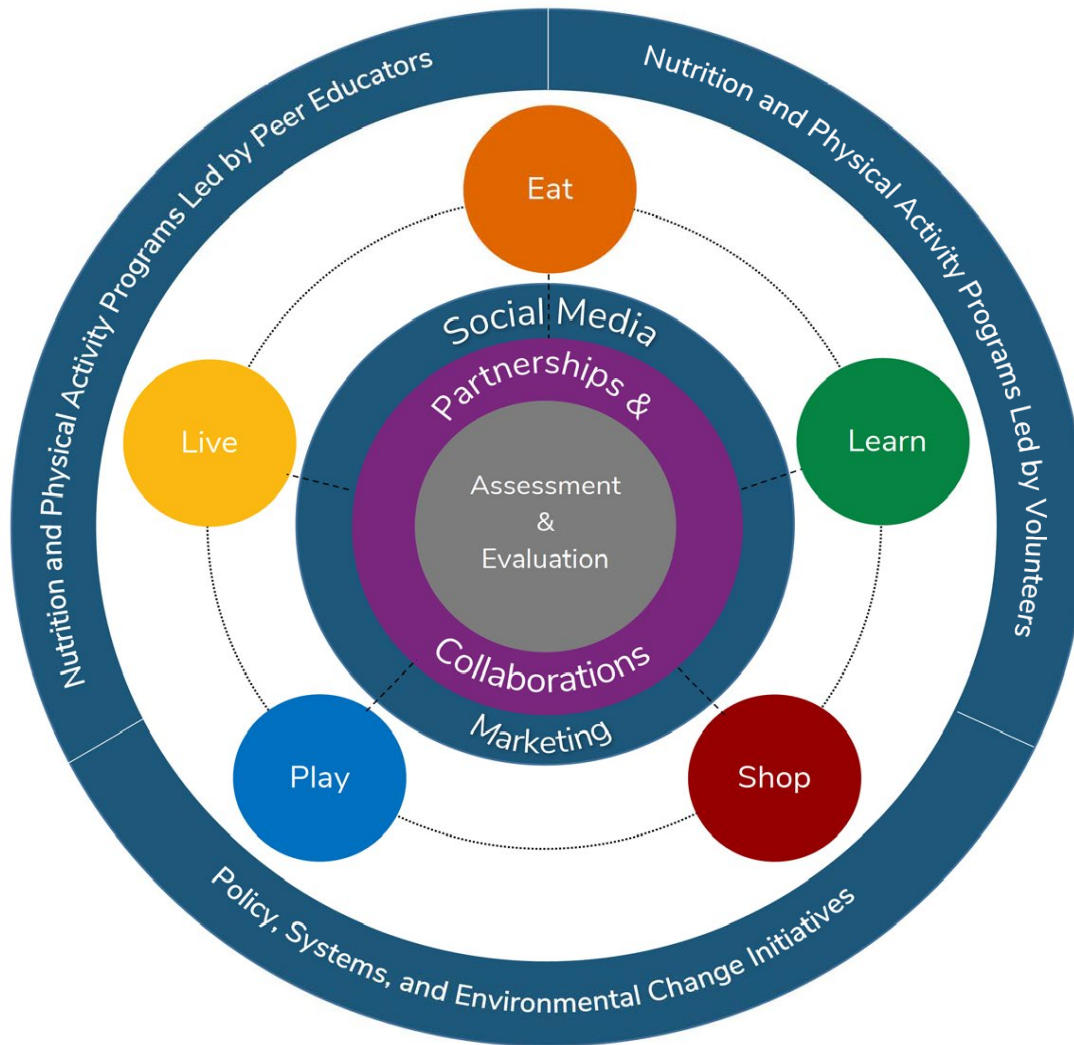
SNAP-Ed

Virginia SNAP-Ed is the Nutrition Education Arm of SNAP



SNAP-Ed is not mandated for SNAP participants, but nutrition educators aim to recruit as many SNAP participants as possible

Goal: To offer nutrition education opportunities to SNAP-eligible audiences through a variety of approaches



Overview

Food Security Assessment During COVID-19

Background

- The Virginia DSS Commissioner was seeking a state-level assessment of food security status to:

- Help inform Virginia SNAP programming and services
 - Serve as a referral system
- Ed and Virginia SNAP



dss.virginia.gov

Purpose of the Survey

- **Initial purpose: Virginia SNAP -Ed formal needs assessment**
- **Revised purpose with COVID -19: Assess food security status within the new landscape**
 - **Increased economic uncertainty with increased under- and un-employment rates**
 - **Increased number of individuals eligible for SNAP**
 - **Food system instability**

Methodology



Methodology

- **Qualtrics survey developed by Virginia SNAP-Ed in partnership with the Department of Social Services**
 - **Socio-demographic information**
 - **Participation in nutrition assistance program**
 - **USDA Food Security Module**
 - **Interest in nutrition education**

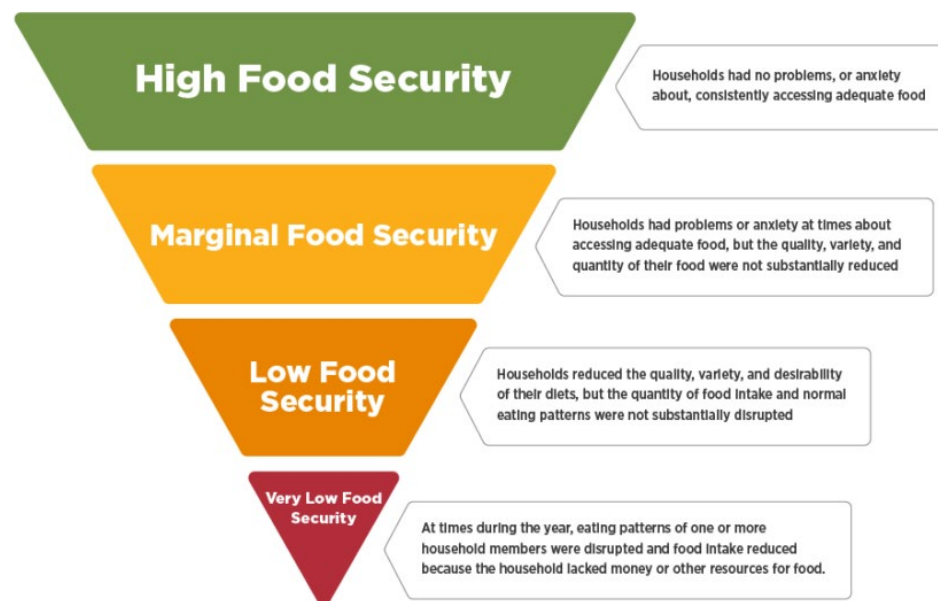
Methodology

- Two independent, cross-sectional surveys
 - March-April 2020
 - November-December 2020
- Cross sectional sample
 - Individuals with low incomes
 - Virginia residents
 - ≥ 18 years
 - Recruited using Qualtrics panels



Data Analysis

- Both rounds analyzed independently
- Food security status determined using USDA ERS coding, scoring and classifications



Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service.



Preliminary Results

Respondents

Respondents of the Virginia Food Security Survey (2020)			
Date	Socio-Demographic Information		n (%)
March, April 2020 (n=1,328)	Age	18-29 years old	590 (44.5)
	Gender	Female	955 (72.0)
	Race	White	6845 (63.7)
		Black	364 (23.5)
	Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	107 (8.1)
	Education	Some college or less	906 (68.3)
	Income	Less than \$30,000/year	812 (61.3)
November, December 2020 (n=973)	Age	18-29 years old	389 (40.0)
	Gender	Female	694 (71.3)
	Race	White	620 (63.7)
		Black	221 (22.7)
	Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	83 (8.5)
	Education	Some college or less	684 (70.3)
	Income	Less than \$30,000/year	601 (61.8)

*percentages computed from complete responses

VA State Demographics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019)

Gender

Female 50.8%

Race

White 69.4%

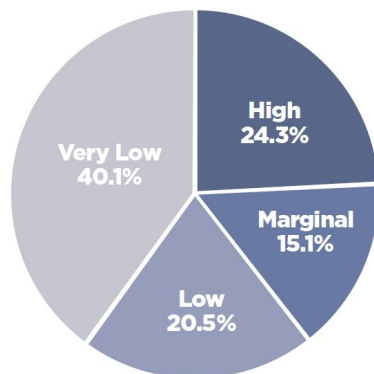
Black 19.9%

Hispanic 9.8%

Food Security Status of Adults

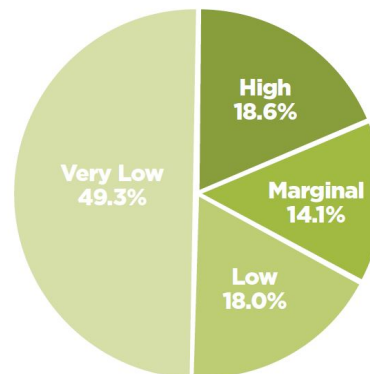
Food Security Status of Adults in Virginia March, April 2020 (n=1,328)	
Food Security Status	n (%*)
Very Low	533 (40.1)
Low	272 (20.5)
Marginal	200 (15.1)
High	323 (24.3)

