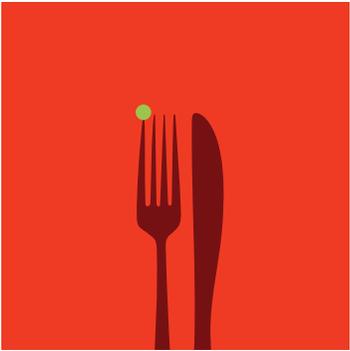


SAFE & HEALTHY

FOOD PANTRIES
PROJECT



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The goal of the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project is to improve access to and availability of adequate, appropriate, safe & nutritious food for low-income people who utilize food pantries. This goal is accomplished through the development of a guide for coordinators and volunteers of client choice food pantries to make improvements in the food pantry environment. This guide was informed by information captured through surveys and focus groups of food pantry clients, staff, and volunteers of six pantries in Wisconsin and is complemented by research-informed recommendations and best practices for improving the food environment.

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“In the wake of rising food insecurity, diet-related disease and foodborne illness, food pantries are increasingly seeking sound guidance on how to further improve the nutritional quality and safety of their inventories. We offer this toolkit as a way pantries can learn the latest research, assess their current practices, review diverse strategies, and develop a road map of actions to improve the nutrition & safety of the foods they provide to families.”

— Jonathan Bader, WISCAP

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About the Project



Why the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project?

The number of individuals who rely on food pantries to meet their food needs has increased 64% in Wisconsin since 2007¹. As more Wisconsinites turn to food pantries to meet their food needs, it is more important than ever that food pantries consider their role in supporting the health and well-being of their clients by working to improve the nutritional quality and safety of the foods they offer.

More than 1 in 9 Wisconsin households are food insecure, meaning they lack assured access to sufficient foods to support a healthy and active life². Meanwhile 2 in 3 low-income Wisconsinites are overweight or obese and 1 in 10 has diagnosed diabetes³. Rising rates of obesity and diabetes in recent years have highlighted the burden of these diseases on society, and are calling for action across all community sectors.

Ensuring food security for all households requires a foundation of four strong legs: family economic security and well-being; adequate access to healthy and affordable food; use of federal nutrition programs; and access to emergency / charitable food safety net, which includes food pantries.

Just as food pantries are critical to ensuring community food security, they are increasingly a key component of the local food environment for tens of thousands of low-income people in Wisconsin. A 2014 Feeding America Hunger Study found that nearly 2 in 3 households plan for charitable food assistance as a part of their monthly household budget⁴. This means that food pantries contribute significantly to the overall quality of foods that low-income individuals consume.



1) ECONOMIC SECURITY & WELL-BEING

2) STRONG FEDERAL FOOD & NUTRITION PROGRAMS

3) ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

4) STRONG AND ACCESSIBLE EMERGENCY/CHARITABLE FOOD SAFETY NET

FOUNDATION FOR ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

Client choice food pantries permit clients to select their own food, much like a grocery store. Clients select from a variety of foods and often the amount of food provided per food group is based on the household size. Client choice pantries strive to support personal dietary needs and to reduce food waste by allowing clients to choose the foods they prefer.

LINKING FOOD INSECURITY & HEALTH

Food insecurity has negative impacts on health, including nutrient deficiencies, low birth weight and premature birth, and chronic stress⁵. It becomes more difficult to manage chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, when an individual is struggling to meet their basic food needs⁶. In certain groups of people, food insecurity has also been found to be associated with overweight and obesity.

To worsen the risk for poor health, a recent study reports that factors that increase the risk of foodborne illness include stress, pregnancy, age under five years or between 60-65 years, nutritional deficiency, and eating fatty foods⁷.

Who should use the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project guide?

All food pantries play a role in supporting the health of their clients. This guide is intended to assist coordinators and volunteers of food pantries to make improvements in the food pantry environment that optimize the nutritional quality and safety of foods distributed to clients, while also supporting food security. While this guide was designed especially with client choice food pantries in mind, certain strategies presented in this toolkit can be applied to any pantry.

