

# Emergency Food Assistance Program

## CLOSEOUT REPORT: State Fiscal Year 2019



Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture and Zachary D. Lyons / WA State Department of Agriculture



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

**Food Safety & Consumer Services Division**  
**Food Assistance**

AGR PUB 609-438 (R/11/19)

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## WSDA FOOD ASSISTANCE OVERVIEW

Through service, regulation, and advocacy, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) supports the viability and vitality of agriculture while protecting consumers, public health, and the environment. Food Assistance (FA) is part of the Food Safety & Consumer Services Division, which serves consumers and stakeholders in the state of Washington by assuring the availability, safety, and integrity of the state's human and animal food supply.

WSDA Food Assistance (FA) programs serve communities and lower-income families by improving access to safe and nutritious foods. We honor our connections with agriculture and strengthen the emergency food system by providing food, funding, logistical support, and outreach to hunger relief agencies and tribes. FA manages and creates statewide policy for six unique federal and state food assistance programs, each with a different set of regulations. Our programs include the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), EFAP-Tribal, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Trade Mitigation Program (TMP), and the Farm to Food Pantry (F2FP) Initiative.

We work with over 50 contractors that are made up of a mix of food banks, community action agencies, tribes and tribal organizations, who typically operate more than one of our programs. Our advisory committee is part of the Washington Food Coalition and plays a critical role in developing coordinated, responsive, and strategic solutions to the issue of hunger in our state. We work with a wide variety of partners, stakeholders, and state agencies to support our mutual goals.

In 2019, WSDA's FA programs provided approximately \$40 million worth of state and federal food and funding to support 500 food banks, food pantries, meal programs, tribes, and tribal organizations. One in six Washingtonians (1.12 million people) received food from emergency food providers that were supported with resources from our programs.

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

### EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CLOSEOUT REPORT

Food banks, food pantries, backpack programs, home delivery, mobile food pantries and voucher programs that participate in EFAP comprise our most comprehensive “snapshot” of Washington State’s emergency food system. In order to receive EFAP funding, participating agencies must report client and food distribution figures monthly, and at the end of the state fiscal year, provide a closeout report summarizing their annual impact. For our purposes, a food bank is considered an agency that collects, warehouses, and distributes food, commodities or other products to food pantries, meal programs and other hunger relief organizations on a regional, county, or statewide basis. A food pantry is an emergency food assistance program that distributes unprepared food without charge to its clients. This report focuses on food pantries, and tribal voucher programs, where hungry people in our state are directly benefitting from emergency food resources.

The pounds of food and client visit metrics reported by emergency food providers are used to assess the scope of need and understand trends within the emergency food system as a whole on a year-over-year basis. Large food bank networks and small food pantries alike use these figures because they tell an important story about hunger in our state. Because this data is available for every county, it allows Food Assistance to hone in on local challenges and opportunities, while also seeing it as a whole statewide emergency food system. However, as stakeholders in the emergency food system know, these figures still have limitations and may not tell the full story.

As the emergency food system becomes more efficient and continues to place more emphasis on healthier foods, measuring changes within the system and their effects on clients will be important. Agencies are beginning to identify more nuanced metrics that will help to evaluate the impact of these changes in the emergency food system more holistically. For example, new metrics may include regular reporting on good food that was rescued and diverted from a landfill, or about the nutritional density of the foods provided.

We are privileged to work with thousands of dedicated emergency food providers, staff, volunteers and community partners who are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors struggling to put nutritious food on the table. Without their commitment to providing quality data we would not be able to assemble this statewide snapshot year after year.



Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture

# EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOOD PANTRY CLOSEOUT RESULTS

## FOOD PANTRY OPERATIONS

Washington State food banks and pantries, including tribal food pantries, received a total of \$4.95 million in state funding from EFAP in state fiscal year (FY) 2019 to help provide 148.44 million pounds of food to 1.12 million Washingtonians struggling to put food on the table. EFAP food pantry dollars supported the distribution of a pound of food last year for an incredibly low average cost of only 3 cents.

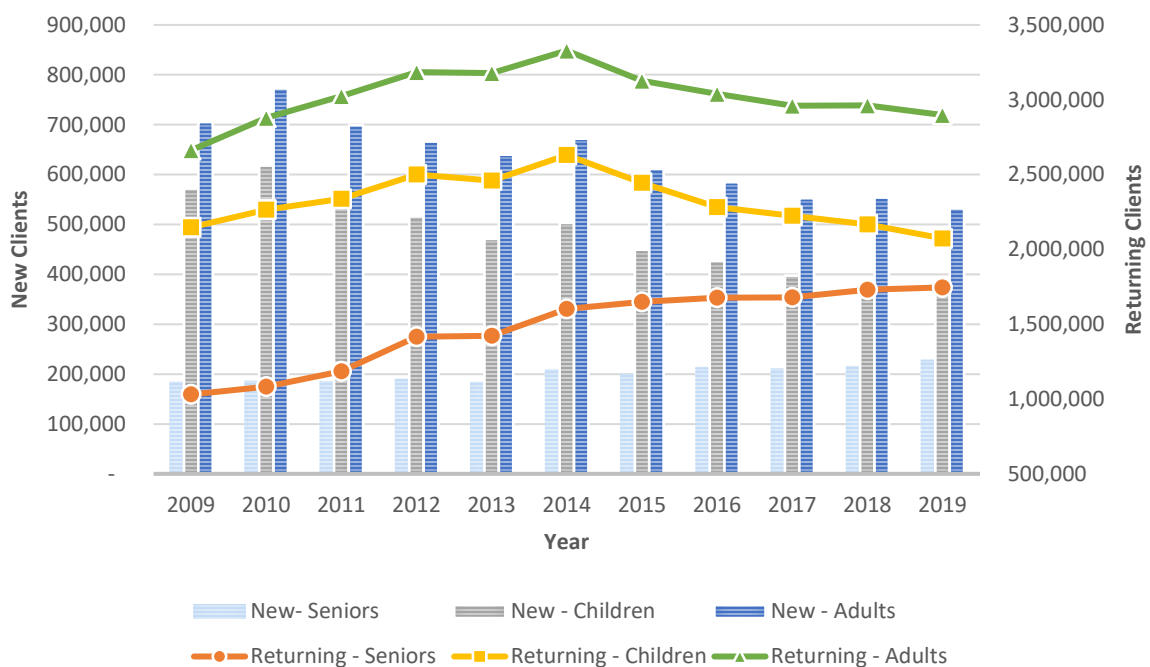
**89%** JUST OVER 89 PERCENT OF EFAP FUNDING WAS SPENT DIRECTLY ON FOOD OR OPERATIONAL EXPENSES.

