

APRIL 2020

A stylized graphic of a family consisting of four grey human figures of varying heights, arranged in a circle. The figures are composed of a circular head and a vertical rectangular body. The entire family icon is enclosed within a light blue circular arc that is broken at the top and bottom. The title text is centered over the family icon.

# Centering Families During A Pandemic

USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC

A White Paper

## Centering Families During A Pandemic

In the wake of a global health pandemic, the impact of a similarly devastating and pervasive condition persists – racism. While the novel COVID-19, Coronavirus, disease has unfortunately taken the lives of over 150,000 humans and impacted nearly 2.5 million families globally, to say that it has done so indiscriminately would be false. In the United States, the release of more accurate predictions of the impact of the virus has resulted in unprecedented nationwide extensions of rigorous social distancing “Slow the Spread” guidelines. While the predictions didn’t quite tell us who would be hit the hardest, once again, the data has provided another stark reminder that African Americans especially will continue to be gravely impacted because of racism – an undeniable social determinant of health in its own right.

To combat COVID-19, most governments have acted with states issuing Stay-at-Home orders and cities instituting fines for violations of curfews and social-distancing requirements. Yet, none of the actions have addressed the structural racism that has contributed to the lack of coordination, focus, and awareness to the unique challenges people of color face in this country. That oversight is precisely why, time and again, low-income African American families in particular have topped the charts of those impacted by COVID-19 in cities across the nation.

Today, all schools and universities have transitioned to distance learning models, many businesses have adjusted their operations or closed, and countless Americans have been laid off. The response of a federal stimulus package to millions of American households is helpful, but it simply is not enough. In fact, so long as the strategies are approached with a one-size-fit-all model, they will never be enough for our families who have been disinvested and under-resourced by the *pandemic* of racism far longer than COVID-19.

Soon after the introduction of the “Slow the Spread” CDC guidance, USI launched our COVID-19 Action Plan to track COVID-19 impact across our communities in an effort to: develop aligned national strategies, coordinate responses, and track COVID-19 progress as it relates to both our families and our staff. We developed a family assessment geared towards assessing the needs and risks of our families to help connect them with available resources and to advocate for more. USI’s starting point for developing strategy is the disaggregated data that allows us to highlight the trends and needs across subgroups in our population and address them with intentionality. In recognizing that racism is a significant barrier to the well-

being of our families we can only adequately serve them by starting with data about race. Over 90% of the population we serve is African American and economically disadvantaged.

Our assessment data has showed us that:

- 30% of our families lack resources such as food, disinfectant products, and household toiletries;
- 52% of our families have one or more family members that suffer from a chronic health condition;
- 22% of our families don't have access to internet and Wi-Fi that would allow their children to effectively participate in distance learning; and
- 50% of our families have lost employment or wages due to COVID-19.

The obstacles our families face, in many cases, are often compounded by the everyday realities they must endure as they navigate the disinvested communities where they live. These communities are often under-resourced with inadequate access to basic needs such as quality healthcare and healthy foods. Again, this environment is the result of deeply rooted institutionalized racism, which is effectively an "underlying health condition" for the families we serve.

Although racial demographic data related to COVID-19 is still limited, given our reality, it isn't a surprise that COVID-19 has hit low-income families of color the hardest in terms of health, education, and economic measures. For the few cities that have released racial data, African Americans are accounting for a disproportionate number of deaths related to the virus, despite the fact that they are often a significantly smaller segment of the total population. The pandemic is highlighting the underlying economic and racial disparity across the country where many African American communities still face barriers to healthcare access. Currently, over 70% of New Orleans' COVID-19 related deaths are African American, despite the fact that they make up only 33% of the state's population.

Data from completed assessments show that our families in New Orleans are being most severely affected by COVID-19. USI's New Orleans's staff have faced greater challenges in supporting residents whose needs have drastically increased over the last few weeks, even as resources remain scarce. Staff has been engaged in helping the newly unemployed households obtain unemployment benefits and providing technological assistance to help

families with the transition to virtual, especially for the nearly 90% who have children with distance learning requirements.

