



FOOD ACCESS ALEXANDRIA


WINTER 2023

Welcome


to the inaugural issue
of the Food Access
Alexandria Newsletter...


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WHAT'S INSIDE?

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SECURITY TEAM

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 NEWS & CALENDAR

 PARTNER FEATURE:
MOTHER OF LIGHT CENTER

Welcome

...the official communication on hunger, food access, and food security from the Department of Community and Human Services.



Introducing the DCHS Food Security Team



Melissa Jensen, Food Security Coordinator

melissa.jensen@alexandriava.gov

Melissa is a committed anti-hunger advocate, and after many years of collaborating with government agencies she is excited to join DCHS to improve food access and economic equality for the residents of Alexandria. As Food Security Coordinator, she works to coordinate food access efforts between the City and community partners, measure data on hunger, and create a food security strategic plan. Her work focuses on improving food access, increasing enrollment in the federal nutrition programs, immigrant food access, older adult hunger, and closing the grocery gap. Melissa has a JD from William & Mary Law School and a BA from the University of Texas at Austin.

Negassi Bezabih, Service Navigator Liaison

Negassi.bezabih@alexandriava.gov

Negassi was born and raised in Ethiopia, and obtained his master's degree in Economics from Copenhagen University, Denmark. During his career, he held positions in project management, research, and case management. Over the years, he has worked for several international non-governmental organizations in Africa and Europe. Before joining DCHS, Negassi was a case manager and employment specialist at Catholic Charities Migration & Refugee Services in Alexandria.



Lukisha King, Service Navigator Liaison

Lukisha.king@alexandriava.gov

Lukisha greatly enjoys serving her community and has dedicated herself to helping our most vulnerable neighbors. She has an MBA degree in Healthcare Administration from South University in Savannah, Georgia, and has worked in multiple areas within higher education, including advising and teaching, for over 20 years. She has also worked with persons with disabilities as a Sexuality Education Trainer, Service Provider, and Coordinator for over 10 years. Lukisha is a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania native and lived in Gainesville, Florida for over 20 years before moving to Alexandria, Virginia in 2021. In her free time, she enjoys swing and ballroom dance.

Data

Participation (December 2022)

Your kindhearted support makes such tremendous difference to the lives of those in the Alexandria community! Here's how you've helped:

SNAP	13,543 Individuals
WIC	39,501 Individuals
SCHOOL BREAKFAST	5,500 Individuals
SCHOOL LUNCH	9,500 Individuals
CONGREGATE SENIOR MEALS	152 Individuals
MEALS ON WHEELS	120/60 Meals a day
SENIOR HOME DELIVERED GROCERIES	92 Individuals
ALIVE!	3,756 households

8.4%

FOOD INSECURITY:

Economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

9.4%

POVERTY RATE:

a household that lives at or below the official poverty measure.

News

SNAP Emergency Allotments Ending February 2023

Since March 2020, SNAP participants have been able to receive the maximum SNAP benefit levels through SNAP Emergency Allotments. On December 23, Congress passed omnibus funding legislation that, among many other things, will end SNAP Emergency Allotments at the end February 2023. This means that February will unfortunately be the last month that these extra monthly payments are available.

When Emergency Allotments end, participants will return to their normal benefit levels. For many participants, this will result in a dramatic loss in benefits; the average will be \$80 a month. The best way to help people is to help them maximize their deductions-expenses that can be claimed on the SNAP application to raise benefit levels, such as housing, childcare, and medical expenses.

We anticipate confusion and anxiety about this change, so we recommend sharing the following language:

Attention: Your SNAP Benefits May be Decreasing in March

Due to COVID-19, everyone receiving SNAP also received temporary increased benefits. February 2023 will be the last month you will get these emergency benefits, so your SNAP benefits may decrease in March 2023.

