

Contra Costa County Social Service Impact & Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

What the COVID-19 Crisis Looks Like in Contra Costa County

February 2021



EHSD COVID-19 Snapshot: 2020 Year-End Report

The arrival of the Coronavirus in Contra Costa County nearly a year ago created an enormous shift in landscape that continues to touch many aspects of our daily lives. The most vulnerable members of the community have been disproportionately impacted by the adverse health, economic and social impacts of the virus. Many of these persist, particularly for those affected by long-term unemployment and underemployment.

Following the March 16, 2020 Shelter-in-Place Order, the unemployment rate in Contra Costa County quickly spiked to 14.5% in April, due to non-essential business closures. It has declined since that time, but rose again to 7.9% as the year closed in December 2020. This is still high, compared to an average of less than 3.5% in 2018 and 2019.

As we have illustrated in prior COVID Snapshots, the severe job losses quickly led to increased demand for food, shelter, financial assistance and social services. Our long-established benefit and service programs, such as CalFresh and Medi-Cal, were readily available to fill many of the critical needs. In addition, a range of federal, state, local and philanthropic programs provided supplemental financial support.

Throughout the year, and even now, the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), along with County and community partners, has continued to serve an expanded customer base due to ongoing, elevated needs for services among our community members.

This COVID Snapshot provides a year-end summary of key supports delivered, and sets the stage for an environment of ongoing needs that may persist until the worst effects of the virus have been resolved.

For COVID-19 Health & Disease Information, visit

coronavirus.cchealth.org

For more Employment & Human Services information, visit ehsd.org



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March—December 2020 Highlights

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), with its County and Community Partners, Has Played an Important Role in Supporting the Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- More than \$4 million per month in Emergency CalFresh assistance distributed to Contra Costa families
- Added approximately 11,500 individuals to the CalFresh ranks
- 33,000 additional individuals enrolled in Medi-Cal health insurance coverage
- 565 children of essential workers attended the Emergency Child Care Program
- Nearly \$1.8 million distributed to Contra Costa families through Season of Sharing
- Over 36,000 meals delivered through our Senior Nutrition Program contracts
- Approximately 140,000 restaurant-prepared meals delivered to vulnerable older adults through the Great Plates Delivered program.
- Referred vulnerable individuals to over 1,800 services through our Social Services Rapid Response Team
- A total of 1,715 engagements with businesses and individuals through the Workforce Development Board's #BounceBackContraCosta initiative
- 212 older age youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who had transitioned out of Foster Care received services and benefits in the Supported Transition Services program in 2020.
- To mitigate financial impact of the pandemic, former court dependents that aged out of the transition support program at age 21 on or after April 17, 2020 were authorized to receive continued assistance payments until June 30, 2021. 21 young adults received these continuing assistance payments in 2020.