Even as restrictions and regulations tighten, many of the working adults in our families are amongst the millions of underpaid essential workers in the nation without the luxuries of work-from-home relief. Approximately half of the assessed families have been laid off as a result of COVID-19, and while less than 10% of families said they would have difficulty paying their April rent, that number is expected to increase as the pandemic extends into the upcoming months. So, while half our families are the working poor, now dubbed “essential workers,” the other half are unemployed and at an even greater risk of housing instability, even amidst a national eviction moratorium.

USI leadership and partners from across the nation have come together to help address the needs of our families. USI staff have compiled both local and national resources to distribute to residents and made new connections with local organizations to identify opportunities to collaborate. Site leadership has connected with local businesses including restaurants and hotels to identify opportunities to donate resources that may go unused during city-wide business closures. USI’s dedicated family support staff have taken on the role of transporting supplies directly to families who do not have adequate transportation options or are high-risk populations, such as our seniors. Our education specialists have created educational content to keep school-aged children engaged while school districts work to prepare distance-learning curriculum. USI’s latest development is the Recession Workforce Planning committee created specifically to strategize around economic mobility and stability for our families, in the face of the looming unemployment crisis, which has already reached over 22 million claims in the span of a few weeks.

There is still a long way to go, but thus far, USI has helped over 3500 families receive assistance with accessing food supplies, rental and utility payments, government benefits, medical goods and services, and basic needs such as disinfectants and household toiletries. Many of our site leaders are working hard in cities where new cases show no sign of slowing down, from the South’s epicenter in New Orleans to St. Louis, Sacramento, Puerto Rico, St. Croix, Pittsburgh and Baltimore, to name a few. USI staff are working to help close the resource gap for families wherever possible. Hundreds of households are being provided weekly food supply, financial donations are being used towards buying household essentials

and resources and support has been extended to all who need assistance, despite the added capacity required to fulfill those needs.

Our Action Plan fills gaps where needed and ensures reasonable measures are being taken to provide staff with their own protection as essential operations continue. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to develop, USI is proactively strategizing to ensure our families can remain on the pathway to stable and thriving. USI recognizes that the current system has failed our most vulnerable and that is why our advocacy agenda is directed towards:

- Increasing the minimum wage to a living wage that is able to support the basic needs of families. This pandemic has revealed the inequities regarding pay when considering the definition of an essential employee;
- Improving the healthcare system so that it is both accessible and culturally competent; and
- Developing the infrastructure that's needed to provide all families with internet and technology-related opportunities.

USI will continue to work in solidarity with the families we support, by continuing to disaggregate data and build robust strategies with our local partners that ensure families are stable and moving towards thriving. We will use our voice to lift the countless disparities that our families and neighbors face daily to ensure that freedom rings equitably in disenfranchised communities across the country, and we hope you do, too.

## 2019 USI CITIES AND SITES

### BALTIMORE

Perkins

### COLUMBUS

Poindexter Village

### CLEVELAND

### EAST ST. LOUIS

Samuel Gompers

### GALVESTON

Cedars at Carver Park

### MEMPHIS

Foote Homes

Legends Park

University Place

Resident Services

### MIAMI

Northpark at Scott Carver

### MINNEAPOLIS

Heritage Park

### NEW ORLEANS

Harmony Oaks

Iberville/ Treme

Marrero Commons

### LOUISVILLE

Beecher Terrace

### PITTSBURGH

Larimer/ East Liberty

### SACRAMENTO

Marisol Village (Twin Rivers)

### SAN ANTONIO

Wheatley Courts

### SAN FRANCISCO

Alice Griffith

### ST. LOUIS

Arlington Grove

Near North Side

North Sarah

Renaissance Place

Senior Sites

### TULSA

Eugene Field

### Norfolk

Tidewater Gardens

People First Empowered by USI

### PUERTO RICO

Bayshore Villas

Renaissance Square

### US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Louis E Brown III

### \*ANTICIPATED PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITIES

#### FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Caville Place

#### WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

Cleveland Avenue Homes





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Families at the Center of Results

NATIONAL COVID-19 ASSESSMENT RESULTS | March 18 - April 18, 2020



Outreach Attempts:  
5,503



Assessments completed:  
3891 / 65%



In the case of a quarantine,  
do you have enough food to  
last for 7 days?



