

COVID-19 Evolution of Client Needs

Summary of changing needs since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

March
2020

- Clients calling for information on exposure, general symptoms and contraction of COVID-19
- Food assistance is at 5 to 10 times the usual demand
- Less than 20% of clients who have housing needs are looking for rent payment assistance
- Unemployment and disability assistance is 10 times the typical need

April
2020

- 1 in 6 clients need food assistance
- CalFresh application assistance doubles
- Need for temporary financial assistance is 5 times the usual demand
- Periodic spikes in need for legal services and tenant rights information or counseling
- Unemployment/disability application assistance remains at 10 times the usual demand

May
2020

- Clients calling for COVID-19 testing information increases; transfers to the Public Health Nurse Line hit record high
- 1 in 9 clients need food assistance
- Increased demand for rent and utilities payment assistance
- Mental health and substance abuse needs rise for a short period

June
2020

- COVID-19 testing assistance rises to top need within health care; transfers to the Public Health Nurse Line hit record high
- Housing and utilities assistance are the most common social needs
- 1 in 12 clients need food assistance; demand for CalFresh application assistance returns to pre-COVID-19 rates

July
2020

- Housing surpasses healthcare as top need in the second half of July
- Rent payment assistance rises as the top housing need with the introduction of the City of San Diego's COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program
- 1 in 14 clients need food assistance
- CalFresh application assistance remains steady

August
2020

- Top needs include housing and utility assistance; 1 in 4 need housing assistance
- Rent payment assistance remains the top housing need; top programs include the SD Emergency Rental Assistance Program & EFSP funding
- Legal assistance needs remain 50% higher than usual
- Food assistance needs remain low, however, CalFresh application assistance needs steadily rise

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September
2020

- Housing, income support/employment and utilities are the most common needs
- Rent payment assistance continues to be the top housing need; referrals are primarily to EFSP rent payment assistance program
- Most common income support needs are related to CalFresh application assistance and EBT card services

October
2020

- Housing assistance accounts for 1 in 4 needs; rent payment assistance remains as top housing need, however referrals declined throughout the month due to diminished funding
- Emergency food needs rise to levels 57% higher than the average in September
- Top needs for income support include CalFresh application assistance and EBT card services

November
2020

- Health care needs, specifically clients calling for COVID-19 testing assistance, are 50% higher than the previous month
- 1 in 10 clients need food assistance;
- Need for emergency food assistance is the highest since May
- 1 in 5 clients need housing assistance;
- Coordinated entry access sites surpasses rent payment assistance as the top housing need

December
2020

- Health care needs account for 1 in 5 needs surpassing housing as the top need in December
- With declining temperatures, the need for homeless outreach programs for unsheltered homeless is twice as high as in the warmer months of this year
- Food assistance represents 1 in 10 needs; Top needs include emergency food assistance, grocery delivery and home delivered meals

January
2021

- Health care needs continue to surpass housing; top health care needs include COVID-19 testing assistance and vaccine information
- San Diego's COVID-19 Positive Recovery Stipend Program reached an all-time high since November
- Tax preparation assistance triples; clients are screened for Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility and more than 1,300 appointments scheduled for VITA services

February
2021

- Transportation needs increases with more clients in need of transportation to vaccination appointments
- The need for tax preparation assistance is rising with about 6,500 appointments scheduled for VITA services so far this year
- Rent payment assistance needs reached the highest level since November; utilities assistance needs reached the highest level since May 2020

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March
2021

- Housing needs increased by 31% and utility needs increased by 82% compared to February; the increased need is associated with the launch of Emergency Rental Assistance Programs (ERAP)
- Compared to the previous six month period: tax preparation assistance needs were 150% above average; criminal justice & legal services needs were 14% above average; income support & employment needs were 3% above average; mental health & substance use needs were 15% above average