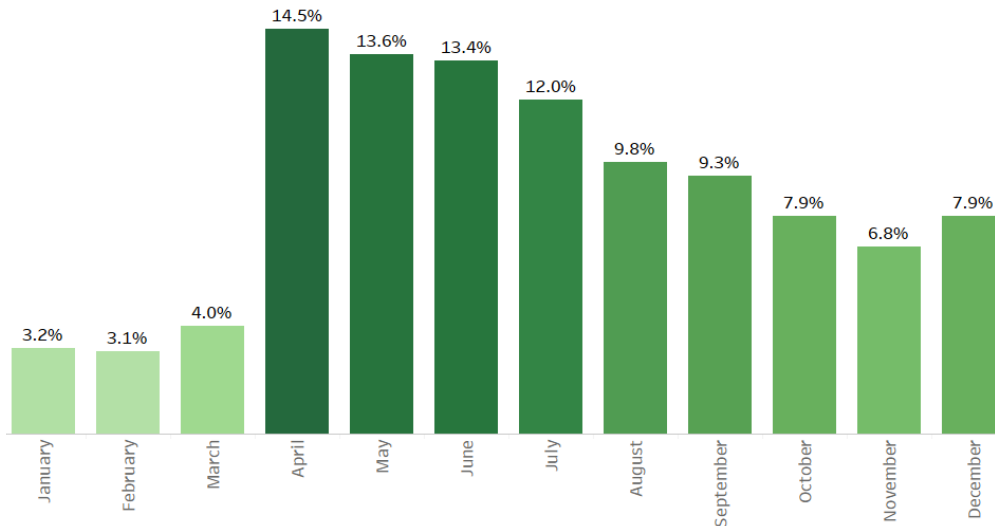
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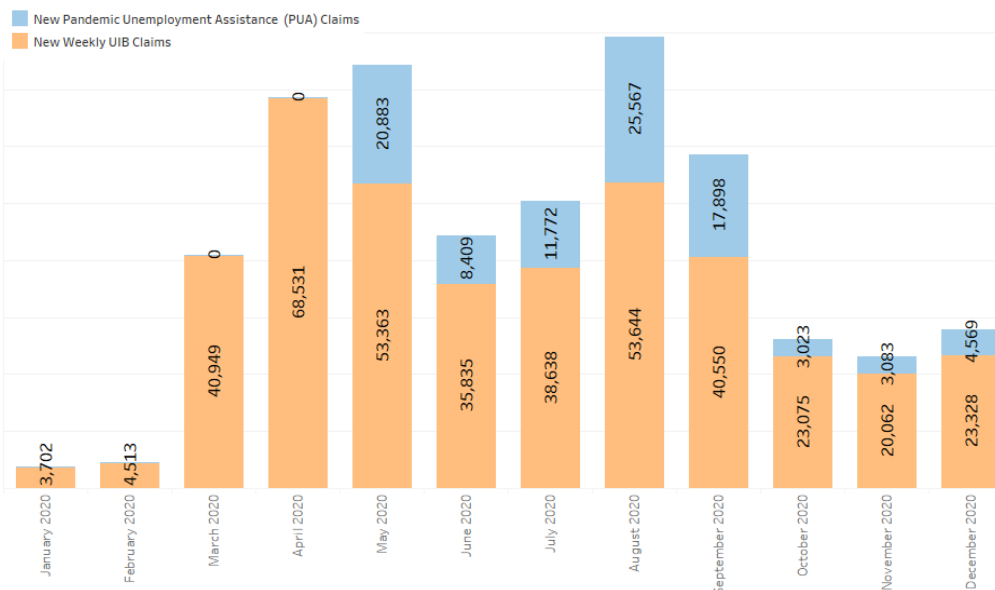
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Unemployment in Contra Costa County

Unemployment Rate in Contra Costa County
January to December 2020



Contra Costa County Unemployment Insurance Benefit (UIB) Claims
January to December 2020



Following the March 16, 2020 COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Order, there was an immediate spike in unemployment in the county, due to non-essential business closures. While the overall unemployment rate and certain sectors of the economy have improved, the decline in unemployment has leveled off since October—and actually increased in December. Even at 6.8–7.9%, the rate is significantly higher than the average of about 3% coming into 2020.

Similar to the Unemployment Rate, the level of Weekly Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims has not declined significantly since October 2020.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Federal Reserve have projected that elevated unemployment rates will persist for an extended period. While the overall unemployment rate has improved in Contra Costa County since its April 2020 high point, certain industry segments are likely to continue to be impacted by the effects of the pandemic and related business closures. For example, in Contra Costa/Alameda Counties, there was a loss of 37,300 leisure and hospitality jobs between December 2019 and December 2020. There are many low wage earners in these sectors who may continue to need assistance until the positive economic effects of a vaccine take effect.