**11%** LESS THAN 11 PERCENT OF EFAP FUNDING WENT TO ADMINISTRATIVE OR INDIRECT EXPENSES.

Of the \$4.95 million dollars of EFAP funding allocated to food pantry organizations, only 11 percent went to administrative or indirect costs, an identical rate to FY2018. Approximately 30 percent was spent on direct food purchases. This was a decrease in spending of 10 percent from the previous year, likely a result of the twofold increase of food coming to the state from the TEFAP and TMP federal programs. Monthly reimbursements showed food pantry providers had to shift resources to align with increased operational needs, away from food procurement to better facilitate the increased shipping, storage, and distribution needs. The remaining 59 percent was spent on costs associated with operating food programs such as storage, transportation, food repackaging, cleaning, equipment, employee salaries and benefits, supplies, and utilities. EFAP funds do not cover all agency costs, but due to their flexible nature, are an essential foundation for food banks and pantries in providing food to families in need.

The total number of times clients received emergency food in FY2019 dropped by 168,000 from the previous year, but the need remained deep for Washington residents accessing services, with average annual visits per client reaching an all-time high of 6.98.

## NEW AND RETURNING CLIENTS BY AGE



## FOOD PANTRY CLIENT VISIT DEMOGRAPHICS

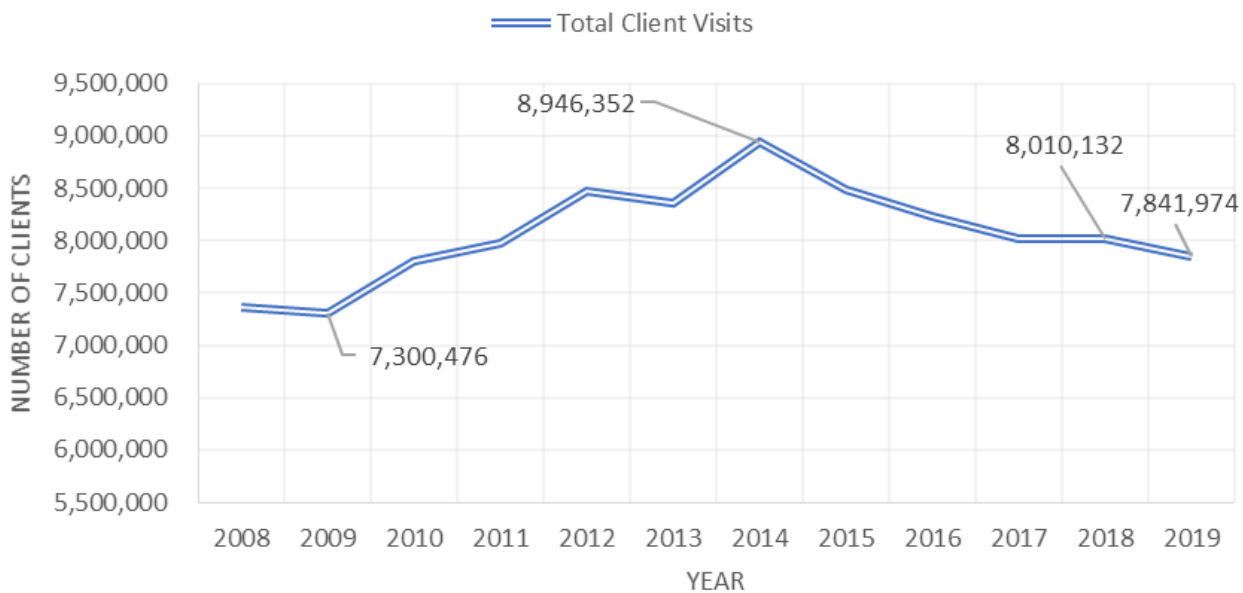
**New clients:** The number of people using food pantries in FY2019 was 1.12 million as compared to 1.15 million in FY2018. This represents a slight decrease of 2.4 percent.

**1.12M** 1.12 MILLION WASHINGTONIANS USED AN EFAP FOOD PANTRY.

**7.84M** WASHINGTONIANS VISITED AN EFAP FOOD PANTRY OVER 7.84 MILLION TIMES.

**Returning clients:** The number of returning clients was down slightly, dropping by just over 2 percent compared with last year. Despite the overall decrease, the number of returning seniors (55 and older), continued to rise for the tenth consecutive year.

## TOTAL CLIENT VISITS



**Total client visits** - The total number of visits (new plus returning clients) in FY2019 was down by 2.1 percent. Food pantries saw a decrease in visits from 8.01 million last year to 7.84 million in FY2019. Annual visits dropped below 8 million for the first time in eight years. Washington’s emergency food system continues to meet the needs of a staggering 2 million more annual client visits compared to FY2007 pre-recession figures.

**7X** THE AVERAGE CLIENT VISITED A FOOD PANTRY NEARLY 7 TIMES.

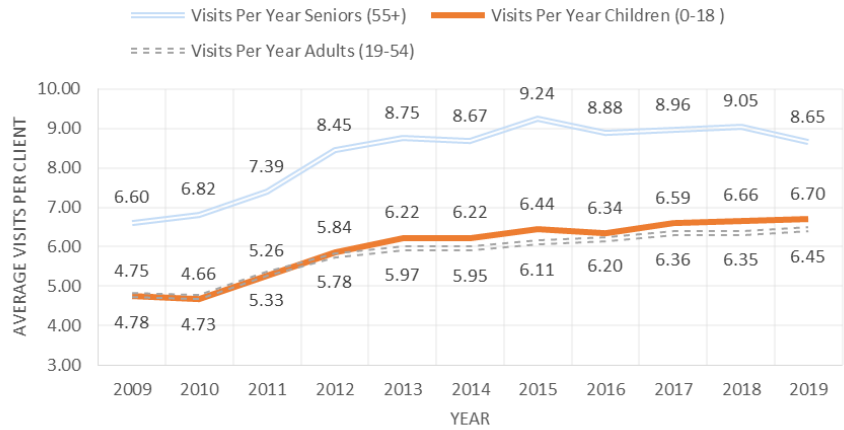
**8.65X** THE AVERAGE SENIOR VISITED A FOOD PANTRY JUST OVER 8.65 TIMES.