1 Wisconsin Community Action Program Association TEFAP & Food Security Report. November 2014.

2 Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh. Household Food Security in the United States in 2013, ERR-173, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2014

3 Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH), 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey. WI Department of Health Services, Office of Health Informatics, Division of Public Health. Accessed at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/brfs/index.htm

4 Feeding America Hunger in America 2014. Accessed online at www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/hunger-in-america

5 Cook, John T., Deborah A. Frank, Carol Berkowitz, Maureen M. Black, Patrick H. Casey, Diana B. Cutts, Alan F. Meyers, et al. "Food Insecurity Is Associated with Adverse Health Outcomes among Human Infants and Toddlers." *The Journal of Nutrition* 134, no. 6 (2004): 1432-38.

6 Berkowitz, Seth A., Travis P. Baggett, Deborah J. Wexler, Karen W. Huskey, and Christina C. Wee. "Food Insecurity and Metabolic Control Among U.S. Adults With Diabetes." *Diabetes Care*, June 11, 2013.

7 Food Research and Action Center. Relationship Between Hunger and Overweight or Obesity. Accessed at <http://frac.org/initiatives/hunger-and-obesity/are-hunger-and-obesity-related/>

8 Lund, Barbara M., and Sarah J. O'Brien. "The Occurrence and Prevention of Foodborne Disease in Vulnerable People." *Foodborne Pathogens and Disease* 8, no. 9 (September 2011): 961-73.

How do I use the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project guide?

The steps for implementing the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project are outlined below. **You can adapt the strategies and tools** presented in this guide so they are appropriate for your pantry – so be creative and identify what will work best for your pantry!

step 1: Assess your current food pantry operations with the **Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Assessment** tools. Use the results of these assessments to **identify priority areas** where the food pantry can make changes to the food pantry environment and **set goals**. Not all areas will need to be addressed immediately and not all areas may be appropriate for your current pantry structure and operations.

step 2: Review the **Safe & Healthy Food Pantry Strategies** sections for research-informed recommendations and best practices for improving the food pantry environment. Once you are familiar with these strategies, move on to developing your Action Plan (Step 3) using the results of your program assessment (Step 1).

step 3: Use the goals you set (Step 1) to develop an **Action Plan** that outlines the desired changes at the food pantry. Include in your plan actions your pantry is willing and able to implement from the **Safe & Healthy Food Pantry Strategies** section (Step 2). Develop written **nutrition and food safety policies** for the food pantry. These policies are critical tools for guiding, communicating, and sustaining pantry nutrition and food safety operations.

step 4: Implement the strategies identified in your **Action Plan** using the ideas and materials provided in the **Safe & Healthy Food Pantry Strategies and Tools to Support You** sections.





Then, **document your success** by re-assessing your pantry operations. Regular assessments, at least once per year, allow the food pantry to evaluate progress in achieving your goals and success at implementing your action plan. Future **Action Plans** can be developed to sustain existing changes and expanded to incorporate new strategies for improving the food pantry environment.

Taking a Community Approach to Implement the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project

Any volunteer or pantry coordinator can confirm that finding ways to creatively engage your community in your food pantry is a win-win. As you promote food security in your community, your pantry will strengthen existing relationships or uncover partnership opportunities, volunteers, and donors along the way. Involving your clients in food pantry operations and connecting them to community resources will support the pantry, as well as make it more useful to the families you serve. As you implement the steps of the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project, **consider ways to engage community members and clients in meeting your nutrition and food safety goals.**

Some ways to involve and recognize members of the community in supporting a safe and healthy food pantry include:

- Organize food drives that focus on donations of healthy and safe foods.
- Fundraise so the food pantry can purchase nutritious foods that are a priority.
- Provide emergency food storage for overflow inventory.
- Offer a variety of volunteer opportunities.
- Refer clients to other services such as jobs, housing, childcare, transportation, health insurance, mental health, drug/alcohol recovery, child support, energy assistance, home repairs, education, domestic violence, and more. **2-1-1 Wisconsin** is a free call service that provides information and resources to Wisconsin residents.
- Connect clients to agencies conducting **FoodShare outreach**. These organizations can provide information on how to apply and assist clients with online applications.