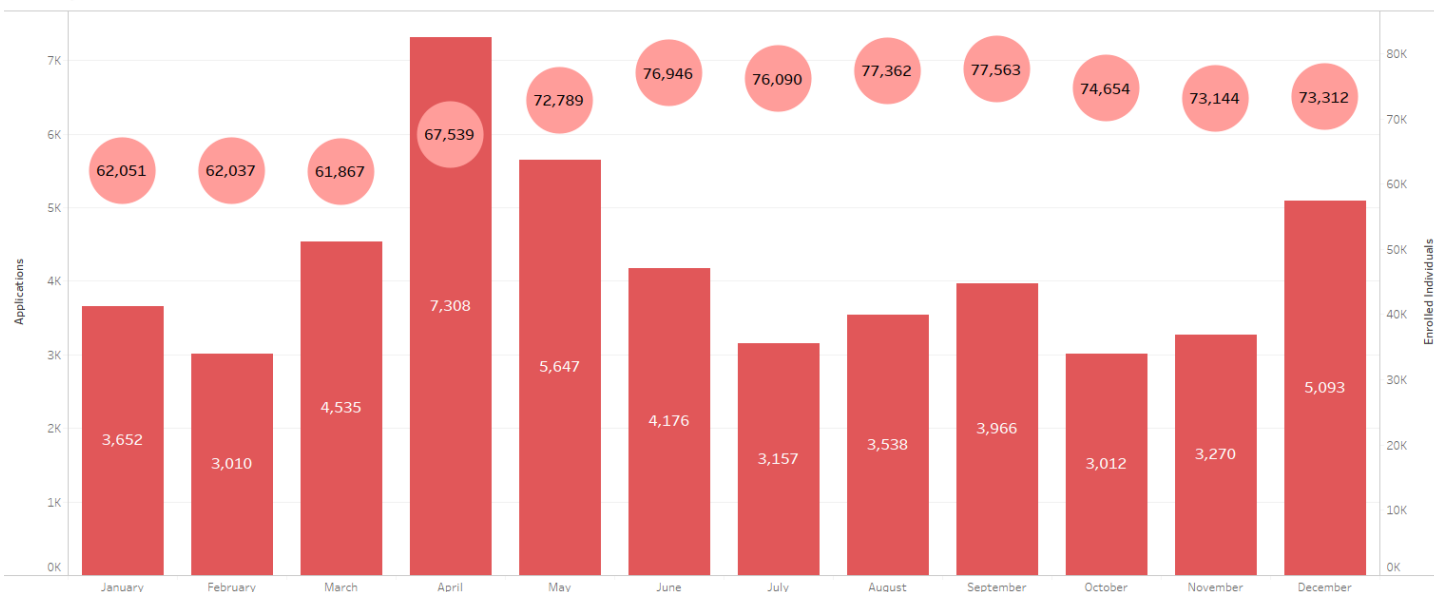
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CalFresh: Applications and Enrollment

CalFresh (CF): Comparison of Enrolled Individuals and Applications
January to December 2020



CalFresh helps stretch household food budgets, and allows recipients to afford more nutritious options. Following the March 16, 2020 COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Order, there was an immediate surge in demand for food assistance.

CalFresh enrollment increased 25% in the five months between March and August 2020. It remained elevated at the end of the year. The average monthly number of individuals enrolled in CalFresh increased 22% between 2019 and 2020.

CalFresh Enrollment Percentage Change Year-Over-Year, 2018 to 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Average Monthly CalFresh Enrollment: Individuals	-5%	-3%	+22%
Average Monthly CalFresh Enrollment: Households	-3%	+2%	+27%

Prior to 2020, the number of individuals receiving CalFresh in Contra Costa County had declined in recent years, largely due to the improving economy. One exception was the period beginning June 1, 2019, when certain aged and disabled individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) gained eligibility to receive CalFresh. Enrollment increased accordingly.

We anticipate elevated CalFresh application and caseload levels will continue for some time into 2021, as the economic recovery may advance slowly in certain industry segments.