**March/April
2020**



Food Security Status of Adults in Virginia Nov., Dec. 2020 (n=973)	
Food Security Status	n (%*)
Very Low	480 (49.3)
Low	175 (18.0)
Marginal	137 (14.1)
High	181 (18.6)

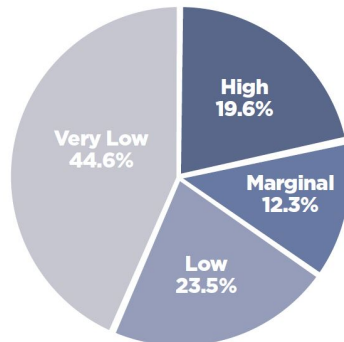
**November/December
2020**



Food Security Status of Households with Children

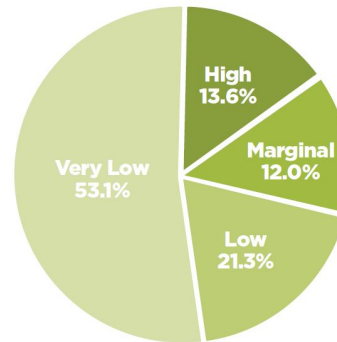
Food Security Status of Households with Children in VA March, April 2020 (n=617)	
Food Security Status	n (%*)
Very Low	275 (44.6)
Low	145 (23.5)
Marginal	76 (12.3)
High	121 (19.6)

**March/April
2020**



Food Security Status of Households with Children in VA Nov., Dec. 2020 (n=514)	
Food Security Status	n (%*)
Very Low	239 (53.1)
Low	96 (21.3)
Marginal	54 (12.0)
High	61 (13.6)

**November/December
2020**



Food Security Status of Individuals and Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

Food Security Status of Adults Receiving SNAP Benefits in Virginia March, April 2020 (n=199)	
Food Security Status	Number (%)
Food Insecure	118 (59.3)
Food Secure	81 (40.7)

Food Security Status of Adults Receiving SNAP Benefits in Virginia Nov., Dec. 2020 (n=165)	
Food Security Status	Number (%)
Food Insecure	134 (81.2)
Food Secure	31 (18.8)

Food Security Status of Individuals and Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

Food Security Status of Households with Children Receiving SNAP Benefits in Virginia
March, April 2020 (n=170)

Food Security Status	Number (%)
Food Insecure	122 (71.8)
Food Secure	48 (28.2)

Food Security Status of Households with Children Receiving SNAP Benefits in Virginia
Nov., Dec. 2020 (n=225)

Food Security Status	Number (%)
Food Insecure	188 (83.4)
Food Secure	37 (16.4)

Implications

Implications

- **Self-reported food insecurity drastically increased as a result of COVID - 19**
 - Higher rates among households with children
 - High levels of very low food security
- **SNAP did not protect against food insecurity**



Implications

- Virginia Department of Social Services has used the report in both state and national testimonies to request more funding for SNAP and changes to the Thrifty Food Plan



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/thriftyfoodplan>

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Virginia Cooperative Extension • Family Nutrition Program



Implications

- **Help galvanize state -level support for food security efforts**
 - **Governor's Children's Cabinet Food Security Subcommittee**
- **Confirms that families with children should continue to be the focus of SNAP -Ed and EFNEP in Virginia**

Focus on Food Security

- **Food Access Project**

- **Virginia Farmers Market Manager Certification Program**
- **Annual Farmers Market Manager survey**
- **Virginia Fresh Match**

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Focus on Food Security



- **Partnership with Federation of Virginia Food Banks**
 - **Establish a statewide network of emergency food distribution sites**
 - **Serving clients with dignity**
 - **Fueling them with nutritious foods**
 - **In-depth listening session and field feedback**

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Acknowledgments

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Questions?

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Limitations

- No measure prior to COVID -19
- Not a representative sample