- Provide other services to support food pantry clients by collecting and distributing items such as toiletries and other non-food items, toys and books for children, free clothing and/or furniture, holiday gift programs, etc.

Some ways to engage food pantry clients in daily operations include:

- Invite pantry clients to be volunteers.
- Provide new clients with a written pantry overview to orient them to your pantry's hours and days of service, procedures, description of where the foods come from, how food is allocated to households, as well as basic food safety and nutrition information.
- Establish a bulletin board or another method to share community and pantry events and opportunities.
- Regularly invite clients to give feedback on the food and services provided and to suggest changes using a suggestion box or conducting client satisfaction surveys.
- Create a client advisory board to engage them in decision-making. Your clients have great ideas and some are more than willing to share them with you. Facilitating communication between clients and yourself provides an opportunity to learn from each other. Everyone is empowered when all voices are heard and recognized.



Josie Montañez-Tyler,
Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry,
Madison, WI

Training Volunteers

Volunteer training is your opportunity to orient new helpers, clarify job duties, outline your expectations, pantry procedures, review civil rights standards and non-discrimination principles, as well as establish the culture and tone of your food pantry. It may seem strange to talk through job descriptions and expectations with people who are freely giving you their time but in actuality this not only prevents problems from arising in the first place but helps put new volunteers at ease by clarifying expectations and responsibilities. **Creating a volunteer handbook will guide your training**, ensure it is consistent and thorough, and give volunteers a written document to refer to. An example volunteer handbook is available from the River Food Pantry in Madison, WI: www.riverfoodpantry.org/volunteer.html.

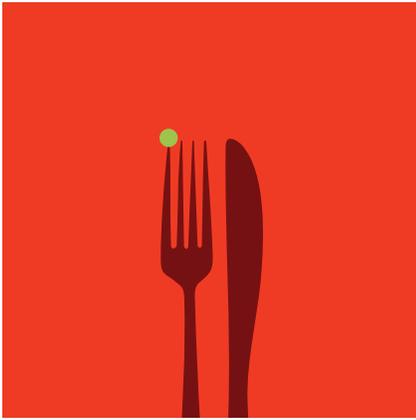


A Team Approach

Working alongside other community partners to implement the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project is recommended. This team approach may come in the form of a local food resource/food pantry network, hunger prevention taskforce, or healthy living coalition.

A team approach may also engage critical community partners along the way to support the implementation of your action plan. Examples of partners you might consider engaging to support your efforts include:

- Your county UW-Extension office and Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program representative
- Local dietitian
- Community hospital or clinics
- Local university or technical college
- Pk-12 schools
- Local businesses such as grocers, fitness centers, banks, etc.
- Public health department
- Social and human services department
- Farmers and community gardeners
- Library



STEP 1

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT



Your pantry's decision to focus on safe and healthy food pantry practices is an important first step. Assessing current pantry practices ensures that the strategies your pantry implements are reasonable and appropriate for the pantry and will have the most impact for food pantry clients. Some pantry assessment ideas and tools are described below. You might consider partnering with your county UW-Extension office or other local educational institution to help collect this information.



TOOLS
TO SUPPORT YOU

**FOOD PANTRY
ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

... appendices 1c and 2c

Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Assessment

This self-assessment tool is designed to allow pantries to assess **current practices and policies** that support a safe and healthy food pantry environment and suggests areas for improvement. Use this self-assessment tool to guide the development of your Action Plan.

Food Source Self-Assessment

This self-assessment tool is designed to help you explore the **relative percentage of food** received from each of these sources to better understand points of leverage for improving the safety and nutritional quality of the foods you offer. That is, if you receive a majority of your inventory from a food bank, your action plan might look different than if you are primarily dependent on community or commercial donations.