Do you have antibacterial  
soap or other disinfectant  
cleaners such as bleach,  
Clorox, Lysol?



Do you have your household  
essentials for the next 7 days  
(toothpaste, toilet paper,  
soap, feminine products,  
etc)?



If you have young children  
do you have a 7-day supply  
of baby essentials (formula,  
baby food, diapers etc.)?



Are you or your school aged  
children required to do  
remote learning?



If so, does your children  
need tutoring or homework  
assistance?



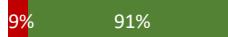
Do you have access to a  
computer or tablet with  
internet connectivity?



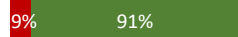
Do you have a chronic health  
condition?



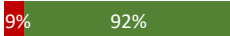
Do you have a 2-week supply  
of prescriptions?



Do you have the medicine  
you need for your family for  
the next 7 days?



Do you have a plan to get to  
where you need in case of an  
emergency?



Did you pay your rent this  
month?



Did you pay your utilities this  
month?



Are you still working?



Do you have a support system in the following areas?



To help with your children



To help in case of an  
emergency



Are you still working?



To help with activities of  
daily living?





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Families at the Center of Results

### COVID-19 ASSESSMENT RESULTS March 18 - April 18, 2020

#### Outreach Attempts:

- Week 1 – 4,450
- Week 2 – 4,535
- Week 3 – 4,924
- Week 4 – 5,503



#### Individuals Reached:

- Week 1 - 9,583
- Week 2 – 10,245
- Week 3 – 10,680
- Week 4 - 10,778



Assessments completed: 2913/64%

GENERAL

YES

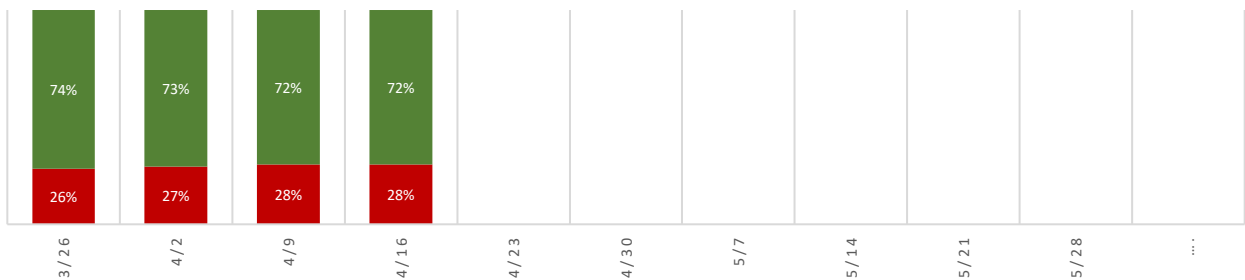
NO



In the case of a quarantine, do you have enough food to last for 7 days?



Do you have antibacterial soap or other disinfectant cleaners such as bleach, Clorox, Lysol?



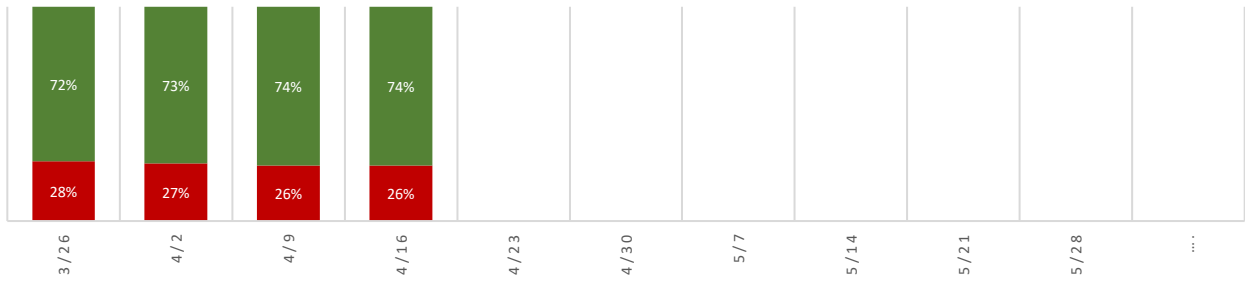
Do you have your household essentials for the next 7 days (toothpaste, toilet paper, soap, feminine products, etc)?