**Visits per client** - Although there was a small drop in total client visits, those who did rely on their community food pantry did so at an all-time high of 6.98 times per year. This figure continues to trend upward each year and has since 2008. Greater analysis is needed to determine if this is because of deeper client need, improved access, or both. Regardless of the reason, clients have increased the frequency with which they visit pantries while receiving more food per visit. The need continues to grow.

It is important to note that seniors continue to demonstrate a greater need than the general population. Seniors visited food pantries 27.6 percent more often than their non-senior counterparts, averaging 8.65 visits per year as compared with 6.55 visits annually for the general population.

The fact that those using food pantries averaged two visits more per year as compared with a decade ago indicates that even with the improving economy, unemployment down to pre-recession levels, and fewer people needing help, those who still need help putting food on the table are struggling more than ever, especially Washington’s senior population. Due to cost-of-living increases and growing income inequality, visits to an emergency food provider occur out of necessity.

## VISITS PER YEAR BY AGE GROUP



## PERCENT OF CHANGE BY AGE GROUP: TOTAL VISITS 2018 TO 2019

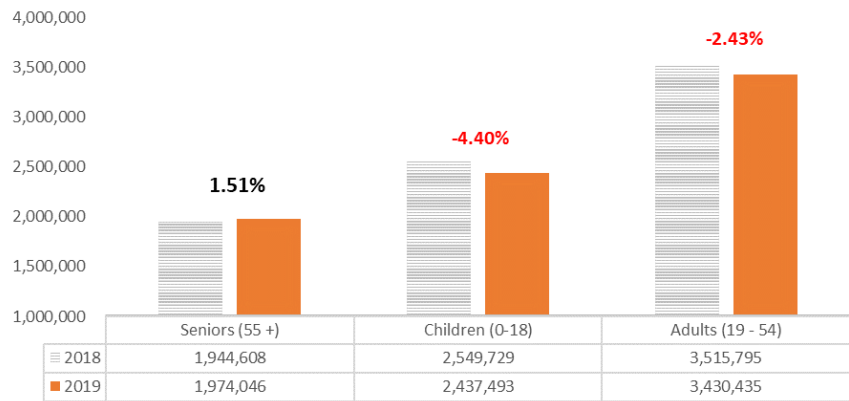
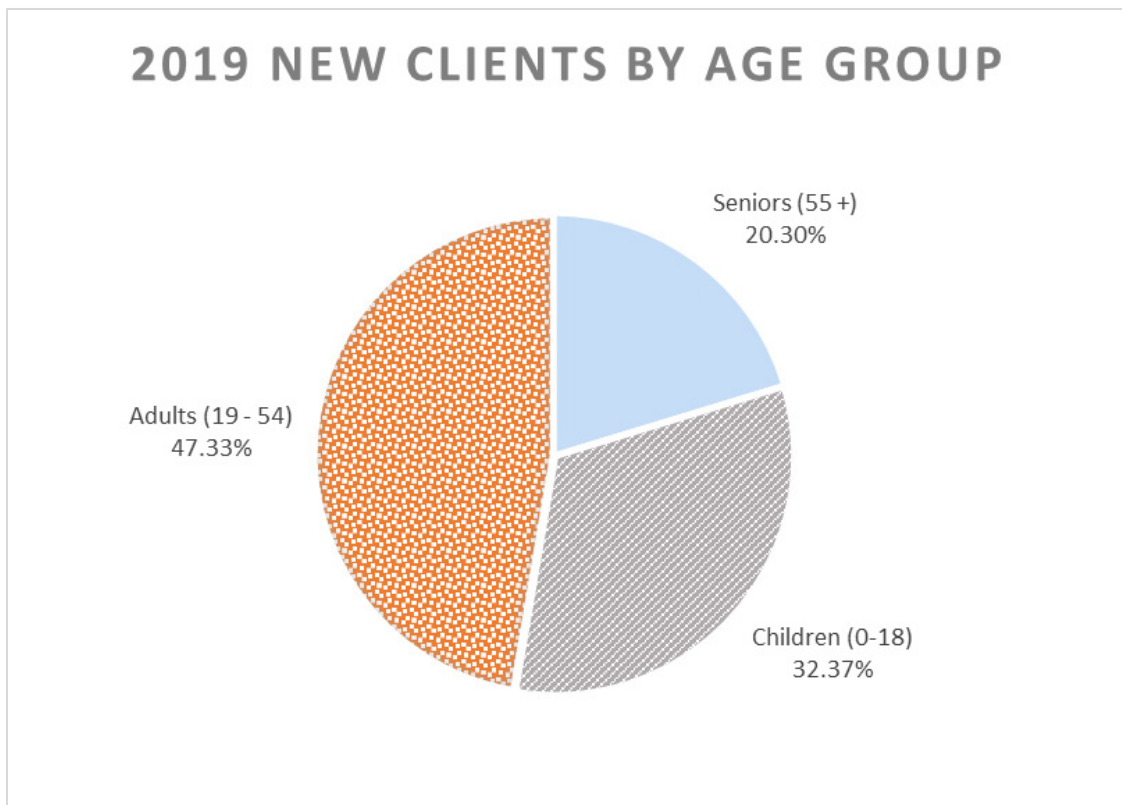


Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture

## FOOD PANTRY NEW CLIENT AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

EFAP new client demographics by age group have changed dramatically over the past decade. The percentage of senior clients has increased from 12.59 percent to 20.3 percent over the past decade. The percentage of children has decreased from 39.16 percent to 32.37 percent and, adults have stayed constant at around 48 percent.

New client visits, as a whole, continue to decrease. We have seen this trend now for five consecutive years. During this period, children and adults both had a reduction in visits and as mentioned previously, children make up a smaller segment of the food pantry population versus previous years. Meanwhile, seniors continue to see increases in new clients and make up a larger segment of the client population year over year. As baby boomers continue to leave the workforce and find themselves on a fixed income, we expect this trend to continue.



