

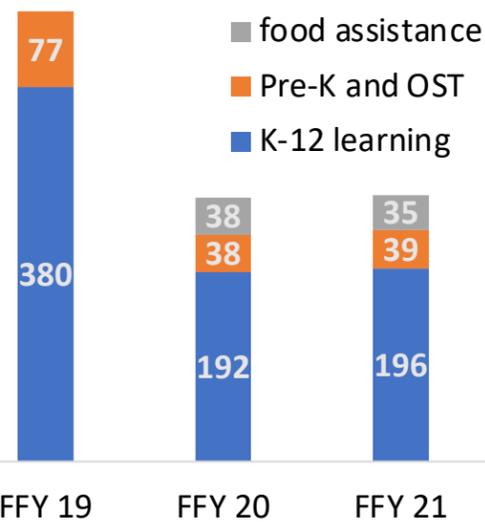
Where Do We Go from Here? California local health departments navigate school-based SNAP-Education during COVID-19

Summary Statement	Objective	Methods
COVID-19 forced California local health departments (LHDs) to suddenly adapt planned SNAP-Education strategies with K-12 school partners in the wake of school closures and state-wide redirection to focus on COVID relief efforts.	To understand pandemic-related changes to school-based SNAP-Education and identify areas of opportunity.	Secondary mixed-methods analyses of California LHDs' school-based SNAP-Education activity reported into the Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS) and data from annually conducted needs assessments for FFY 2020-21.

Results

During the pandemic, policy, systems, and environmental changes (PSEs) taking place in schools decreased dramatically. However, new partnerships formed, based on what was feasible given COVID regulations and the needs of families. Food assistance-related PSEs, such as establishing schools as food pantry sites and increasing access of federal food programs, and implementing virtual nut-PA education were areas of growth. Additionally, information and resources were often provided during school meal pick-up times (e.g., home gardening kits, recipe cards); these were seen as important ways to maintain community connection and complementary activities to other SNAP-Education strategies.

Major types of school-based SNAP-Education PSEs



COVID-19 impact by major types of school-based PSEs, FFY 20

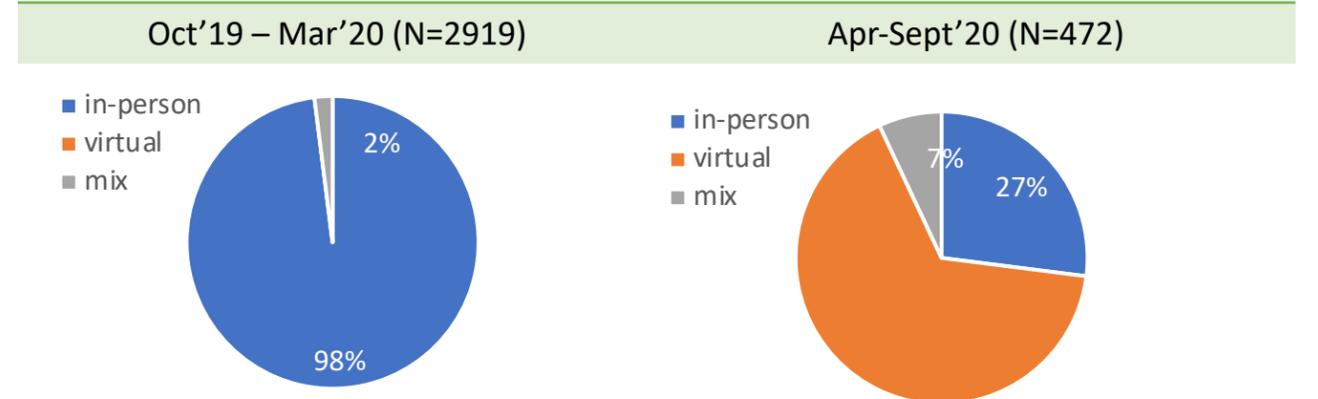
% in each category:	K12 Learning N=192	Food Assistance N=38	Pre-K/OST N=38
Discontinued	19%	5%	45%
Modified	39%	8%	37%
New	1%	87%	0%
No response	42%	0%	18%

Over 75% of schools reported several PSE-related strategies were not feasible due to COVID:

- Healthy foods/beverages for celebrations/events
- Improving access to PA opportunities or facilities
- Changing or improving cafeteria environment
- Increasing fruit/veg options at lunch

Main barriers to SNAP-Education implementation were staff turnover and redirection, and rules/regulations (e.g., school closures, access limitations, distancing requirements). LHDs that were able to adapt or develop new strategies cited having strong partnerships and community support.

Direct Education Delivery Method



"School sites closed due to COVID-19, so we had to modify any PSE activities in the lunchroom. To stay connected, we provided handouts and recipe cards as families picked up meals."

"Covid has greatly influenced the work that has been done at the site. The focus has been on basic needs of the school population...and on connecting to students through online lessons."

"We were previously unable to work at [this school] due to the distance. However, with COVID and so many of our services being offered virtually, we have begun partnering with them."

Authors

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Conclusions

SNAP-Education programs nationwide can continue to serve SNAP-eligible children and families during crises like COVID-19 by partnering with schools and other community organizations. These partners can identify what the needs are and the best ways to address them.

