

brighterbites®

# A RAPID RESPONSE TO FOOD INSECURITY AND OTHER SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH DURING COVID-19

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living - July 7, 2020

# THE BRIGHTER BITES MISSION

*to create*

**COMMUNITIES OF HEALTH**

*through*

**FRESH FOOD**



# THE BRIGHTER BITES FORMULA: A NEW KIND OF FOOD CO-OP

Produce Distribution  
(20-25 lbs/week)



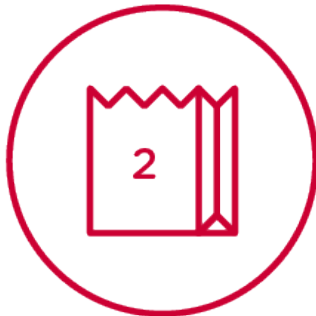
Nutrition Education  
(school & home)



Fun Food Experience  
(recipe tasting)

*All three done weekly for 16 weeks during academic year in schools where >75% children are enrolled in the F/R lunch program or Title 1; 8 week summer program  
Program is free to schools & families*

## *Fill the Plate*



Bring fresh produce to where kids already are.

## *Educate*



Teach kids and families healthy ways to use the food.

## *Make it Great*



Create a fun food experience for everyone involved.

*Measure Outcomes to Determine Impact*

# SINCE 2012, BRIGHTER BITES



has provided over **27 million pounds** of produce and **millions** of nutrition education pieces



to **275,000+ individuals** (representing 53,000 cumulative families)



at over **240 schools and camps** across Houston, Dallas, Austin, New York City, the Washington D.C. metro area, and Southwest Florida.



# THEORETICALLY-GROUNDED AND EVIDENCE-BASED

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- **Community-Academic partnership:** UTHealth School of Public Health is an academic/research partners for Brighter Bites.
- **Conduct research** to determine program effectiveness on behavioral and health outcomes
- Brighter Bites **tracks KPIs** to measure the program's dosage, reach, fidelity, and acceptability in real-time across all sites.
- **Program evaluation** to longitudinally track behavioral outcomes (child and parent fruit and vegetable intake, home nutrition environment, school nutrition environment), and qualitative data to determine program impact.

# THE DATA

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As compared to those in the comparison schools, families participating in Brighter Bites reported:

- two-fold increase in cooking meals from scratch, and a significant increase in eating meals together and serving more produce as part of those meals<sup>1</sup>
- two-fold increase in using nutrition labels to guide grocery purchases<sup>1</sup>
- and a significant decrease in added sugars consumed among children<sup>1</sup>
- 2-year follow up showed sustained consumption of the fruits and vegetables among families. <sup>2</sup>
- Consumed more fruits and vegetables served at school lunches, according to a 2017-2018 plate waste study <sup>3</sup>



Brighter Bites made me cook things I wouldn't have bought for fear of wasting money if my children didn't like it. <sup>4,5</sup>

- Brighter Bites Parent



# COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY – APRIL 2020



# BRIGHTER BITES COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY

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- School closures abruptly ended Brighter Bites traditional programming.
- Important to reach families, identify needs, and provide resources.