## FOOD DISTRIBUTION

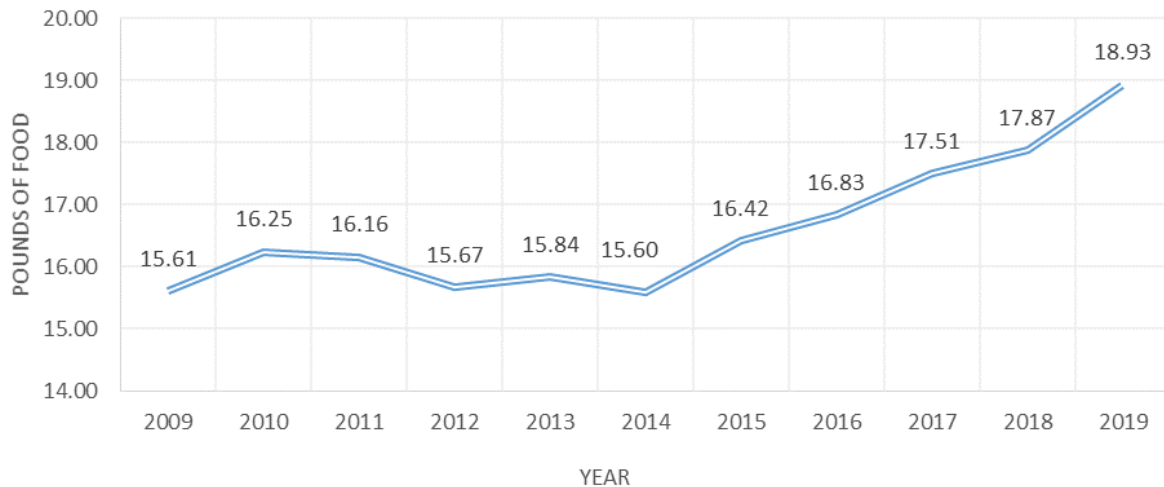
### POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED

In FY2019, the total pounds of food distributed by food pantries to hungry families was higher than in FY2018, at 148.44 million pounds this year compared to 143.18 million in the previous year. Even though total visits to food pantries were down, the average pounds of food a client received with each visit increased, from 17.87 pounds in FY2018 to 18.93 pounds in FY2019, a 5.9 percent increase. This was the largest increase year over year in the past decade and the highest number of average pounds per visit ever recorded, a testament to the ability of food banks and food pantries to procure and distribute food with increasing efficiency.

**148M** EFAP FOOD PANTRIES  
DISTRIBUTED 148 MILLION  
POUNDS OF FOOD TO CLIENTS.

**18.93** THE AVERAGE CLIENT  
RECEIVED A RECORD 18.93  
POUNDS OF FOOD PER VISIT

## AVERAGE POUNDS OF FOOD PER CLIENT VISIT



**Cost per pound** - Sufficient funding can be difficult to come by for many food pantries, even those that receive EFAP funding. Communities donate time and food but as the nonprofit world knows, donated time and food do not necessarily keep the doors of a food pantry open, nor allow an organization to pick up donated food, pay for gas, or keep the lights on. EFAP funds and donated funds are essential for operating food pantries and meeting the needs of clients.

As mentioned in the beginning of the report, EFAP dollars alone allowed EFAP participating agencies to procure and distribute a pound of food to their clients for just 3 cents per pound. As all partners in the emergency food system recognize, none of us, organizations large or small, exist on an island. Other organizations and funding sources contribute to building a dynamic emergency food system. The EFAP closeout report asks for all match sources to be reported at the end of each year. This provides a more complete understanding of how state EFAP funds are leveraged to benefit lower-income Washingtonians.

Taking into account both cash match (donated funds) and state EFAP dollars, it cost participating food providers about 30 cents to procure a pound of food. Had these organizations purchased food on the open market, it is estimated they would have spent an average of \$1.67 per pound. This is an amazing accomplishment and a testament to EFAP providers' ability to leverage their cash donations and procure food at a remarkably low price.

For every EFAP dollar allocated to the emergency food system, nearly \$5.57 goes back to the community in the form of food to lower-income families. The 148.44 million pounds of food distributed to clients cost the emergency food system about \$44.5 million based on the 30 cents per pound figure; whereas it would have cost approximately \$248 million based on FY2019's donated value rate of \$1.67 per pound.

**Match value** - The amount of match (cash and in-kind) supporting the emergency food system from other resources increased from \$348.14 million in FY2018 to \$375.35 million in FY2019. EFAP food bank contractors are required to match their state funds by 100 percent - 50 percent of which must be cash. As with every year, these numbers are impressive, but do not represent all of the cash and in-kind match that EFAP organizations received last year.



# \$0.30

FOOD PANTRIES PROCURED FOOD FOR AN AVERAGE OF 30 CENTS PER POUND.

# \$375M

EFAP FOOD PANTRIES REPORTED \$375.35 MILLION IN-KIND AND CASH MATCH.

This FY2019 figure includes more than:

- \$303 million in additional donated food valued at \$1.67 per pound.
- \$30 million in volunteer labor valued at \$14 per hour.
- \$2 million in other donated services such as transportation by volunteers.
- \$40 million in cash donations.

EFAP contractors reported a staggering 76-to-1 match to EFAP funding ratio. And, looking just at cash match to EFAP dollars, we see that EFAP funding made up around one-eighth of participating EFAP agency budgets. These figures show the emergency food systems' ability to leverage their cash donations and the role of EFAP dollars in Washington food pantries and food banks.

## OPTIONAL EFAP REPORTING –ADDITIONAL SERVICES

To meet the needs of their clients, many EFAP agencies also provide other services that do not fall under the category of full-service distributions, covered in the previous section. These distributions are no less important and are in some cases more important than a full-service distribution. Not all participating agencies or counties provide these additional services but to those who do, it is important, and should be acknowledged.

**Supplemental Clients** - The client categories listed in the previous section speak to the number of clients that received a full-service distribution in the past year. A full-service distribution is a client having received a balanced distribution of three or more of the five food groups listed in the USDA MyPlate.

A supplemental distribution indicates that a client received two or fewer of the food groups identified by USDA's MyPlate. Supplemental distributions may occur at a food pantry that does not have the capacity to store all five food groups, may be done from a location that brings the food into the community or apartment complex where need is greatest; eliminating the need to find transportation to and from a full service food pantry. Or, a client may visit a food pantry and due to storage limitations or need, express interest in only a few items such as produce and protein not meeting the threshold for a full-service distribution.

This year, 14 counties across Washington State reported serving supplemental clients. These counties served 87,496 supplemental clients 367,839 times. Clients averaged 4.2 supplemental visits per year and received 3.28 million pounds of food averaging 8.92 pounds per distribution. A supplemental distribution is not insignificant and can make a big difference to a client in need that may need just enough to get through the week.

