



April 19, 2020

COVID-19 Rapid Needs Scan

*Puentes de Salud*¹

Puentes de Salud and partner Southwark School continue to survey our constituent families regarding their predicaments and needs related to the COVID-19 crisis. As of April 19, 2020, we have surveyed a total of 1,022 families living in the Philadelphia region. Conversations covered families' current food, economic, and health status; the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on families' livelihoods, their children, and their ability to access adequate nutrition; and their concerns about the future. 834 conversations have been conducted to date with Spanish-speaking families; the remaining 188 families spoke a wide variety of languages at home, including Burmese, Chinese, Khmer, Nepali, Vietnamese, English, Indonesian, and other languages. Families were contacted based on enrollment at Southwark School (393 conversations) and/or use of Puentes de Salud services – previous clients at the Puentes medical clinic (543 conversations), or current or previous participation in Puentes' education or community programming (86 conversations).

As a subset of this work, in the 629 conversations with Spanish-speaking families part of the Puentes de Salud community, Puentes staff and volunteers collected detailed information about the families' level of food and economic insecurity, their health status, and their ability to support their children's educational needs. These conversations were conducted in two waves – an initial 86 conversations with families were conducted in late March, in the early days of the crisis. These initial 86 families were previous participants in Puentes' education and community programming; almost all live in South Philadelphia. More recently, 543 calls were conducted with Puentes clinic clients. These families were more geographically distributed – while nearly 60% reside in South Philadelphia, the rest are distributed across the region – for example, over 18% of these clients reside in Upper Darby. The average household in this sample of families had nearly 5 residents. Across the Puentes community, families earn on average \$12-25,000 annually to support a household of this size.

The following report focuses on the 543 calls conducted with prior Puentes clinic clients, with attention to how results have shifted since the previous versions of this report (4/6/2020 and 3/26/2020).

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Food Insecurity

After each conversation, Puentes staff assigned the family a food insecurity score on a scale from 1-5, with 1 representing low food insecurity, and 5 representing extreme food insecurity.

- 69% of families were assessed at a 3 out of 5 or higher in terms of food insecurity, with 25% rated as significantly or extremely food insecure. These results are consistent with calls conducted earlier in the crisis.
- 75% of families reported that they had no more than two weeks' worth of food in their home; 25% reported having less than one week's worth of food available.
- 71% of families expect their food insecurity to increase over time, reporting that they felt it would become harder in the coming weeks and months to acquire enough food to feed their families.
- **73% of families already had or planned to access food from a free food distribution site in Philadelphia**, a figure consistent with results from early April. By contrast, in late March 50% of families reported accessing or planning to access free food.

Economic Insecurity

After each conversation, Puentes staff assigned the family an economic insecurity score on a scale from 1-5, with 1 representing low economic insecurity and 5 representing extreme economic insecurity.

Economic Insecurity

- 80% of families were assessed at a 3 out of 5 or higher in terms of economic insecurity, with **40% rated as significantly or extremely economically insecure**, consistent with results from early April.
- **78% of families expressed concern that they would have trouble paying rent and/or utilities in the next month.**

Income and Work

- Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 53% of families' breadwinners worked in the restaurant industry; other common industries included construction (25%) and cleaning (14%).
- **89% of families had at least one breadwinner who lost their job or had hours reduced.**
- 94% of those who worked in the restaurant industry either lost their jobs or experienced a reduction in hours.
- **57% of families had lost all sources of income.**

For families where an adult was still working, 81% reported that their employer provided either information or supplies to help their employees stay safe and healthy during the crisis.

Health

5% of the families with whom we spoke reported symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, and/or body aches (this represents 10 families total). The vast majority self-reported that themselves and their family members were healthy for the time being. **This figure is consistent with results in early April, suggesting that there has not been an obvious increase in COVID-19 illness in our community.**

However, the availability of medical care for Puentes' community has been significantly reduced. With Puentes' physical location closed, our staff have observed an approximately 50% reduction in appointments for telehealth, with an even steeper drop-off for Obstetrics/Gynecology patients. Anecdotally, there has been an increase in the number of Puentes patients who are unable to afford necessary medication, and options for accessing critically-needed medication for ill patients have dwindled.

Education

- 79% of families reported receiving materials from their child(ren)'s school/teacher to support their education, a moderate increase (9%) from early April results. An additional 11% received materials for some but not all of their children.
- Many parents reported no barriers in using materials provided by schools to support their children's education. For those who expressed difficulty using these materials, the primary barriers that families faced were lack of sufficient technology (20%) or access to the internet (15%), and lack of materials in their language (10%).

Conclusion

The diverse families that make up the Puentes de Salud and Southwark School communities are deeply and continually impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Food insecurity is very high; nearly 75% of families need to access food via free food distribution sites. Economic insecurity is extremely high, with more than half of families without any income and close to 80% concerned that they will not be able to afford basic expenses. There is also room for improvement in educational supports for children during the current period of school closure.

Note that results as of April 19, 2020 are largely **consistent** with results from early April. This suggests that significant need is holding steady among the Puentes community –while we are not seeing a worsening overall in our community's wellbeing, we are also not seeing improvement – significant and ongoing unmet need exists in our community, especially with regard to food and economic support.