

## The Connection: Baltimore's Social Needs Newsletter

May 8, 2020

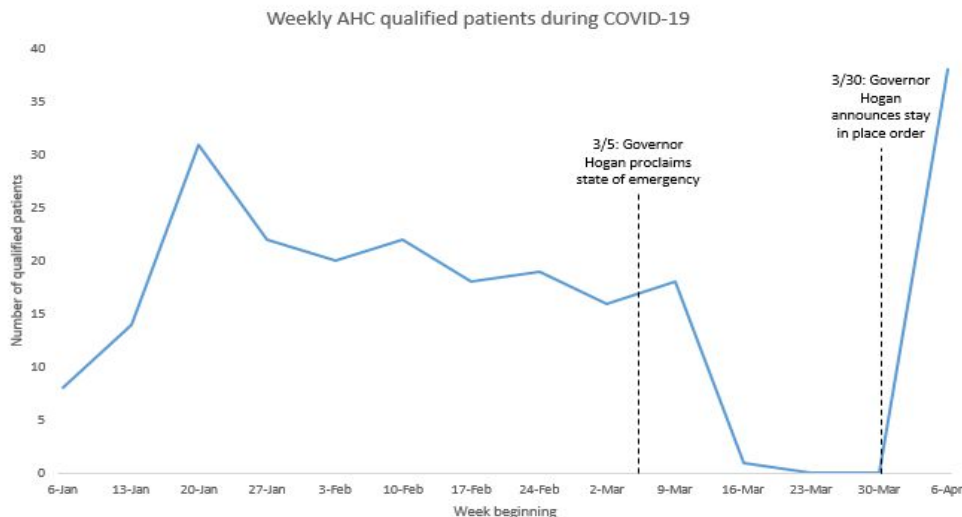
Welcome to The Connection, a newsletter put forth by the Baltimore City Health Department Accountable Health Communities Team. Here you will find information on: social determinants of health, and the work we are doing to ensure Baltimore residents get access to essential resources such as food, housing, and mental health. To learn more about social determinants of health and our Accountable Health Community(AHC) Project, click [here](#).

It is important now, more than ever, that we recognize the urgent need to connect people to social resources and streamline the coordination of stakeholders involved in this work. In addition, we want to highlight and recognize all that our AHC Partners are doing in response to COVID-19. If you or anyone you know would like to be added to this list-serv, please click this [link](#).

### AHC COVID-19 Response

The Baltimore Accountable Health Communities Project is committed to responding to this crisis in flexible and compassionate ways. We are mobilizing to meet the social needs in our communities in the following ways:

1. During COVID-19, to ensure we can continue identifying and addressing social needs, AHC has transitioned to **telephonic screening & navigation** for Baltimore residents in need



As you can see in the graph above, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our screening numbers. During March, when Governor Hogan proclaimed a state of emergency and later announced a stay at home order, we saw our screening numbers drop to zero.

There were several reasons for this drop in screening numbers:

- Clinical screening staff were re-deployed to the COVID-19 response.
- Lack of Personal Protective Equipment for screening staff,



- Limited volunteer staff due to safety concerns.

However, as our clinical partners adapt to working under COVID-19 conditions with methods like telephonic screening, we are seeing an increase in screening and navigation. We anticipate social needs to increase as the pandemic continues. From March 1st to April 18th, nearly 37,000 Baltimore residents filed for unemployment insurance.<sup>1</sup> The loss of jobs will impact their financial security and other needs. The increased demand for social needs has been reflected in the number of patients who continue to qualify for navigation in April. We will continue to screen over the phone and come up with creative ways to address residents' social needs.

2. **Health Disparities:** To date, Maryland's communities of color make up a disproportionate number of [COVID-19 cases and deaths](#). Communities of color have been subject to centuries of structural racism, which has led to disparities in housing, wealth, access to healthy food, access to clean and green spaces. This has impacted the [health outcomes](#), stress levels, and [access to care](#). These circumstances have significantly contributed to the underlying health conditions communities of color are experiencing and that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 and COVID-19 related death. This link between social determinants and the impacts of COVID-19 underscores the importance of addressing Baltimore's social needs in our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Community Resources:** Have you checked out [CHARMCare](#)? This is our resource database that contains information on available social, behavioral, and health services in Baltimore City. To ensure that anyone who visits CharmCare gets accurate, up-to-date, COVID-19, specific resources, we are working diligently to update all food resources every 48 hours, and all other resources weekly. To support our partners, and to ensure that we have a comprehensive set of resources, we are working with Baltimore's Maryland Access Point (MAP) program and Central Maryland 211.
  - a. If you have any resources that you would like to see in CHARMcare, please e-mail [Charmcare@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Charmcare@baltimorecity.gov) and [Lindsay.Adams@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Adams@baltimorecity.gov)
4. **CHARMCare Council**, composed of over twenty community stakeholders, convened their spring meeting to discuss the COVID-19 social needs landscape. Moveable Feast presented on their work addressing COVID-19 related [food insecurity](#) click [here](#) to see PowerPoint.
  - a. If you would like more information about the CHARMcare Council please e-mail [Charmcare@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Charmcare@baltimorecity.gov)
5. Baltimore City AHC welcomed our [new Program Director Elise Bowman](#). Please click above to get to know Elise better!

### AHC & Food Insecurity in Baltimore City

- Prior to COVID-19, [over 65%](#) of Baltimore City AHC navigated residents reported experiencing food insecurity. Individuals living in neighborhoods that have been recognized as being food insecure are not the only ones at risk. Our data suggests, 68% of Baltimore residents living outside of healthy food priority areas reported being food insecure.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unemployment Insurance Initial Claims by County- Unemployment Insurance <https://www.dlr.state.md.us/employment/uicounty.shtml>. Accessed May 6, 2020

<sup>2</sup> "A Healthy Food Priority Area" in Baltimore City is an area where: 1) The average Healthy Food Availability Index score for all food stores is low, 2) The median household income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, 3) Over 30% of households have no vehicle available, and 4) The distance to a supermarket is more than a quarter mile."

## Social Needs Updates

- COVID-19 has led to unprecedented food insecurity. For more info on Baltimore City Emergency Food Insecurity Response click [here](#). For the most up to date resources on Food, please visit CHARMcare.org and search for FOOD.

### **COVID-19 Webinars and Health Related Social Needs Research Spotlight**

- [Food is Medicine Coalition Pre-recorded Webinar](#): “Bringing Food Home During COVID-19: Medically Tailored Meal Nonprofits Respond to a New Epidemic”
- Health Leads Article: [Flattening The Next COVID-19 Curve](#) – Our Essential Resources