**Issues and Concerns for COVID -19 Response| Updated March 2021**

**Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster Counties; Buffalo and area Counties; Dawson County;** **Dodge County; Hall County**; **Lancaster County; Otoe County; Pawnee, Richardson, Johnson, & Nemaha Counties; Panhandle counties; Tribal Communities (Santee Sioux Nation, Omaha Tribe, Winnebago Tribe, Native Western Nebraska)**; **York County**

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| LANGUAGE BARRIERS | * Need for readily available language (e.g., Spanish, Somali) translation and interpreters * More instruction in tribal languages [this is not directly related to COVID-19, but is an ongoing concern about loss of connection to culture and the importance of culture as an element of prevention efforts] * Pandemic increased needs for all residents, but especially those who have language barriers to getting services * Many Spanish-speaking individuals reached out for help for the first time * Continued need to have information and services in Spanish, Arabic, Somali |
| Resources needed and possible solutions: | Provide training for some who might be able to serve in this way and find funds to pay for their service.  Funding to provide translation for programs who do not have a bilingual staff person available to help people find employment.  Additional TV’s/teleprompters to share community information in different areas of the city to make information more accessible.  Promote awareness and provide funding for flyers, giveaways and incentives at pop-up sites for covid vaccinations  Conversation about developing a translator/interpreter pool to be linked to NATI (Nebraska Association of Translators and Interpreters) with pilot in Kearney to form a Community Charter Association  Funds for Spanish Radio, newspapers to provide PSA’s |
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| CONNECTIVITY | * Tech literacy - many adults struggle to fill out an online form, understand the educational technology to help their children with their homework or receive messages from the school * Still have places that do not have internet access, or limited bandwidth (outside of Grand Island and Kearney, southeast NE, central NE) * Families and individuals outside of public school systems – unknown device and broadband access * Adult education students need electronic devices for GED and other learning * Child care home and center-based directors do not have access to laptops * Broadband is extremely limited in Tribal Community lands; sole provider option of service is often experiencing limitations in new services and limited support for repair |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Provide families with SIM cards, modems, and routers that can be provided as pre-paid rather than monthly charges; request schools could have an orientation at the beginning of the school year  Public schools have provided devices and hotspots for kids, but for school use only  ALLO EBB is great – thank you!  LPS response has been quite admirable and planning for summer school and next school year is good.  Childcare providers to host virtual meetings to connect families to resources, etc., but need agency support to host volunteer connections  UNK “laptop take back event” with Motherboard partnership  Possible hot spot ‘check outs’ in partnership with local library |
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| FOOD AND SUPPLIES | * Food banks will have a funding cliff when the fiscal ear ends in June * FEMA is stating foodbanks do not have legal authority to feed people; this will create crises unfunded by state funds and thousands of hungry Nebraska families * Families and individuals who cannot qualify for SNAP or EBT are struggling to have enough funds for food * High need for fresh and healthy foods; mostly packaged options available if there is availability * Continued support of farm to table food boxes; need to clarify importance to elected officials and within communities who these boxes should be prioritized for (e.g., those in need) * Senior Center has become the distribution point for USDA food boxes (475 boxes distributed in February in Gothenburg) * Need a central place for food pantry updates, times, locations * Increases in students utilizing weekend backpack programs * Food pantry busy with appointments and distributing boxes * Food Pantries (Cozad) seeing twice the usual number of families each month * Hundreds of families need food boxes each week, but there is no one to organize this distribution anymore (Lexington) * Food pantries need additional items; relying solely on community to donate and those donations are far fewer * Need for food in CR is much higher due to students needing to be home for quarantine or home-based learning and not accessing school-provided meals |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Need continued SNAP enrollment efforts  Prioritize Food Pantry refrigeration  Fund Bountiful Backpacks  Ensure Summer Nutrition Programs are in place for all communities  Provide coordinated technical assistance for Farmers’ Markets (e.g., with Nebraska Extension)  Keep in contact with Senior Center to provide funds if needed. Keep in contact with food pantry to be sure supplies are adequate. Dawson County Family Partners consider heading up distribution in Lexington.  Additional funding to support additional food needed in boxes (protein) and items, supplies to continue to carry out multiple distribution (advertisements, bags/boxes, storage, etc.) location – Hall example  Gas vouchers for volunteers who deliver the food to outlying counties  Funding to support a part-time position to coordinate the community food efforts (this ensures no food goes to waste and is shared amongst all of the distribution locations) – Hall example  Be Well Collaborative is raising $15,000 to set up EBT services for this season’s farmer’s market – Buffalo example  Enhancing UNK’s Handshake platform to engage college volunteers, could it be expanded to other high schools |