Inventory Assessment

The What's on the Shelf? Inventory Snapshot Tool estimates current food inventory and allows you to better understand how food destined for distribution aligns with the amount of food per category necessary to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In turn, this information can be used as a general guide for your food procurement and acquisition strategies. It is important to remember that this inventory assessment will only provide a snap-shot in time, and may not always be an accurate reflection of what you have on hand. Therefore, you might consider conducting an assessment at least once per quarter (summer, winter, fall, and spring) to capture seasonal changes in inventory.





Food pantries that receive a significant portion of their inventory through community food drives might consider conducting an assessment of food donated through these channels. An example is Brown County’s Food Drive Inventory Tool. This tool was developed to establish a baseline from which to measure the impact of donor education messages on increasing healthy food donations.

These food pantry inventory assessments may require a significant amount of time and may seem like an overwhelming task. The amount of time dedicated for each will depend on the size of your food pantry inventory and the amount of food received from a community food drive or the detail in existing inventory records kept. Seeking out the help of community volunteers to assist you with these efforts is recommended.

OTHER IDEAS FOR ASSESSMENT

Community Asset Map

A community asset can be people, places, or services that exist in the community. Making a list or an asset map helps you better understand your community and identify partnership opportunities and other resources that can support your pantry. Refer to the University of Kansas Community Toolbox for more information on how to create a community asset map: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/identify-community-assets/main>

Client Interviews or Survey

Use a questionnaire to ask clients for feedback on general pantry operations and to get more information about safe and healthy food pantry strategies. Examples of information you might seek from pantry clients includes:

- Special dietary needs or restrictions
- Food preferences
- Food safety concerns
- Ideas for improving food pantry operations

TOOLS **TO SUPPORT YOU**

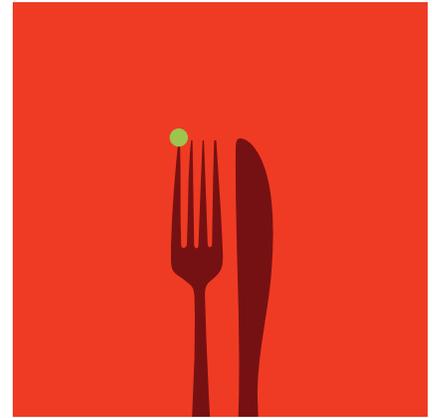
SAMPLE CLIENT SURVEYS

... appendix 1a

STEP 2

STRATEGIES





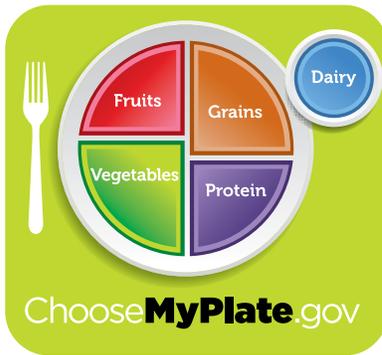
GIVE YOUR FOOD PANTRY A HEALTHY BOOST

As more Wisconsinites turn to food pantries to meet their food needs, it is more important than ever that food pantries consider their role in supporting the health and well being of clients by working to improve the nutritional quality of the foods they offer. Healthy eating patterns, alongside regular physical activity, can help people attain and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk for chronic disease, and promote overall good health.



How do I know what's healthy?

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) provide advice for making food choices that promote good health for Americans over 2 years of age. The DGA recognize that food insecurity limits a household's ability to acquire adequate food to meet their nutritional needs, and therefore seeks to maximize the nutritional content of meals.



Healthy eating patterns limit foods high in sodium, solid fat, added sugars and refined grains and include a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low or no fat dairy, and a variety of protein foods.

—U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*

Most Americans consume too much sodium and too many calories from solid fats, added sugars, and refined grains. Examples of items high in these food components include highly processed items such as soups, cookies and cakes, and soda and fruit drinks. A healthy eating pattern limits intake of foods and beverages high in these food components, and focuses on consuming a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, and fish, eggs, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds.

How do I help my pantry provide healthier food choices to clients?