If you have young children do you have a 7-day supply of baby essentials (formula, baby food, diapers etc.)?



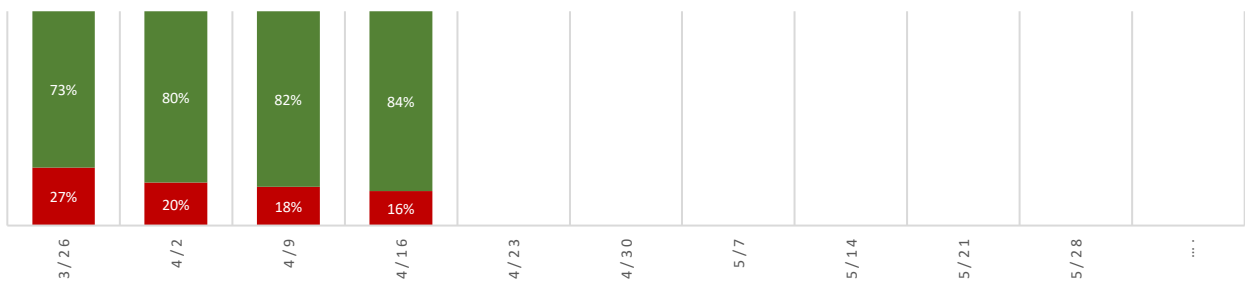
EDUCATION

YES

NO



Are you or your school aged children required to do remote learning?



If so, does your children need tutoring or homework assistance?

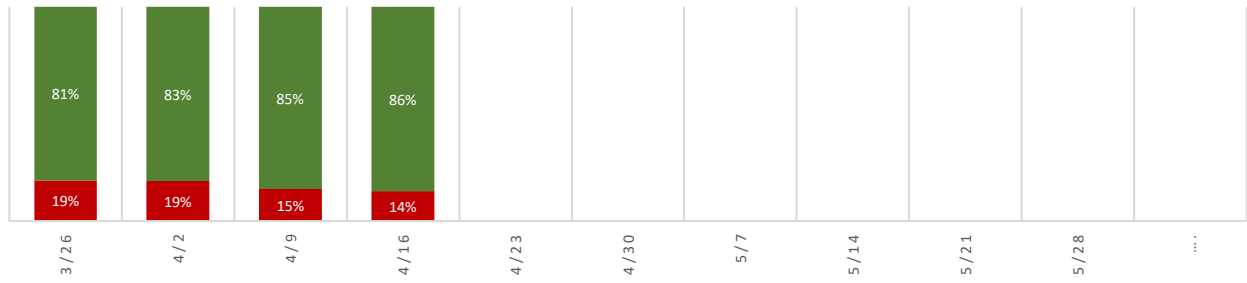


Do you have access to a computer or tablet with internet connectivity?