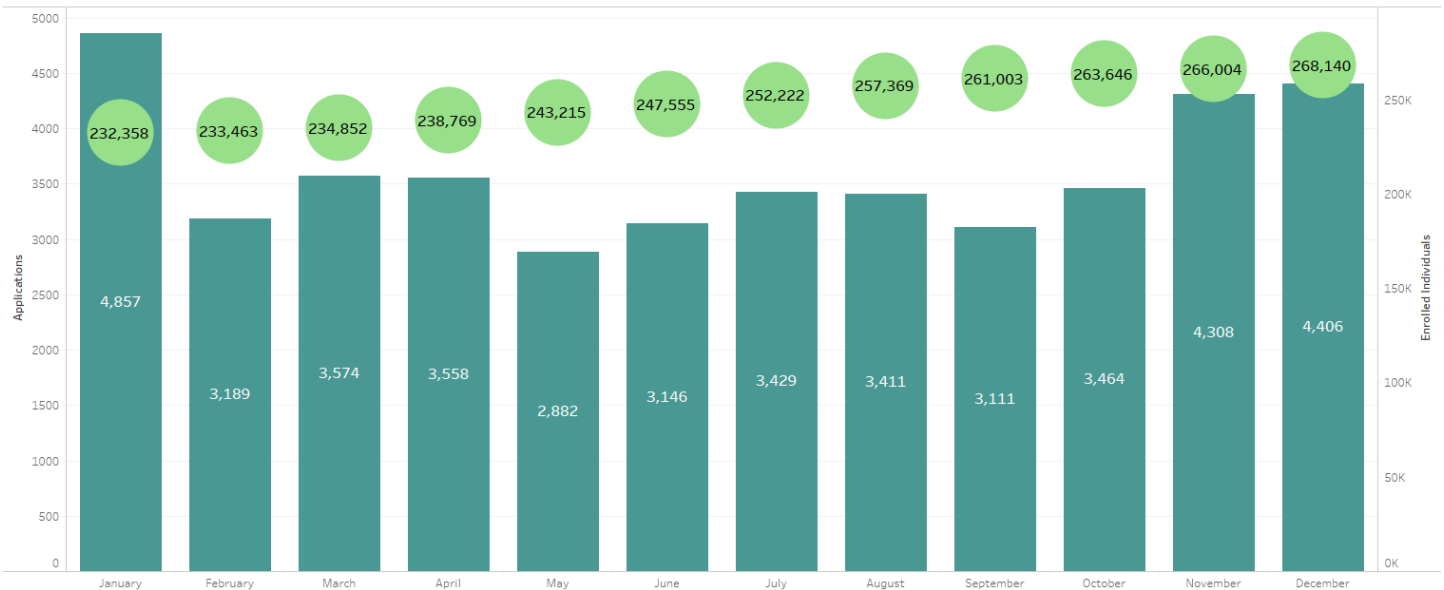
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Medi-Cal: Applications and Enrollment

Medi-Cal (MC): Comparison of Enrolled Individuals and Applications
January to December 2020



In Contra Costa County, more than a quarter of a million low-income adults, children, pregnant women, seniors and people with disabilities receive health insurance coverage through Medi-Cal. This is nearly 1 in 4 County residents.

Medi-Cal Enrollment Percentage Change Year-Over-Year, 2018 to 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Average Monthly Medi-Cal Enrollment: Individuals	-1%	-2%	+5%
Average Monthly Medi-Cal Enrollment: Households	-1%	-2%	+7%

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the number of individuals enrolled in Medi-Cal increased 14% (March through December 2020). Previously, the number of individuals enrolled in Medi-Cal remained fairly stable year-to-year.

Medi-Cal applications and enrollment were trending up at the end of 2020. We anticipate elevated Medi-Cal application and caseload levels may continue for some time into 2021, as COVID-19 is still a major health concern and the economic recovery may advance slowly in certain industry segments.