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| HOUSING AND UTILITIES | * Many households requested assistance with rent or utilities so far in 2021 and requests continue to come in and the statewide COVID-19 funds are hard to access and receive in timely manner * Seeing an increase in utilities assistance * Need more resources for coordination staffing to support front line emergency services and coordinate supports * Large hotel expenses due to long term stays, need for coaching to support individuals and families in hotels * Incentivized coaching to help families and individuals sustain housing * Coordinated list of rental options for agencies to refer individuals looking for rentals * Grow current coordinated entry system for housing, rent and utilities to electronic forums * Evictions that need legal assistance to retain housing vouchers or success in next rental * Huge increase in first time assistance * Need workforce housing to support job opportunities in communities * Not sure how many, if any, are accessing the state assistance website * Non SS requesting assistance (undocumented) * Every NPPD shut off requires a $2.50 reconnection fee; unable to get traction to waive fee if paid by CR * Unable to create a plan to reduce electrical shut offs with NPPD when family is working with a coach or CN |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Easily accessed funds for short-term assistance  Moratorium on utility disconnects and evictions helped immensely, but those short-term solutions are starting to go away (bring them back)  Continued assistance to offset bills for rent, mortgage and utility assistance.  Funding to continue hotel/motel vouchers for homeless individuals who cannot be placed in a shelter due to COVID, COVID exposure or waiting for a test result to come back  BCCP has hired a bi-lingual navigator to help in processing CR applications  Moderate temperatures may show less need for utilities supports, but spikes observed for low and high temperatures |
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| HEALTH CARE-MENTAL HEALTH CARE | * Access to vaccines * Supports to combat vaccine hesitancy in English and non-English speaking populations * Mental health care is a huge need for children, parents, and families * Anxiety has increased in all populations; consensus this is a high priority for healthcare workers, elderly, unemployed, families, educators, etc. * Increase in the number and severity of issues needing professional mental health interventions * Need 24-hour crisis support options * Not enough funds or mental health professionals * Workforce capacity issues for health and mental health * Need for more types of mental health treatments or counseling options * Noting higher costs of health care * Need better understanding of community to reduce stigma * Law enforcement and EMS need better trainng * Funds to cover costs associated with intensive family in-home therapy * Spanish-speaking and other multi-lingual counselors/therapists * Spanish/Somali-speaking drug counselors/meetings * Free health care clinic needed * Need funds for extra costs of healthcare bills for COVID related medical bills * Consistent health care screenings in own language * Continued availability of mental health services to be offered virtually * Stigma still associated with accessing mental health therapy but not trauma informed supports due to COVID -19 realities * Need brain injury resources and case management (bilingual case managers) in Buffalo County * Need trusted sites for purchase of PPE for businesses * Need for fatigue compassion for front line health care workers * Need continued support for wearing masks in facilities (no city ordinance after Feb 2021) * Need supports for first responders, funeral home employees, medical providers, to deal with significant loss of life among patients and clients * Need Behavioral Health regions to offer more guidance and supports, share models, etc. * Families requesting support for insurance deductibles, mental health visits and medical expenses * There is an increase in substance abuse-specifically with meth * True substance abuse issues may be unknown because of high need and lower availability of services |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Telehealth sessions, additional staff in the schools  Funding to support access to devices with internet connections.  Funding to continue to support the internet provided  Possible partnership with HelpCare Clinic (Buffalo)  Funding to offset costs of mental health services, transportation vouchers to get there, advertising in multiple languages, funding to offer community training for partners to provide appropriate trauma informed services.  Funding to provide kits to seniors who are isolated and unable to get out and socialize with others.  Funding for campaign around suicide prevention phone numbers and  ways to deal with isolation and strategies (radio, TV, social media blasts, flyers)  Interest in setting Charter up to help bi-lingual students pursue degrees in nursing and mental health counseling. |
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| CHILDCARE | * Parents struggling to pay for the cost of childcare * Parents needing supports to pay for childcare if they have to stay home to care for other children * Childcare option shortage; especially evening options; many childcare options closed due to COVID * Some programs have had to limit numbers due to COVID, which also limits income while increased PPE/cleaning costs * Need certified staffing * Overall concern for lack of available care (capacity) * Existing child care centers are struggling with expensive needed repairs * Childcare providers struggling to find qualified staff * Need Mental health supports for workers * Need compassion fatigue training for providers * Childcare providers struggling to make relationships with parents (because of limited drop off time/access) * Connectivity needs for zoom meetings, need laptops in homes and centers * Unaffordable quality childcare for low wage-earning households * Still in need of continued support and COVID-19 related guidelines * Need for formal social emotional skill curriculum in childcare centers (staff and children) * Continued need for PPE including thermometers, sanitizer, masks, and cleaning supplies so funding for those costs * Difficult for families to find childcare that is open and accepting new families; some providers are not accepting or do not qualify for other childcare expense aid that is available |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Funds to pay for general operating costs, especially for provider salaries, to keep doors open during times of decreased attendance when families are quarantined.  community child care services/providers, free classes/assistance for home care providers to get/receive state certification  Developing a “sub list” of providers that could help at centers if a teacher has to quarantine to avoid closure of a classroom.  Funds needed for support and address compassion fatigue training and support for mental health  Hiring incentives to attract workforce to child care positions  Need to establish a substitute pool |