### Does your household have access to broadband internet at home?



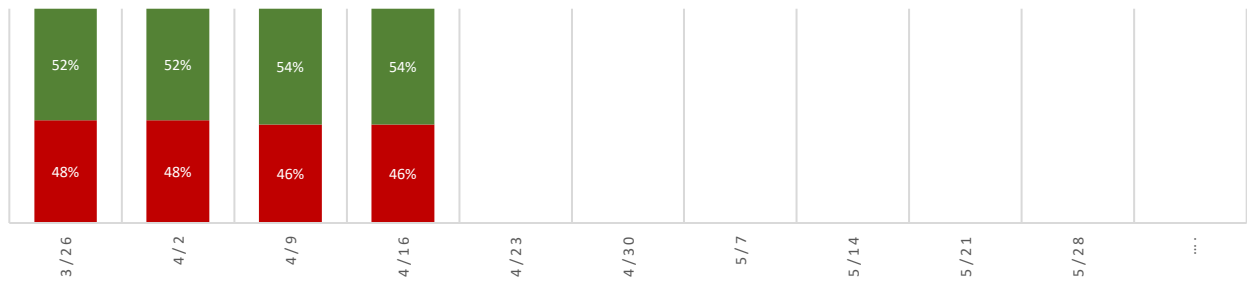
### HEALTH

YES

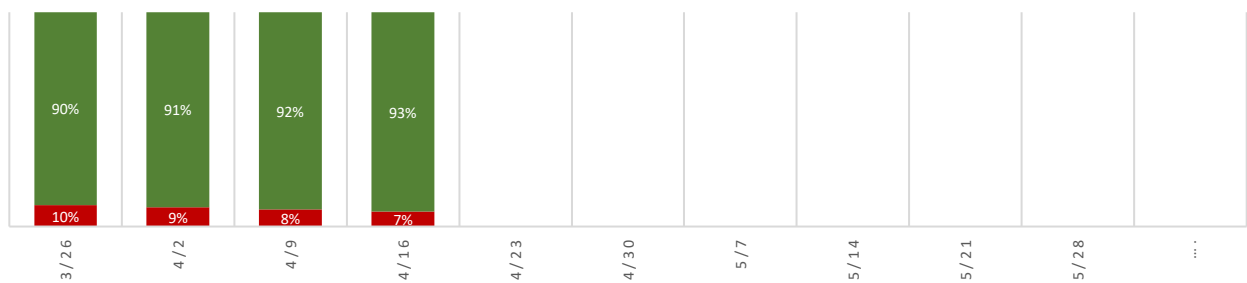
NO



### Do you have a chronic health condition?



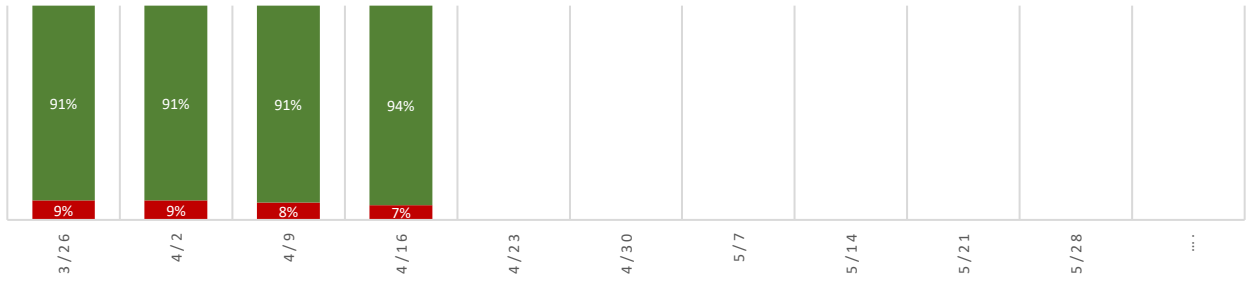
### Do you have a 2-week supply of prescriptions?



