

Date: March 31, 2020
To: Food Industry Partners
From: Rick Gaupo, President & CEO
Re: Temporary Shifts in Food Acceptance and Distribution to Better Meet Community Needs in this Moment

At Marion Polk Food Share, we are committed first and foremost to the health and safety of our community — to our clients, volunteers, and the broader food stream. And we've already taken a host of critical steps to ensure families have access to the food they need while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

More than 47,000 people rely on our network — and in times of crisis, that number grows as many of the support mechanisms people usually rely on are put on hold. Schools and community centers close, creating a gap in meals for countless families. Seniors, people with chronic conditions and those with compromised immune systems face higher risks in public spaces, forcing many to remain at home.

Marion Polk Food Share is ready to meet the evolving needs of our communities head-on. We're shifting our food sourcing and distribution to keep as much nutritious food flowing as possible. We're adjusting staffing and volunteer allocations to better support local food assistance sites. And we're working with state and local officials to remove barriers to food access and reach people facing hunger wherever they may be.

Outlined below are several of the temporary shifts in food acceptance and distribution at the Food Share to better meet community needs in this moment. We continue to prioritize meal-building foods — produce, protein and pantry staples — that best meet current priorities and capacity.

As of April 1, 2020, the Food Share will continue to accept:

- **Produce Donations:** We will continue to accept donated packaged produce.
- **Food Industry Donations:** We will continue to accept distribution-ready, packaged goods that meet our sourcing priorities from Food Industry Partners (e.g. manufacturers, distributors, etc.), on a case-by-case basis.
- **Frozen Bulk Fruits and Vegetables:** We will continue to accept bulk frozen fruits and vegetables, as long as they can be received into outside storage for repack at a future date. All other frozen repack donations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Whether your food donations meet the criteria above or not, [please fill out our online form with any donations of food, supplies and/or packaging](#) that you would like us to consider and we will contact you to discuss the details of your donation.

Starting the week of March 23, 2020, the Food Share has temporarily suspended food donations from:

- **Retail Recovery Program (grocery stores):** We have temporarily suspended standing grocery store pick-up routes. The Retail Recovery transportation team has been redeployed to other high-priority food sourcing and distribution work, based on community needs. We will continue to assess our ability to restore pick-ups, and will be in regular communication with staff and partners as the situation evolves.
- **Food Drives and Food Donations from the General Public:** We have temporarily suspended pick-up and receiving of all Food Drives and donations from individuals from the general public. Please plan to hold community donations at the food drive site or home, until this temporary suspension is lifted. We will be in regular communication with staff and partners to adjust, as needed.

We can't do this without [your support](#). There are two key ways you can support those at greatest risk in this worsening crisis and help communities emerge stronger:

1. **[Donate funds to support our community response to COVID-19.](#)** Financial contributions go much further than food donations in moments like these, and your support will help to bolster food distribution in hard-hit communities.
2. **[Spread the word that food remains available to all who face challenges at this time.](#)** We're working with local food assistance sites throughout our network to ensure people have access to the resources they need.

Each and every one of you is a critical part of our mission of bringing people together to end hunger and its root causes. It's times like these that our work together becomes even more visible — and to those who are most at risk, even more important. Our Marion Polk Food Share community has stepped up many times before. We will be bold in our response. We are a community together, even when we feel isolated or six feet apart, and will stay committed to providing an abundance of nutritious food.

With your continued support, I know that we can meet the challenges of this moment head-on and emerge stronger together.

Incredibly grateful for all you do,



Rick Gaupo, President & CEO