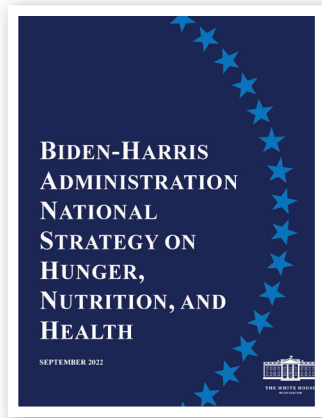
Make sure your SNAP case is up to date so that you receive the most benefits you are eligible to receive. **If you believe that your benefits are lower than before March 2020, contact DCHS at 703.746.5700, to see if there is any missing information that could increase your benefits.** You can submit information by emailing it to DCHSPublicBenefits@Alexandriava.gov or dropping off at the DCHS office at 4850 Mark Center Drive.

Visit alexandriava.gov/go/2334 if you need food assistance due to the decrease in SNAP benefits.

You can also visit hungerfreealexandria.com or ALIVE!-inc.org for a list of food resources in your neighborhood.



News, Cont'd.



White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

On Wednesday, September 28, 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration hosted the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health to bring Americans together to achieve this goal —to end hunger by 2030. The first such conference in over 50 years, the Administration also released a National Strategy with actions the federal government will take and a call to action for partners across all sectors to help end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases and disparities.

[Read the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.](#)

DCHS IS MOVING!

OLD ADDRESSES

WE HAVE MOVED

NEW ADDRESS

4850 Mark Center Dr.
Alexandria, VA 22311



Alexandria Food Resource Directory

DCHS Alexandria Food Resource Directory can be found at alexandriava.gov/go/2334. The directory will be updated quarterly and will soon be available in Spanish and Amharic.

If you would like to add or update your program information for future issues, please complete this [Food Assistance Resources Program Updates form](#).

During February 2021, nearly all DCHS programs and services will move to a new location in the West End of the city at 4850 Mark Center Drive. Information about the specific dates that program locations will change will be shared with clients and the community as they become available.

Visit alexandriava.gov/DCHS for updates.

Upcoming Events

Hunger Free Alexandria Meetings: Third Tuesday of the Month / 10 a.m.

Join food providers, faith-based communities, schools, social services organizations, and advocates to coordinate efforts to end hunger in Alexandria.

Visit hungerfreealexandria.com/member-resources for more information.

Budget Public Hearing: Monday, March 13 / 7 p.m.

The Alexandria City Council is holding a public hearing about the FY2024 budget. Public input is welcome. To speak at a meeting of City Council, register in advance by completing a [City Council Speaker's Form](#) online or by calling 703.746.4550 at least one day prior to the meeting.

Empty Bowls Alexandria: Saturday, February 25 / 6 p.m.

ALIVE! is hosting the 6th annual [Empty Bowls Alexandria](#) to raise funds and awareness for families facing food insecurity in the City of Alexandria. Empty Bowls is a grassroots movement by artists and communities to raise money for food related charities. Your ticket buys you a bowl handcrafted by local artisans, as well as a night of delicious, local food, entertainment provided by local bands, and the chance to win amazing raffle prizes – all while directly providing support for ALIVE! Alexandria.



PARTNER FEATURE

Mother of Light Center (MOLC)

Mother of Light Center (MOLC) is a Catholic organization in the Arlington Diocese that is entirely operated and led by volunteers.

Founded in 2019, MOLC serves the needs in Alexandria's Chirilagua community and provides for a wide range of needs from daily essentials of food and clothing to spiritual ministries of prayer, support, and outreach.

MOLC FOOD PANTRY & HOUSEHOLD GOODS: provide food, clothing, and household items, including diapers, toiletries, and furniture. Volunteers deliver bags of food to hundreds of Alexandria residents. These are available through a self-reported application; contact

MOLC for more information. MOLC also sponsors back-to-school backpack drives and winter coat drives each year and delivers baby baskets to new mothers.

MOLC COMMUNITY PROGRAMS: MOLC offers several community programs for vulnerable families, including the St. Anne support group for single mothers (meets once a month on the first Saturday from 4–6 p.m., childcare and dinner provided), sewing classes, and the Reach for the Stars after-school program (for ages 5–11, 2 times a week).

MOLC is opened Monday- Saturday from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Contact [Matilde Alvarado](#) with questions.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

421 Clifford Ave.

Alexandria, VA 22305

motheroflightcenter.com

MotherOfLightCenter@gmail.com