### Do you have the medicine you need for your family for the next 7 days?



### Do you have a plan to get to where you need in case of an emergency?

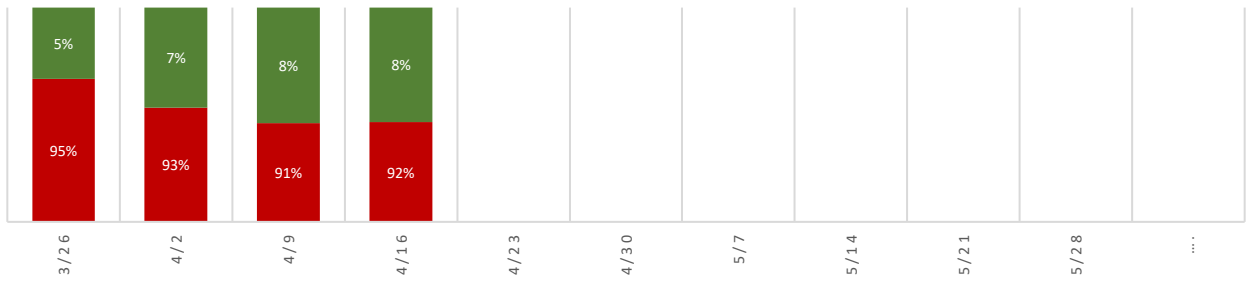


HOUSING STABILITY

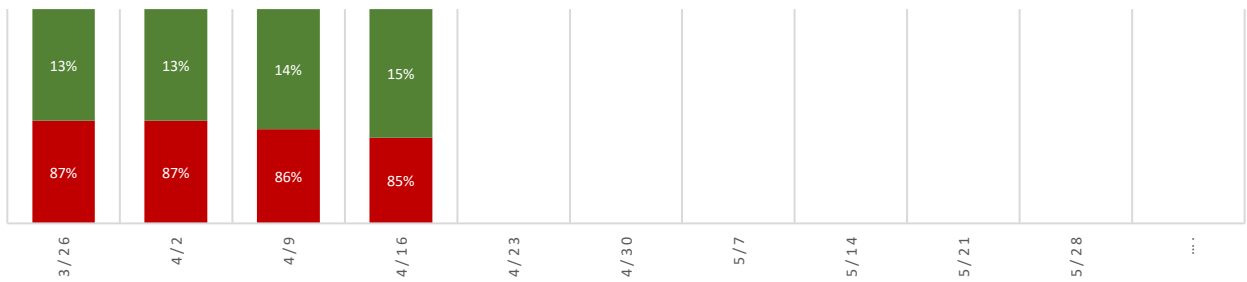
**YES** **NO**



Did you pay your rent this month?



Did you pay your utilities this month?



Did you lose employment as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?



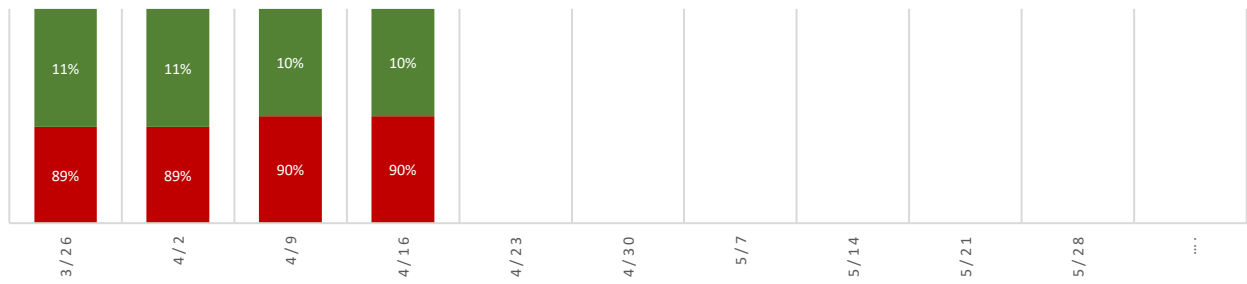
Do you have a support system in the following areas?