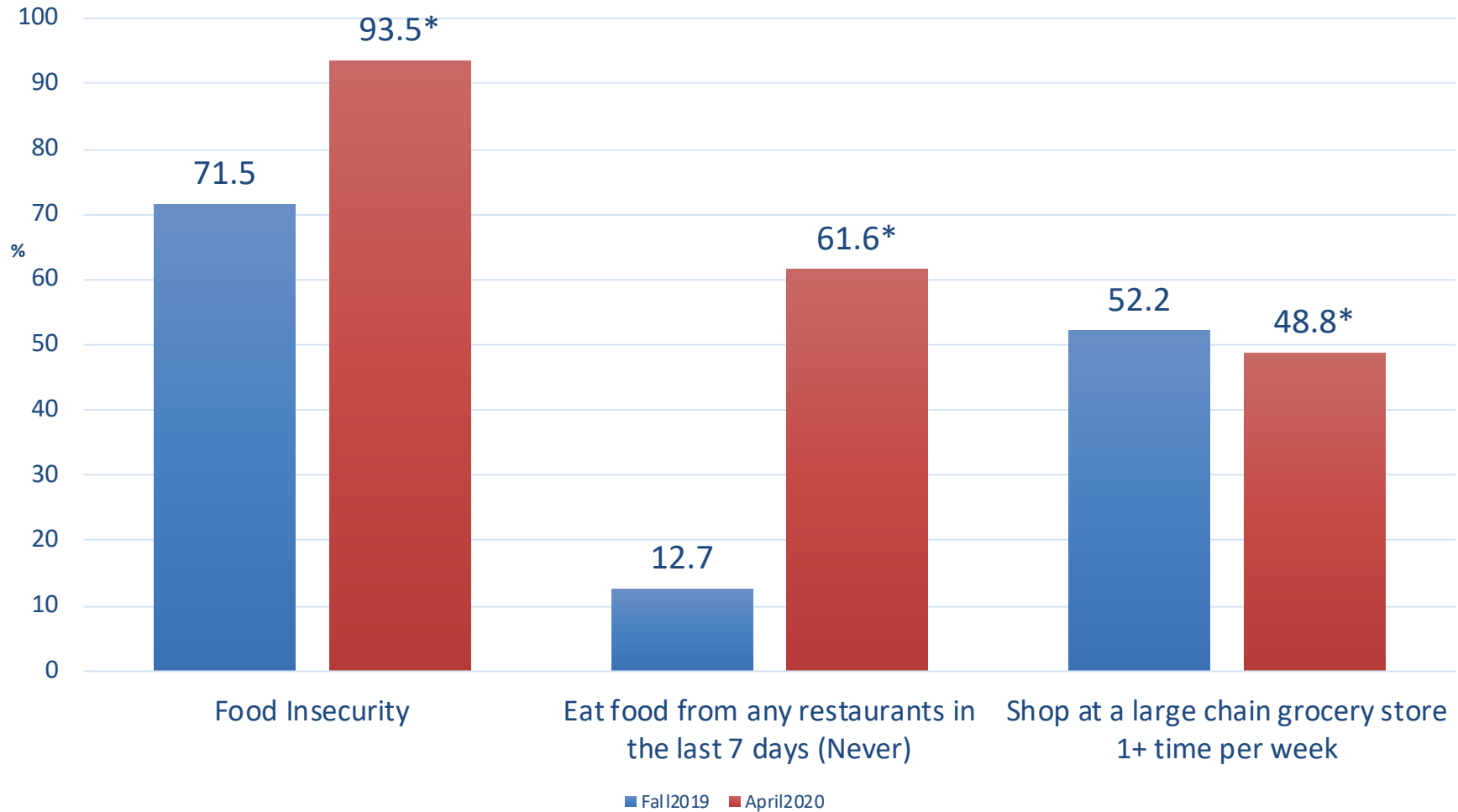
# PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY

## U.S. households with children by food security status of adults and children, 