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| Substance Abuse Prevention | * Youth substance abuse treatment options, schools are seeing an increase in substance abuse since COVID began. * Need to identify evidence based strategies for families and youth Implementation of a program/support for coping skills that connect youth to each other – youth feel disconnected and losing interest since COVID limited activities in community and school.  Finding ways to connect with a purpose. |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Intervention services in schools who are breaking policy for substance abuse – streamlined efforts for early intervention for youth who violate substance abuse policies on school grounds – this would require more staff |
| SPECIAL POPULATIONS-  undocumented | * They are less likely to access services including health care because of status * They are less likely to have health coverage * Finding the name on the statement does not match the client’s name and finding the other person proves difficult * Non SS requesting assistance (undocumented) * Unknown numbers of at-risk populations who have age and language barriers to vaccine * Need to get people back to work, many jobs open * Need for centralized resources, in multiple languages (MyLink) * Dental services for uninsured children/families/individuals * Mental health education awareness and supports for Hispanic/Latino populations * Mental health vouchers that are accepted by bilingual mental health therapists for primarily Spanish speaking families/individuals * Entry into the field for bilingual talent in medical, legal, and community settings * Cultural awareness in agencies, organizations and businesses for the person served * Do not have bilingual therapists |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Private CR funds are available, but sometime getting the paperwork to match the client is a struggle  Partnering with ‘Do Right Right Now’ to promote vaccine, not garnering support from greater partners yet  BCCP has hired as Spanish speaking navigator to assist with applications and outreach, First Lady developed a discussion board for ideas/solutions to be posted  UNK providing $100K to support the development of MyLink in Central Nebraska with Cares Act Funds  Train the trainer in Spanish for Mental Health First Aid Training in Buffalo County  Expand capacity to provide affordable dental services to uninsured children/families/individuals and education by increasing interdisciplinary collaboration  Educational Campaign on mental health awareness for both English & non-English individuals/families  Integrate bilingual professionals in community, healthcare, and legal settings |
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| SPECIAL POPULATIONS - young adults | * Young adults are having trouble making wise decisions and are lacking guidance - left “adrift” * Disconnected youth lack information regarding resources * Gas money for transitional youth * Access to postsecondary ed/career training and re-training (affordability, accessibility issues in competitive market) * Past due balances/debt to colleges for students stopping out/dropping out with virtual transition/pandemic related reasons * Accessible housing. This is not related to housing/rental support financial, but availability of affordable housing units to utilize FYI voucher, rental assistance, etc. * Access to cash assistance (not gift cards, gas cards, etc.) – cash for emergency needs |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Develop coaching system and connect with DHHS coach when possible  Providing smart phones at discharge at Richard Young Hospital when youth are being discharged   * ETV – NE will receive $406,000 in additional ETV. We have a plan to allocate $30,000 to past due balances so youth can re-enroll in school/training. We also plan to increase the ETV awards by $1000 per student and students are eligible up to age 27. We also hope to provide a one-time stimulus to all ETV students. * Utilizing Venmo for quick access to cash assistance, when possible (versus cutting checks via support services funds or issuing gift cards) * Regarding accessible housing – this is a bigger issue than we can solve – but hoping to increase accessible housing via the Blair tech campus and eventually the Sarpy Co. campus.   + Need more options that landlords/programs open-up housing options that accept FYI/HUD vouchers or to partner with YHDP.   + College on-campus housing needs to accept FYI and HUD/YHDP as forms of payment – particularly on community college campuses * Fostering Academic Achievement network is working on a plan to re-design developmental courses so that students (all students) can move into a degree more quickly. * Partnership with AIM/pilot with CYI youth interested in tech – rapid stackable credentialing (done virtually), shared scholarship (AIM pays for the courses, CYI pays to support students to remain stably housed/supported during courses). |
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| EDUCATION | More assistance for GED/ESL classes to make them more affordable  Transportation vouchers – tune up clinics for vehicles so kids can get to school  Food insecurity on weekends  Gaps in providing breakfast/lunch everyday/every week this summer (Hall County) |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Stipends for summer camps and recreational activities  Student shoe vouchers (other clothing as well)  Summer Reading activities and food in a bag  Funding for mental health counseling for students who are seeing in increase in behaviors, loneliness and social isolation |
| TRANSPORTATION | * Lack of reliable transportation or money to keep cars running * Transportation expenses including gas and public transit vouchers, funding for repairs on vehicles, car payments and insurance * Challenges for seniors and low income to get supplies and to services * Persons accessing Community Response need car repairs or vehicles for transportation * Transportation is needed to run after 4:30 to get people to work outside of first shift jobs (e.g., Santee Community) |
| Resources and possible solutions: | Public transportation to and from local towns, in-town bus stops  Would car repair shops or auto sales businesses assist in creating some solutions  Vouchers for gas and vehicle repair |

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| ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS | * Child abuse cases being reported are more severe than pre-COVID * Finding jobs for community members * Many new people needing services that have never accessed before and they are unsure of where to start * Community has jobs available, shortage of workers or people choosing not to work at this time * Many needs for basic social emotional skill development as there has been a loss across populations and all ages due to isolation because of COVID * Kids and families are more isolated and have become withdrawn and disconnected |
| Resources and possible solutions: | * Starting to see some benefits of kids and families being back in a routine and integrated back into community activities |