**Kids Weekend Bags** - EFAP food pantries continually innovate to serve those in need. Many organizations have begun to serve lower-income, school-aged children. EFAP agencies collaborate with local schools and school districts to distribute backpacks or weekend bags intended to feed a child and possibly their sibling(s) for the weekend. Backpacks as defined by EFAP must provide the client with food for a minimum of two days but do not have any dietary requirements. Despite lack of requirements, a 2018 WSDA Food Assistance survey showed that 94 percent of kids weekend bags contain three or more of the five food groups identified by USDA MyPlate and average just over 11 pounds.

Some backpack programs also include a "break bag." Children who rely on school meals throughout the year are provided with food for winter and spring breaks. The impact of backpack programs throughout the school year is significant.

In FY2019 12 counties across the state reported providing 23,514 children with 277,901 backpacks. The average child received a backpack 11.8 times. These figures likely take into account both backpack programs that provide weekly distributions, and/or break bags. Backpack programs do not report the total pounds distributed in their backpacks but using the reported average of 11 pounds per bag, we can estimate that food pantries provided 3.06 million pounds of food to students in FY2019.

**Special Dietary Needs Clients** - Special dietary needs clients are reported in both the full-service clients' data and the special dietary needs clients' data. As identified by the Washington State Legislature, this group includes: Infants under one year of age, children with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, people with chronic diseases such as cancer

and diabetes, people with acquired immune deficiency syndrome, people with lactose intolerance, people with chewing difficulties, alcoholics, intravenous drug users, and people with cultural food preferences. EFAP agencies strive to serve a variety of clients' needs. Special dietary needs programs allow food pantries to serve clients that would otherwise struggle to have their needs met through a traditional full service distribution.



In FY2019 21 counties across the state reported serving 58,205 special dietary needs clients 464,167 times. The average client received a distribution 7.97 times throughout the year. These clients include, but are not limited to, those who receive home delivery for medical reasons, and those who visited their local food pantry.

## EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TRIBAL FOOD PANTRY AND VOUCHER PROGRAM CLOSEOUT RESULTS

### ABOUT THE PROGRAMS

EFAP tribal food pantries and voucher programs are an important part of the hunger relief network in Washington. This state-funded program supports tribal organizations with funding to help alleviate hunger for lower-income Washingtonians, including the homeless, receiving services from a food pantry or receiving a tribal food voucher. The \$512,195 in EFAP funds that tribes spent last year was flexible and could be used for the purchase of food or food vouchers, operational costs, nutrition training, and equipment or repairs. While tribal food pantry data is included in the previous food pantry data, it is also important to look at this data along with the voucher program separately to assess trends specific to tribes and tribal organizations.

# EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TRIBAL FOOD PANTRY CLOSEOUT RESULTS

In FY2019, tribes spent nearly \$74,711 EFAP funds in food pantries, a slight decrease from the previous year. On average, tribes spent just 3 percent of total funds on administrative costs. The majority of participating tribes allocate all or nearly all EFAP funds directly to food purchases, leaving the tribe to pay for associated direct and indirect program costs with matching funds. Tribes reported \$46,062 in match from other resources to support food pantries, down from the previous year but still more than the required tribal match of 35 percent.

## TRIBAL FOOD PANTRY CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION

**35K** TRIBAL PANTRIES HAD 35,988 CLIENT VISITS IN FY2019.

**7.6LBS** THE AVERAGE TRIBAL CLIENT RECEIVED A RECORD 7.6 POUNDS OF FOOD PER VISIT.

**Total client visits** - Total tribal food pantry clients served increased a staggering 18.67 percent from 30,328 in the previous year to 35,988 in FY2019. This was the largest change year over year in client visits in the past five years. It is unknown why the increase in visits occurred.

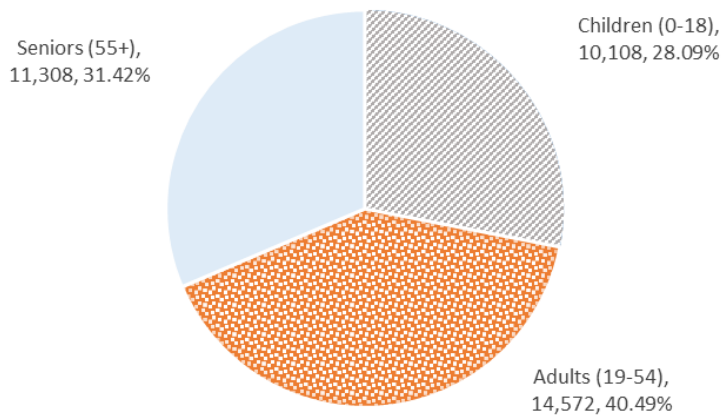
Unlike their non-tribal counterparts, tribal food pantries had across-the-board increases in total visits in each client category, with seniors accounting for the largest increases of nearly 25 percent.

Focusing in on seniors, we see that 495 seniors visited their tribal food pantry 11,308 times in FY2019, averaging 22.84 visits per year. This is a figure much higher than their non-tribal counterparts. However, it is important to remember that clients at tribal food pantries averaged 7.6 pounds per visit – a smaller figure than the average non-tribal client.

Without additional information, we cannot know why the need among the tribal elder population and tribal members in general has increased considerably. This is something FA will monitor this coming year.

**Food distribution** - The number of pounds per client visit stayed relatively constant at 7.6 pounds and the total pounds of food distributed increased by nearly 17 percent to 273,536 pounds.