2018



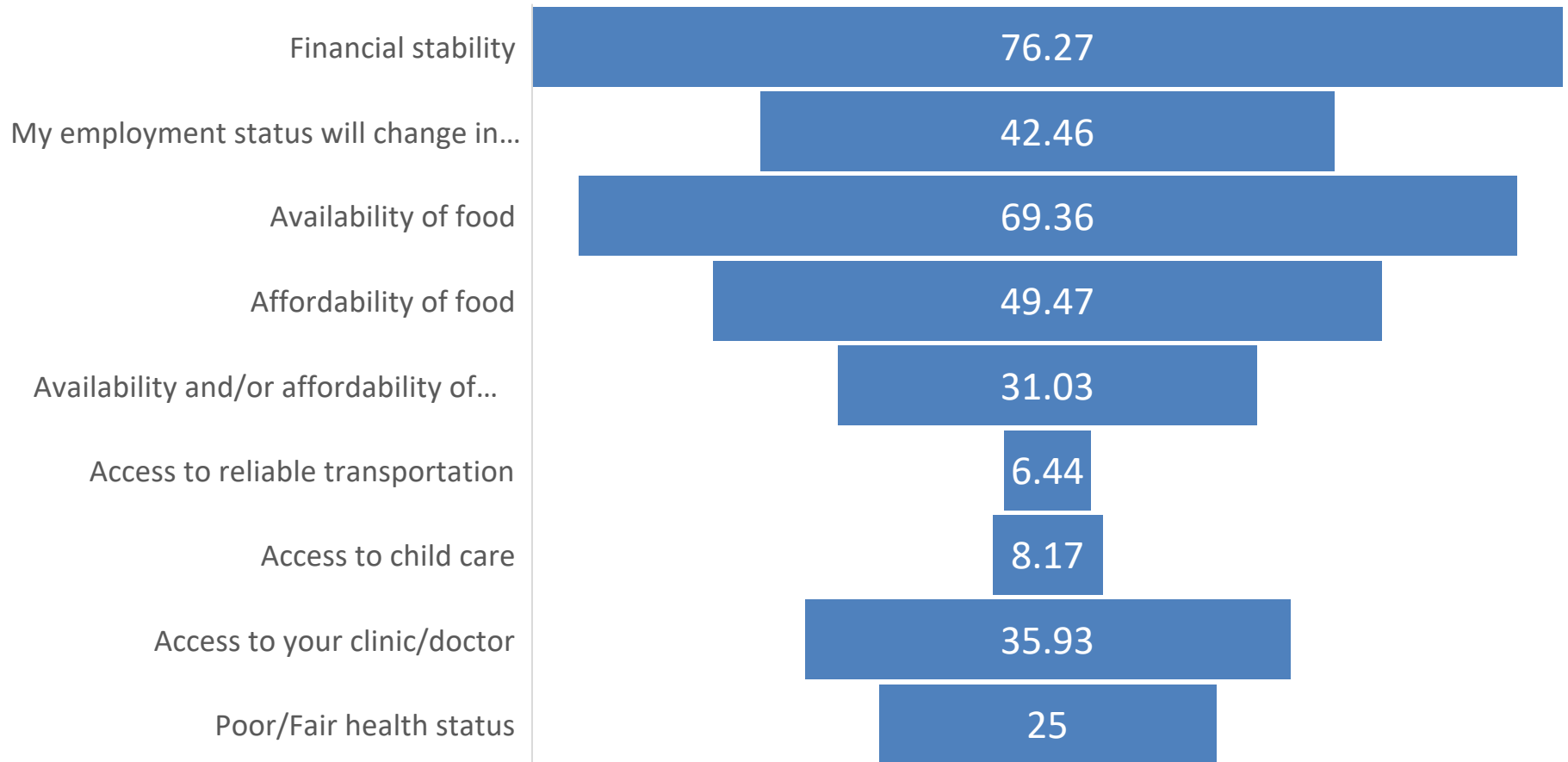
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the 2018 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, U.S. Census Bureau.

# COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY (n=1048)



# COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY (n=1048, Wave 1)

Due to the coronavirus, are you concerned about any of the following in regards to you and your family? (check all that apply) **% Yes**



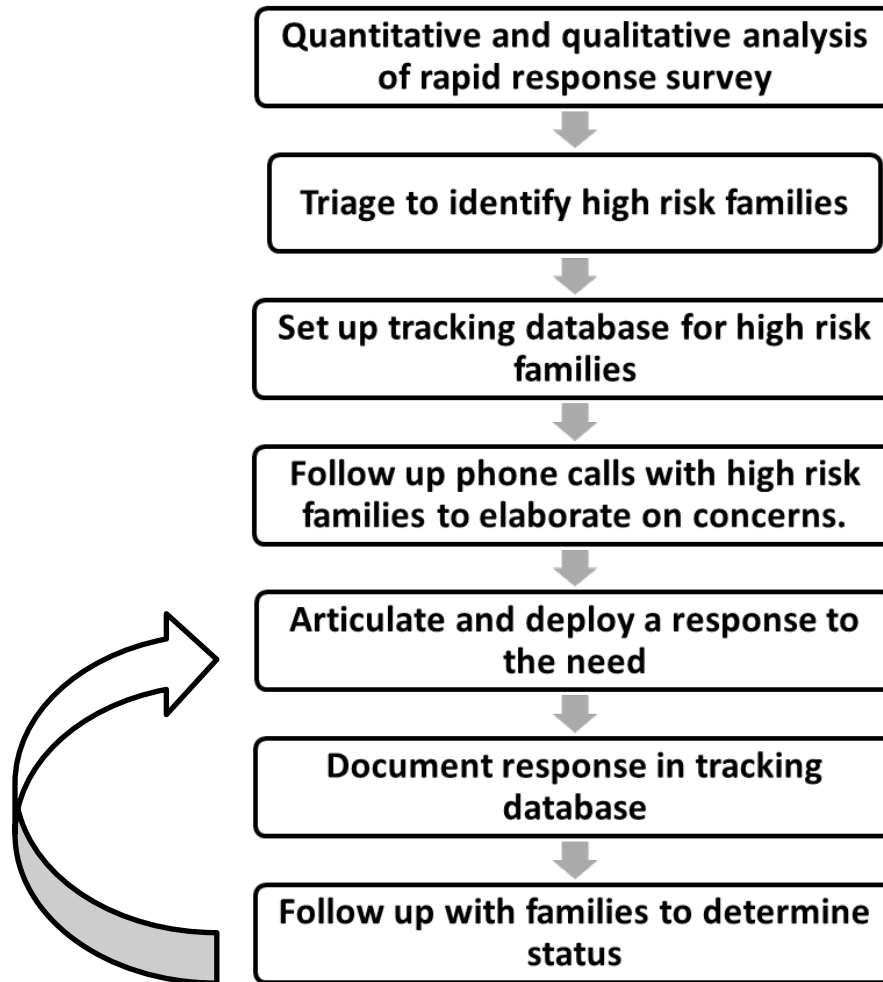
*(Sharma et al., under review)*

# COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY (n=1048) – Qualitative

Themes	Description of Code	Comments
<b>Fear of contracting COVID19</b>	Fear of contracting COVID19 for family	“My biggest worry is that my family gets infected, I worry that I get sick since I'm pregnant.”
	Concerned about when COVID19 will end	“My worry is that this won't end and we won't be able to take care of our kids...”
	Fear of the COVID19 spreading	“I'm worried about people making each other sick since not everyone is practicing distancing and you don't know who is sick because they haven't checked everyone (like for example when you go to the supermarket and people aren't wearing masks)”
<b>Disruption of employment status</b>	Lack of employment	“What's happening is really hard because there's no work but being healthy is the important thing.”
	Fear of being unemployed	“My worry is that my husband can lose his job due to the pandemic that we're going through...”
<b>Financial Hardship</b>	Concerned about not having enough money to pay bills/utilities	“We're just worried about how to pay the bills this month.”
<b>Exacerbated Food Insecurity</b>	Concerned about not having enough food for family and/or children	“I'm worried about not having enough food for my kids.”
	Lack of food for family and/or children	“I feel worried because I'm not giving enough vegetables and fruit to my children since my husband only works 3 days, and I'm not working because my baby was just born, so there are 4 children and 2 adults and I'm short of food and diapers for my baby, but what I need is food for the family...”



# BRIGHTER BITES COVID-19 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROTOCOL



# COVID-19 PIVOT – EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TRIAGE

- Criteria for triage of “high risk” families:
  - responded as being of “poor” health status on the rapid response survey; or
  - indicated in the open-ended question “Please share your greatest concern at this time, or any other thoughts you would like to share with us” the following:
    - a) Running out of food
    - b) diagnosed with COVID-19 and/or living with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, experiencing challenges,
    - c) is ill and needs assistance,
    - d) is about to lose their place of living,
    - e) is about to lose their utilities, or
    - f) no one at home is making an income.
- If they met any of these categories, they were classified as “high risk.”



# COVID-19 PIVOT – EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE RESPONSE

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- Meet families where they are with what they need - staff and volunteers reached out to these families to provide grocery deliveries, gift cards, PPE, and other resources.
- Information regarding testing, and other requested information provided regarding government assistance programs, other non-profits etc.
- To date, 132 families have been supported through this grocery assistance initiative since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# COVID-19 PIVOT – PRODUCE VOUCHERS

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- \$25 produce vouchers bi-weekly sent to more than 15,000 Brighter Bites households for fruit and vegetable purchases at partner grocery chains over 2-3 months.
  - Austin and Houston - Partnership with H-E-B stores, including H-E-B, Joe V's, Mi Tienda, and Central Market.
  - Southwest Florida (Collier County) – Partnership with Winn Dixie in Immokalee and Naples
  - Dallas – Partnership with 99 Cent stores
  - Washington D.C. and Houston – Walmart partnership

# COVID-19 PIVOT – PRODUCE VOUCHERS



**69% redemption rate of vouchers among participating families**

# COVID-19 PIVOT – USDA FARMERS TO FAMILIES PROGRAM

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- Federal initiative developed to distribute free agricultural products such as fresh produce, dairy, and meat, to those in need during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Brighter Bites is distributing 50,000 produce boxes per week on behalf of the USDA in all six Brighter Bites cities.
- Brighter Bites aims to ensure that the 25,000 current Brighter Bites families continue to receive approximately 20-25 pounds of produce just as they did before COVID-19 affected their communities.
- Brighter Bites is also providing these produce boxes to an additional 25,000 families that live in the same cities where Brighter Bites currently operates through community-wide distributions.





# COVID-19 PIVOT – USDA FARMERS TO FAMILIES PROGRAM



**Over 225,000 boxes have been delivered to families by Brighter Bites in all 6 cities, representing nearly 5 million pounds of produce**

## TASTY-MONIAL



COVID-19 has informed the reality that there are no truly safe places left on the earth. The support from our local community organizers and non-profits such as Brighter Bites make the tsunsamis of life easier to endure. We at Brooklyn Borough Hall stand with those who are helpers of the helpless, and we applaud Brighter Bites for their hard work, service, and generosity.