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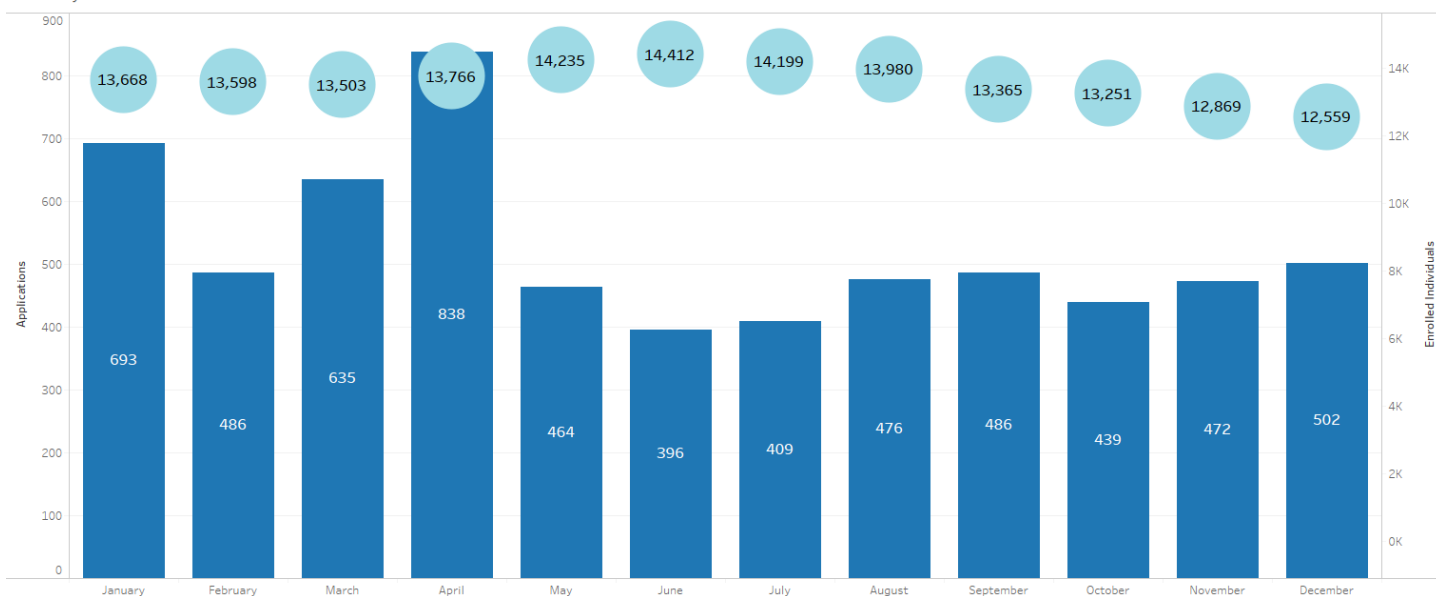


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CalWORKs: Applications and Enrollment

CalWORKs (CW): Comparison of Enrolled Individuals and Applications
January to December 2020



CalWORKs provides financial aid, employment services and other supportive services to families with children under 19, to help them succeed in the workforce and become self-sufficient.

CalWORKs Enrollment Percentage Change Year-Over-Year, 2018 to 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Average Monthly CalWORKs Enrollment: Individuals	-10%	-9%	-0-
Average Monthly CalWORKs Enrollment: Households	-9%	-8%	-2%

During the Coronavirus pandemic, enrollment in CalWORKs has been stable, likely as a result of the increase in Unemployment Benefits and other COVID assistance programs since April 2020. Previously, there was a steady decline in CalWORKs enrollment between 2017 and 2019, as the economy improved and the minimum wage increased.

CalWORKs enrollment in 2021 will depend largely on the rate of economic recovery, the level of Unemployment Benefits and the availability of other COVID assistance programs.