### TRIBAL FOOD PANTRY TOTAL VISITS, DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP 2019



## TRIBAL VOUCHER PROGRAM

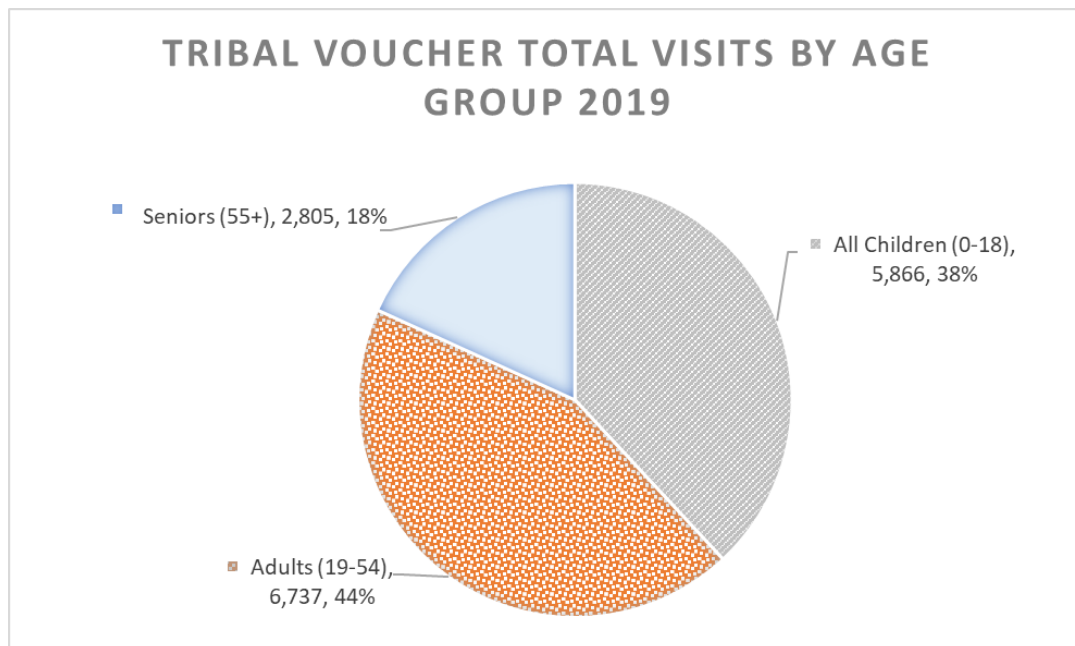
The tribal voucher program plays a critical role in feeding tribal families with limited resources through direct purchases from local supermarkets. In FY2019, tribes spent \$390,450 of EFAP funding on food vouchers compared to \$394,134 in FY2018, a small decrease of just under 1 percent. Voucher programs spent just 10.75 percent of total funds on program administrative and operational costs. The vast majority of participating tribes allocate all or nearly all of their EFAP voucher funds to the vouchers themselves, and pay for direct and indirect costs with matching funds. Tribes reported \$522,110 in match from other resources to support their voucher activities. They are required to provide a 35 percent match to the state funds; voucher programs had just over a 119 percent match. Much of that match was in the form of additional vouchers for their tribal members. The value of the voucher program to tribes is evident as they continue to leverage additional funds to support their members in need.

### TRIBAL VOUCHER PROGRAM CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

**New clients** - The 25 tribes participating in the voucher program issued vouchers to 7,848 people in FY2019 compared to 9,742 people in FY2018. This was a 19.44 percent decrease down to FY2017 new client levels.

**Returning clients** - There were 7,560 returning clients in FY2019 compared to 6,885 returning clients in FY2018, a 9.8 percent increase. They averaged 1.96 trips to their tribal offices for vouchers compared to 1.70 visits the previous year.

With so few EFAP vouchers issued per client annually, both new and returning voucher clients can fluctuate greatly year-to-year.



**Total clients** - There were 15,408 clients served this year; a 7.33 percent decrease from the previous year of 16,627 and the fifth consecutive year of declining clients. This decrease in total voucher clients served was across the board. Seniors, adults, and children all saw decreases of between 5 and 10 percent. A variety of things could be the cause. Two things we do know are that tribes are giving out larger vouchers versus previous years, and the average age of a voucher recipient has increased leading to smaller households as many tribes focus on serving their elder population.

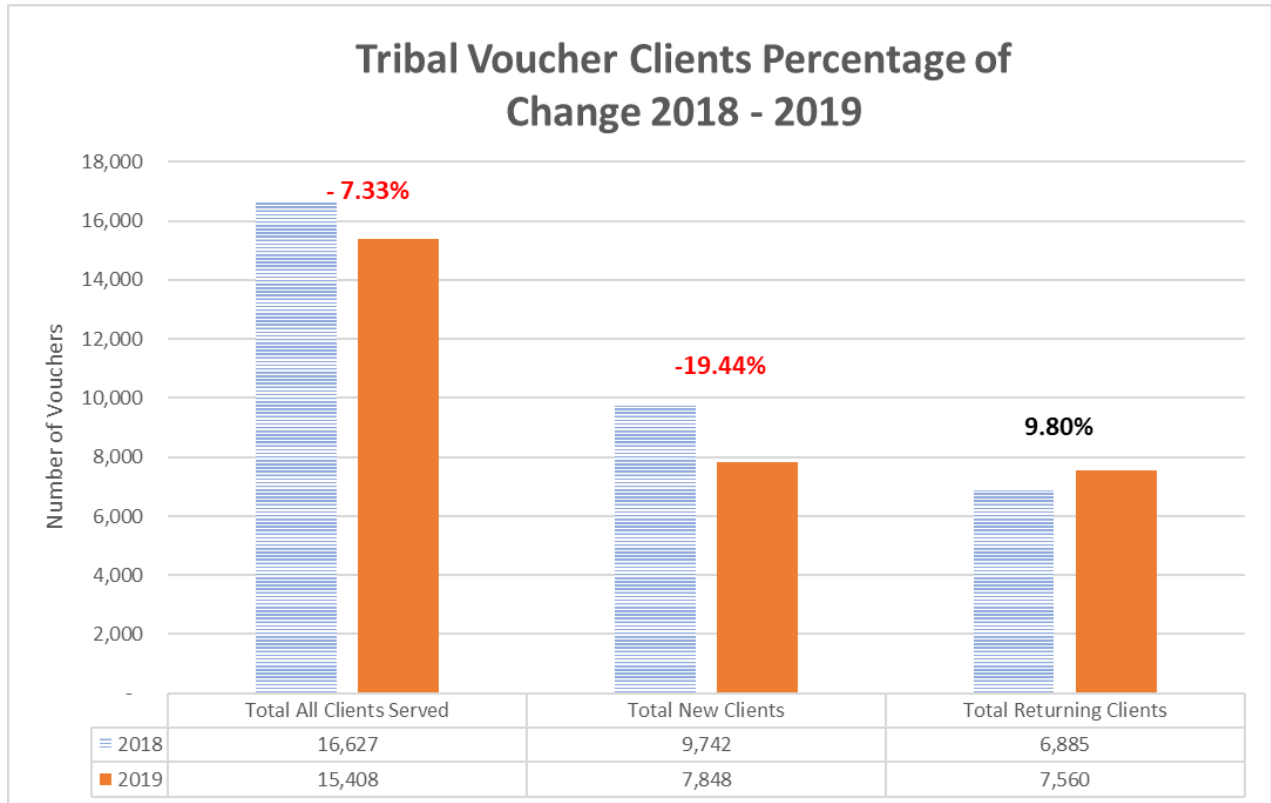
# 89%

TRIBAL VOUCHER PROGRAMS SPENT 89.75 PERCENT OF THEIR \$477,484 STATE FUNDS.