YES

NO



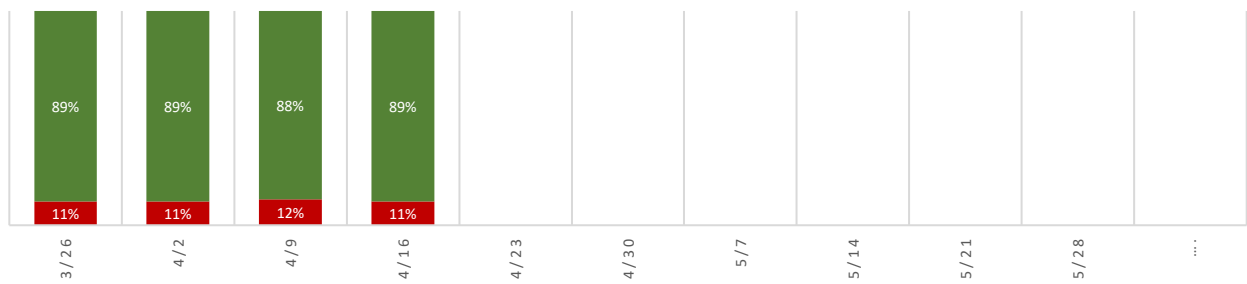
### To help with your children



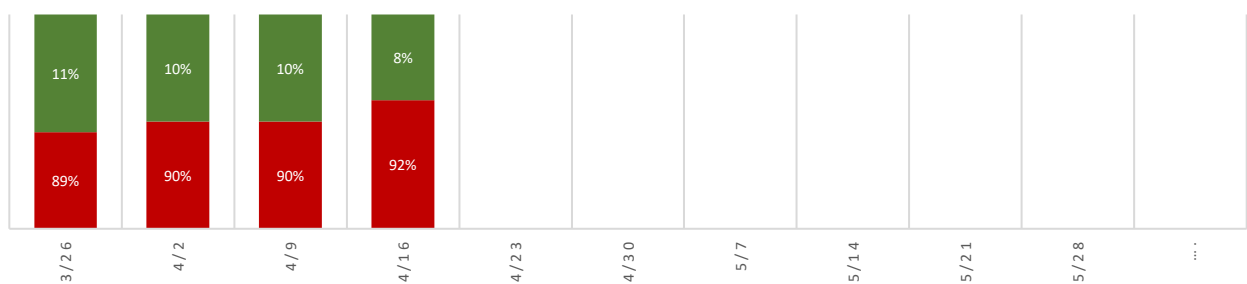
### To help in case of an emergency





### To help take a break?



### To help with activities of daily living?



<b>Assessment Results</b>				
	Total Families with COVID Assessment	2755	1000	36.3%
	Total Seniors with COVID Assessment	502	64	12.7%

After 3-18-2020	All Plans	Safe and Stable Housing - Secure Basic Needs	Healthy Lifestyle - Access: Prescriptions	In-School Youth - Connect to structured high quality out of school time programming	Children and Youth: Access Prescriptions	All Other Goals
<b>Total Plans Developed</b>	3121	1782	52	63	14	1210
Plans closed (cumulative to end date)	2326	1221	32	52	8	1013
Plans with positive outcome (cumulative to end date)	787	559	17	11	5	195
Plans dropped (cumulative to end date)	10	3	5	0	0	0

Basic and Emergency Services	During Period		Cumulative to End Date	
	# Participants	# Instances	# Participants	# Instances
New referrals made during report period				
Assisted Living Facility	1	1	1	1
Barrier Removal: Transportation assistance	12	13	12	13
Barrier Removal: Youth program equipment / supplies	10	10	10	10
Basic Needs Assistance	408	562	408	562
Emergency Housing	1	1	1	1
Food Pantry	422	672	422	672
Government Benefits	25	27	25	27
Housekeeping Assistance	12	12	12	12
Phone / Internet Access	26	31	26	31
Rental Assistance	44	45	44	45
Utility Assistance	85	89	85	89

Health and Family Services	During Period		Cumulative to End Date	
New referrals made during report period	# Participants	# Instances	# Participants	# Instances
Family Literacy	23	23	23	23
Health and Safety Education	0	0	0	0
Health Screenings	2	2	2	2
Prenatal Care	2	2	2	2
Prescription Drug Assistance	2	2	2	2

Employment Services	During Period		Cumulative to End Date	
New referrals made during report period	# Participants	# Instances	# Participants	# Instances
Career Counseling	3	3	3	3
Customized Training	1	1	1	1
Employment Readiness	3	1	3	1
Job Fair/Hiring Event	0	0	0	0
Job Retention Support	2	2	2	2
Job Search Assistance	7	7	7	7
Job Skills Training	4	4	4	4
Objective Assessment	0	0	0	0
On-the-Job Training / Transitional Jobs	0	0	0	0
Placement Services	5	5	5	5
Pre-employment Volunteer Job Experience	0	0	0	0
Re-entry Services	0	0	0	0
Self-Service	3	0	3	0
Underemployment Compensation	9	9	9	9
Upgrade / Incumbent Worker Training	0	0	0	0
Vocational Rehabilitation	1	1	1	1

Early Childhood Education Services	During Period		Cumulative to Last Month End	
New referrals made during report period	# Participants	# Instances	# Participants	# Instances
Early Childhood Education	6	6	6	6
Early Intervention	1	1	1	1
Newly received services during report period	# Participants	# Instances	# Participants	# Instances
Early Childhood Education	3	3	3	3