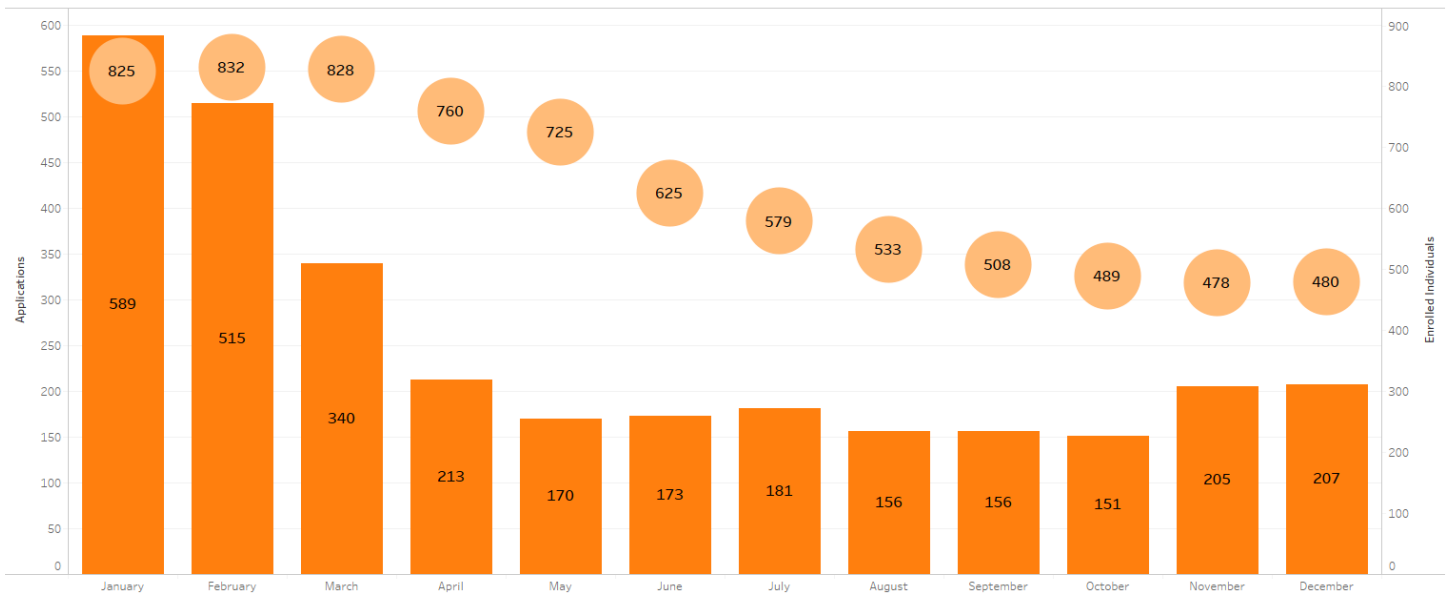
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General Assistance: Applications and Enrollment

General Assistance (GA): Comparison of Enrolled Individuals and Applications
January to December 2020



The General Assistance program is designed to provide temporary relief and support to indigent adults who are not supported by their own means, other public funds or assistance programs.

General Assistance Enrollment Percent Change Year-Over-Year, 2018 to 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Average Monthly General Assistance Enrollment: Cases (GA Cases Represent Individuals)	-14%	+17%	-21%

There has been a decline in GA cases since April 2020, which may be partly due to applicants receiving other benefits through COVID-related programs.

GA enrollment in 2021 will depend largely on the pace of economic recovery, the level of Unemployment Benefits and the availability of other COVID assistance programs.

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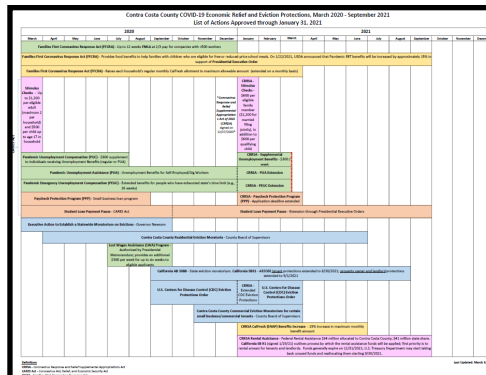
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COVID-19 Government Relief Assistance Tracker

Click on the thumbnail to
view our **COVID-19
Government Relief
Assistance Tracker:**



Our [COVID-19 Government Relief Assistance Tracker](#) provides a visualization of government economic relief and eviction protections approved through January 31, 2021.

While the COVID vaccines show promise, it is uncertain how long it will take for their positive effects on economic recovery and social resilience to solidify. In the meantime, the economy may experience a “rolling recovery” in which periods of advancement are followed by stagnant periods, if virus surges continue.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Federal Reserve have projected elevated unemployment rates may persist into 2022. While the overall unemployment rate and certain sectors of the Contra Costa economy have improved during the year, many people are still struggling – particularly in the hospitality and accommodation industry, where business has remained depressed due to COVID spread.

For example, restaurant workers and workers from personal service sectors are often low-wage earners who have been hit the hardest economically. In Contra Costa / Alameda Counties, there was a loss of 37,300 leisure and hospitality jobs between December 2019 and December 2020, down 31.2 percent.

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021, signed into law on December 27, 2020, provides a welcome measure of assistance through the middle of March 2021. More recently, additional State relief has been legislated, and Federal proposals are moving forward towards enactment. The need for ongoing community support is expected to continue for some time into the year. We remain committed – as always – to serving the needs of our community and to being agile in responding to these rapidly changing times.