# \$59

THE AVERAGE VOUCHER VALUE PER HOUSEHOLD LAST YEAR WAS \$59.47.

**Voucher value** - There were 3,040 households that received EFAP vouchers in FY2019. The average household received a voucher just over two times this past year. The average voucher value per household in FY2019 decreased by just over 1 percent to \$59.47 and the average amount per client increased by 6.92 percent to \$25.34. The funding allocated to vouchers has remained relatively constant but the clients served have continued to drop, leading to consecutive years of increasing voucher value per client.



The voucher program continues to be an important part of EFAP that meets the needs of a very targeted population. The program is administratively labor intensive, but the benefit it brings to clients is evidenced by the additional \$391,739 in voucher match provided to the program. Using the average EFAP voucher value per household (\$59.47), we would estimate that tribal voucher match alone provided an additional 6,587 vouchers to tribal members in FY2019 on top of those provided by EFAP.



Photo Credit: Zachary D. Lyons / WA State Department of Agriculture

## SUMMARY

Washington's economy continues to improve post-recession, and unemployment is down to at or near pre-recession levels in some counties. It is no surprise that the total number of people seeking food assistance went down slightly this year (2.4 percent from last year). Even so, data from emergency food providers across the state shows a substantial and enduring need for food assistance among households with lower incomes who continue to rely on the emergency food system to put food on the table, demonstrated by the increased average number of visits per client which have remained high. Simply put, fewer people relied on the emergency food system to feed their families, but those who did have continued to need it more regularly than in years past.

One area of particular concern is the number of Washington seniors, 55 and older, who rely on their community's food pantry more often. This population is not experiencing the same reduction in need that the general population has. Their total visits to food pantries increased by nearly 30,000 in FY2019. Seniors also used food pantries much more often than other age groups - an additional two times per year on average. Washington's senior population is growing and their presence at community food pantries around the state continues to rise. Seniors continue to have a more difficult time meeting their most basic needs compared to the general population.

Total tribal voucher clients continued to decrease, the fifth straight year in declining numbers. However, tribal pantries had a shift in FY2019 and saw a large increase of nearly 19 percent in total visits.

Several trends across the emergency food system are moving in a positive direction. The number of new clients using food pantries decreased by 2.4 percent, and the number of total client visits decreased by 2.1 percent.

An impressive 148.44 million pounds of distributed food, coupled with fewer overall visits, led food pantries to distribute an all-time high of 18.93 pounds per client. Food pantries across the state are working hard to not only get enough food to families in need, but to provide them with higher quality, healthier foods more efficiently than anytime on record.

The pounds of food and client visits metrics listed in this report are used to measure need and understand trends within the emergency food system. Large food bank networks and small food pantries alike use these figures because they tell an important story about hunger in our state. This data is available for every county, allowing us to hone in on local challenges and opportunities, but also to assess a region or the state's emergency food system. As the emergency food system continues to emphasize and prioritize healthier foods, measuring these changes in the system and their effects on clients will be important. Meaningful new metrics are likely to emerge in the coming years that will help us better understand the important impacts of innovations in the hunger relief sector.

At WSDA, we are privileged to work with thousands of dedicated emergency food providers, staff, volunteers and community partners who are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors struggling to put good food on the table. We thank you all for your tireless work to get food to those in need and your commitment to providing accurate data to help inform and improve the emergency food system.

## STRATEGIES TO MOVE THE NEEDLE

WSDA has launched a Focus on Food initiative in order to clarify and revitalize the agency's complementary missions of supporting agricultural viability and feeding people. This initiative reenergizes our agency's commitment to support all aspects of the food system, from soil health to food access. It highlights the link between agriculture and food as the bedrock of Washington's rural and urban communities, helping our farmers connect with markets for their products, and making sure everyone in our state has safe and nutritious food to eat.

Food Assistance's role in this initiative is to build on successful partnerships and pursue strategies and opportunities to support and connect our agricultural and hunger relief partners. At the nexus of public, private, and non-profit partnerships, FA works collaboratively with a wide variety of partners to anticipate and respond to the evolving needs of the emergency food system and advance common goals. We engage and develop partnerships and resources that support our work and foster a shared vision to meet the needs of hungry people in communities across Washington. Together, we are working to alleviate hunger, support Washington farmers, and promote healthy eating.

While this report has focused on EFAP, each of the six programs we administer through FA are interdependent, and our strategic goals are framed around this connectivity. Looking ahead, our strategies to leverage opportunities and fulfill our mission include the following.

### ENHANCE CAPACITY TO DISTRIBUTE INCREASED AMOUNTS OF FRESH AND FROZEN FOOD

The emergency food system of Washington State is a robust network of warehousing agencies, distribution partners, and direct service emergency food providers including food banks, food pantries, and meal programs. Food Assistance's mission has a dual function of support and regulation, which includes identifying needs and supporting capacity enhancements that will enable our emergency food partners to safely distribute and store an increasing volume of fresh and frozen foods that require refrigeration and freezer space. Three driving forces make cold storage and transportation capacity enhancements particularly timely and important for the emergency food system.

**USDA Trade Mitigation Program** – As a result of international trade conflicts, USDA Trade Mitigation Program (TMP) foods have more than doubled the amount of USDA commodity foods coming into the emergency food system, many of which require cold and frozen storage. In 2019, almost 65 percent of TMP foods were fresh or frozen. This increased the overall percentage of fresh or frozen food coming from our federal programs by 401.3 percent, as compared with the previous year.

**Promotion of Healthy Options** – Over the past decade, the types of foods distributed through hunger relief agencies have changed dramatically, with a trend toward healthier options like fresh produce, frozen protein and other less processed foods. Years ago, it would have been much more common to leave the food pantry with lots of canned, processed and shelf-stable foods. Today, hunger relief organizations are working collaboratively to procure a significant amount of fresh, whole, nutritious foods, many of which require cold or frozen transportation and storage.