- Brooklyn Borough President  
Eric Adams



# COVID-19 PIVOT – HEALTH LITERACY

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- Significant gap in health literacy among Brighter Bites families across the following areas:
  - concerns regarding contracting COVID-19
  - information re. testing, PPE, assistance programs
  - maintaining healthy nutrition, mental health, COVID and kids
- Partnership between Brighter Bites, UTHealth School of Public Health, and Baylor College of Medicine public health and medical students and faculty to develop the health literacy platform.



# COVID-19 PIVOT – HEALTH LITERACY

- A total of 90 resources in the form of weblinks (43), infographics (41), and flyers (6) were developed and distributed to 24,363 Brighter Bites families starting March 20 via multiple modalities, including:
  - individual phone calls
  - phone texts
  - 12 newsletters sent via emails to families and community stakeholders (n=14261 families and stakeholders reached),
  - Brighter Bites website and Facebook page (47 messages disseminated across 3 months)

# COVID-19 PIVOT – HEALTH LITERACY



## HEALTH RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

AS OUR DAILY LIVES CONTINUE TO ADAPT TO THE CHANGES HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY DUE TO COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS), WE WANT TO PROVIDE A LIST OF RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO HELP YOU STAY HEALTHY AND WELL.



**FINANCIAL:** <https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home>



**EMPLOYMENT:** <https://www.twc.texas.gov/>



**FOOD:** <https://ntfb.org/our-programs/get-food-assistance/>



**HOUSING:** <https://www.dallascounty.org/departments/housing/>



**TRANSPORTATION:** <https://www.dart.org/>

**CHILD CARE:**  
[https://www.ymcadallas.org/locations/school\\_age\\_services/emergency-ymca-childcare](https://www.ymcadallas.org/locations/school_age_services/emergency-ymca-childcare)

**CLINICS/DOCTORS:** <https://www.dallascounty.org/departments/dchhs/>

**OR CALL 211**

*Our number one priority is the health and well-being of our employees and the families and communities we serve. We hope that these resources will help ensure that you are able to continue to stay healthy and well during these tough circumstances.*

*-The Brighter Bites Dallas Team*

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

**Local Resources: Information about food, health, education, and more.**

[Houston](#) • [Dallas](#) • [Austin](#) • [New York City](#) • [Washington, D.C.](#) • [Southwest FL](#)

**National Resources:**

- [Florida P-EBT](#) • [Maryland P-EBT](#) • [New York P-EBT](#) • [Texas P-EBT](#) • [Benefits.gov](#)
- [211: Local Social Services](#) • [Exercise at Home](#) • [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
- [Energy Assistance Program](#) • [Food & Nutrition](#) • [Healthcare & Medical Assistance](#)
- [Housing & Public Utilities](#) • [Hunger Hotline](#) • [Mental Health: Crisis Text Line](#) • [Mental Health: Help Line](#)
- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#)
- [Temporary Financial Assistance](#) • [Unemployment Assistance](#)



## PE with Coach Joe



# COVID-19 PIVOT – MOBILE APPLICATION

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- App in development to make Brighter Bites' vast library of 200+ recipes, tip sheets, and produce how-to's available not just to Brighter Bites families, but also to any who can access the Apple and Android app stores
- Hands-free check-in a priority to help staff and family maintain social distance, using QR codes
- Target launch: Fall 2020

# COVID-19 PIVOT – PLANNING FOR FALL 2020 – SPRING 2021

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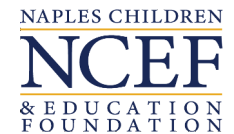
- USDA Farmers to Family Food Box program: projected to continue through December 2020
- Beyond USDA: Brighter Bites will supply pre-sorted bags or boxes to schools for the 2020-2021 school year, instead of bringing parent volunteers together to congregate and sort bulk produce
- Integrating new strategies long-term: investigating use of vouchers in coordination with use of app to incentivize app usage and parent engagement

# COVID-19 PIVOT – PLANNING FOR FALL 2020 – SPRING 2021

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- Continued CATCH implementation via CATCH Online (Google Classrooms).
- Increased social media presence in each city, increased outreach with families and parents.
- Expecting increased food insecurity, we will aim to serve more families per school on a more consistent basis throughout the year.

# PROGRAM PARTNERS



# CONTACT US

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# References

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*the better we*

NOURISH

*the brighter we*

FLOURISH

[www.brighterbites.org](http://www.brighterbites.org)