March 12, 2020

We have received many questions regarding how concerns about COVID-19 will impact the food assistance provided by Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. Many of you are fielding questions from your own clients and are trying to provide accurate information about what’s happening in the community.

Starting immediately, we are asking clients who have symptoms of illness not to visit a pantry in person, but instead, have someone shop or to pick up a pre-packed food order on their behalf. Those electing to get a pre-packed food order will be directed to do so at our main facility. They should still contact our Need Food line at 269-343-3663 to schedule this option and get further instructions. As always, a caseworker or human service professional can schedule and pick-up on a client’s behalf. We will continue to schedule other clients in the normal manner and allow them to shop for their groceries until further notice.

However, we realize that this situation is quickly evolving and changing. We are working with the Kalamazoo County Health Department and other community agencies to coordinate and collaborate efforts. Our staff is working on progressive plans in the event that community conditions and health department guidelines warrant us to alter our food distribution methods. As an essential community service, we are trying to balance the need for food in our community with the health and safety of all involved. We realize that each of you are in the midst of doing the same in your organizations and circles, and we welcome any feedback or questions about how we can work together in event of increasing and substantial community transmission of this virus.

Currently, we are not choosing to close any of our pantry locations or mobile food initiatives distributions. However, our pantry network relies heavily on a volunteer force, and we anticipate that many volunteers will feel uncomfortable continuing this work for their own health and safety. We understand that. With that in mind, it is possible that our daily capacity for scheduling pantry visits may be reduced over time. We plan to continue our regularly scheduled mobile food distributions but will make operational adjustments to expedite the process and limit the time people are gathered.

As you know, things change quickly, and we will try to keep the community updated. Please encourage others to stay tuned to our website (kzoolf.org) and Facebook page for updates as they become available in the coming days.

Thank you for your continued efforts in helping to end food insecurity in Kalamazoo. Feel free to reach out if you have questions or concerns.

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