**Reducing Food Waste through Food Rescue** – In recent years, food waste reduction has taken a center stage in the national conversation about solid waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and hunger relief. In 2015, a national goal was established by the USDA and EPA to cut food waste in half by 2030. In 2019, the Washington State Legislature adopted this goal and tasked the Department of Ecology to collaborate with WSDA and the Department of Health to develop strategies to prevent food waste. In part, strategies include rescuing good food that may have been headed to the landfill, and safely getting that good food to hunger relief partners where it can be put to use feeding hungry people. Building the infrastructure now will help prepare the emergency food system to handle anticipated increases in perishable food coming from statewide food rescue efforts. To that end, the 2018 Farm Bill included a small amount of additional funding for Farm to Food Bank projects. These projects are meant to cut food waste on farms and get

more locally grown food into hunger relief agencies by investing in harvest, processing, distribution and/or storage. As FA develops our state strategy for Farm to Food Bank projects, stakeholder input has shown a clear interest and focus on capacity-building equipment purchases. Specifically, hunger relief providers want to increase refrigerated transport and storage options that support farm to emergency food provider partnerships. These partnerships require unique infrastructure like rural, secure cold storage facilities with multi-partner pick-up and drop-off access -- like the Harvest Node or Harvest Coolbox, and Cool-Pup trailers -- which enable accessible, mid-sized refrigerated distribution from farm to food pantry, and were developed and piloted by partners in Eastern Washington.

Managing an ever-increasing volume of perishable food requires well-coordinated networks for transportation, warehousing and distribution to serve food pantry clients at all levels within the emergency food system. The first step is to build sufficient capacity at the local level. We continue to hear that smaller, community-based food pantries and meal programs with limited capacity are struggling to handle the shift from dry foods to more fresh and frozen foods. To address this challenge, Washington's hunger relief advocates have initiated a cold storage capacity investment request this legislative session. If successful, it is intended to be a stopgap measure until FA can conduct a comprehensive capacity assessment to understand and address longer-term needs. This advocate-driven request includes strengthening an existing partner's refrigerator/freezer rebate program and creating a one-time grant program, administered by FA, for larger capital or construction projects, both of which would have matching requirements.

**Expand Healthier Food Options and Access** – One of Food Assistance's key strategies, which closely aligns with Results Washington's goal of healthy and safe communities, is to continue to facilitate and support the expansion of healthier food options in food pantries across the state. While we are critically concerned that every person in Washington has enough food to eat, we also want to ensure that people with lower incomes who rely on food pantries and meal programs have access to fresh and healthier foods that nourish health and well-being.

**Farm to Food Pantry (F2FP)** – Food Assistance is committed to pursuing innovative ways to bring nutritious food to people struggling to put food on the table while also promoting the economic growth and viability of Washington farmers. The Farm to Food Pantry initiative, a partnership with Harvest Against Hunger, helps bridge the gap between hunger relief agencies and farmers through relationship building and direct farm purchasing. Having just wrapped up our sixth year, WSDA is looking to secure additional funding to make this a permanent, sustainable FA program. Establishing this relationship between farmers and food pantries encourages future donations and gleaning opportunities for fresh produce. In the coming years, our vision is to expand participation statewide beyond the 22 counties currently served, build long-term relationships between farmers and hunger relief providers, and bring locally grown food to lower-income families. F2FP has the dual benefit of getting delicious, nutritious local produce into the appreciative hands of lower-income people, while providing a wholesale lifeline that can help small-to-mid-size farmers thrive, in spite of a complex and challenging international agricultural situation.

**Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** – FA continues to work to expand access to CSFP, which is a federal program that provides senior clients with 28 pounds of critically needed food each month. This program currently operates in 27 counties, and it was recently expanded to the Olympic Peninsula and Whatcom County. For the first time, one of our EFAP-Tribal partners took on the additional role of being a CSFP lead agency, serving their tribal elder population while also coordinating with rural food pantries and creating access for non-tribal elders in the community. In FFY21, we expect to request that USDA grant an additional expansion for our more rural areas.



## DATA SOURCES

- EFAP Contractor monthly Food Pantry distribution and demographic reports
- EFAP Contractor monthly Tribal Food Voucher demographic reports

## DEFINITIONS

“New or Unduplicated Client” means a client served by an emergency food provider during the reporting period for the FIRST time in the current fiscal year.

“Returning or Duplicated Client” means a client served by an emergency food provider during the reporting period who the emergency food provider previously served during the current fiscal year.

“Visits” means all new client plus returning client visits during the fiscal year.

Table 1: Yearly Data for Food Pantries, State Fiscal Years 2009-2019 (FY = July 1- June 30)

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
<b>Total Client Visits</b> (New and Returning)	7,300,476	7,803,414	7,980,242	8,471,871	8,353,656	8,946,352	8,482,299	8,224,133	8,023,428	8,010,132	7,841,974
<b>New Clients</b>	1,461,116	1,576,894	1,433,580	1,371,965	1,294,363	1,384,608	1,260,963	1,225,165	1,160,838	1,151,565	1,123,946
<b>Returning Clients</b>	5,839,360	6,226,520	6,546,662	7,099,906	7,059,293	7,561,744	7,221,336	6,998,968	6,862,590	6,858,567	6,718,028
<b>Total New Families Served</b>	499,918	546,431	505,392	488,076	458,868	484,749	457,407	443,756	432,267	448,296	440,778
<b>Average # of Visits Per Client per Year</b> (Visits/New Clients)	5.00	4.95	5.57	6.17	6.45	6.46	6.73	6.71	6.91	6.96	6.98
<b>Pounds of Food Distributed</b>	113,952,122	126,785,318	128,951,893	132,742,749	132,303,513	139,522,115	139,272,915	138,451,384	140,473,341	143,180,571	148,435,005
<b>Average # of lbs of Food/ Client Visit/Yr</b> (lbs/client visits)	15.61	16.25	16.16	15.67	15.84	15.60	16.42	16.83	17.51	17.87	18.93

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Table 2: Yearly Data for Tribal Voucher Programs, State Fiscal Years 2009-2019 (FY = July 1- June 30)

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
<b>Total Client Vouchers</b> (New and Returning)	17,111	17,559	21,881	15,697	19,965	17,536	19,258	18,143	17,642	16,714	15,408
<b>New Client Vouchers</b>	8,222	9,791	9,064	8,712	8,503	9,526	8,508	9,167	8,349	9,076	7,848
<b>Returning Client Vouchers</b>	8,889	7,768	12,817	6,985	11,462	8,010	10,750	8,976	9,293	7,638	7,560
<b>Total New Households</b>	2,672	3,474	3,123	3,404	3,083	3,661	3,461	3,434	3,027	3,257	3,040
<b>Average # of Vouchers Per Client per Year</b> (Vouchers/New Clients)	2.08	1.79	2.41	1.80	2.35	1.84	2.26	1.98	2.11	1.84	1.96

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