A food pantry filled with a variety of nutritious foods supports **making the healthy choice the easy choice** for food pantry clients. Pantries can create a healthy food environment by:

- 1) Stocking a healthy food pantry
- 2) Encouraging the selection of healthy food choices
- 3) Providing nutrition education



Stocking a Healthy Food Pantry

“We have always tried to make healthy choices available to our clients. After drafting our nutrition policy, we pay more attention to the items we are purchasing and prioritize the healthier products.”
—Chris Kane and Josie Mantañez-Tyler
Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry,
Madison, WI

Ensuring a wide variety of healthy foods are available to meet the diverse nutritional needs of the clients the pantry serves can seem like a daunting task. **Strategies to consider for stocking a healthy food pantry include:**

- Establish a nutrition policy
- Educate your donors
- Find fresh produce

Establish a Nutrition Policy

Adoption of a **nutrition policy** allows pantries to clarify the steps they’ll take to **promote their clients’ health**. A nutrition policy can guide food purchases made to supplement donated foods. A strong nutrition policy might also include language restricting the types of food donations the pantry is willing to receive. In general, nutrition policies should follow a healthy eating pattern as outlined by the DGA.

Educate your Donors

Community food donations can be a major source of food for pantries. It is important to educate donors about the types of food the pantry wishes to receive. **Donors often prefer to give to a pantry what it needs** and are grateful for any ideas offered. Making the pantry’s needs and principles clear helps others to be a part of the vision, kindness, and generosity that makes a community strong.

Strategies may be different for reaching commercial donors (for example, a local grocery store) versus community donors (such as those involved with a community food drive). Be sure to let regular donors know of changes you make to critical and preferred donation lists. Here are some ideas for building relationships and educating donors:

TOOLS
TO SUPPORT YOU



**SAMPLE NUTRITION
POLICY LANGUAGE**
... appendix 1a



TOOLS
TO SUPPORT YOU



SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

... *appendix 2a*

FOOD DONATION GUIDES

... *appendix 3a*

DONOR LETTER

... *appendix 4a*

SAMPLE "SACK HUNGER SUGGESTIONS

... *appendix 5a*

COMMERCIAL DONORS

- Meet with donors to build relationships.
- Provide donors with a copy of your nutrition policy; be sure to explain why it was created and what your pantry hopes to accomplish.
- Provide donors with a list of critical and preferred foods and post this information on your website.
- If arranging for a "Sack Hunger" food drive with a local grocery store, provide the store with a list of preferred foods to include in the packages.

COMMUNITY DONORS

- Provide food drive organizers with a copy of your nutrition policy; be sure to explain why it was created and what your pantry hopes to accomplish.
- Educate food drive organizers about how their donations can help the pantry meet the nutritional needs of the clients.
- Distribute press releases to local media about desired food donations.
- Provide donors with a list of critical and preferred foods and post this information on your website.
- Invite civic groups and businesses to support a "healthy foods initiative" and publicize their names on your website.

Brown County developed a simple messaging campaign to help support their Healthy Food Pantry Initiative. The "Food Drive Five" is promoted in flyers, social media, and press coverage. The "Food Drive Five" includes:

- 1) **Protein foods: peanut butter, nuts, seafood and poultry**
- 2) **Fruits packed in juice, dried or sauced fruits**
- 3) **Soups that are low in sodium and that contain proteins and vegetables**
- 4) **Whole grain cereals and pastas**
- 5) **Colorful vegetables**



Find Fresh Produce

In a recent survey conducted by UW-Extension, food pantry clients expressed an overwhelming desire for more fresh produce. Here is a list of ideas to consider for finding more fresh produce for your pantry:

- Work with local partners and Master Gardener Volunteers to establish and maintain a Plant a Row for the Hungry program in your community.
- Partner with a local farmers' market to glean produce at the end of a weekly market. Youth-service and other community groups might be willing to support your pantry in collecting and delivering the produce to the pantry.
- Partner with a local farmer and community groups to glean unharvested "seconds" from fields. Some farmers may also be willing to sell their fresh local product at a reduced price to food pantries.
- Let local community supported agriculture (CSAs) farms and drop-off sites know that your pantry would be willing to accept unclaimed and extra weekly produce shares.
- Register your pantry at www.ampleharvest.org to inform local gardeners and farmers of your desire for more fresh produce. Ample Harvest provides fliers and publicity for pantries and community partners.
- Committed farmers can also invest directly in an acre of produce or share excess produce with food banks via the Harvest to End Hunger WI initiative. Learn more at www.harvesttoendhungerwi.org.
- Contact local grocers or food processing plants about donating excess quality produce.
- Contact your local food bank to ask about the availability of fresh produce. The amount of available fresh produce at food banks has grown tremendously in recent years.



Encourage Healthy Choices at the Food Pantry



There are a number of strategies that pantries can adopt to support and encourage clients to make healthier choices:

- Offer flexibility
- Incentivize healthier choices
- Provide a shopping list
- Make healthy choices more visible
- Meet special dietary needs and preferences

Provide Clients with Flexibility in Making Selections

Food preferences, dietary needs, and cultural food practices vary widely by individual. Even in choice pantries, there may be selection guidelines or practices that lead some clients to take home products they cannot use and will ultimately let go to waste. Clients may be reluctant to speak up about special dietary needs, concerns, or preferences, or feel rushed to make a quick selection from the foods available at the pantry. By providing some flexibility in choices within food categories and supporting clients in making their selections, food pantries can ensure the food they make available to clients will be consumed. Keep in mind, that not all clients may be aware of pantry policies that offer flexibility in selection. Consider posting a sign telling clients to let a volunteer know if they have questions or concerns about what is offered at the pantry.

“We are small and have more flexibility. Our guests shop on their own and are able to take what they want and need.”
—Sue Steinmetz,
McFarland Food Pantry



Offer Incentives to Encourage Selection of Healthier Choices

Incentivizing healthy food choices has been shown to be a successful strategy for improving dietary behavior in other settings like grocery stores and farmers' markets. Because food pantry clients are likely motivated by the overall quantity of food received during their visit, incentives would work best when additional food items are given as a result of selecting a particular product. For example, you might provide an unlimited selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, and restrict the amount of sweets or pastries that could be selected. You might offer an extra can of vegetables for every two cans of vegetables selected. Incentives can be included in the pantry nutrition policy and accompanying shopping list documents.

Provide a Shopping List to Clients

Some pantries must limit the amount of food per food category clients are able to receive based on household size. This "shopping list" or guide provided to clients directly influences the type and quantity of food chosen. Making improvements to your guide to account for recommended dietary patterns as well as incentivizing healthier choices can encourage clients to make healthier choices. In addition, this shopping list can serve as a mechanism to guide food procurement.



Ohio State University Extension developed a choice pantry shopping guide based on the DGA. Foods are shelved according to color-coded food groups and clients are allowed a predetermined number of choices per food group based on household size. The system ensures that clients choose a variety of different foods so that they can provide healthy, balanced meals and snacks for themselves and their families. To fully support this system, the pantry should be arranged so that food items are shelved according to food groups. The shelves should be color-coded using signs or stickers to designate food groups according to *MyPlate*. Color coding assists the clients in associating nutrition education messages delivered through *MyPlate* with the foods they are selecting at the pantry. See *Sample Client Shipping List* on next page.



Sample Client Shopping List								
Family Size	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat and Beans (Peanut Butter, Eggs)	Diary (Yogurt and Cheese)	Grains	Meal Makers (Soups, Meals in a Box)	Misc. (Oils, snacks & sweets, condiments, staples)	Personal Items
1	2 items	3 items	4 items	1 item	2 items	3 items	3 items	3 items
2	2 items	3 items	4 items	1 item	2 items	3 items	3 items	3 items
3	3 items	3 items	5 items	1 item	2 items	4 items	4 items	3 items
4	5 items	3 items	5 items	1 item	2 items	4 items	5 items	4 items
5	5 items	5 items	5 items	2 items	3 items	5 items	6 items	4 items
6	5 items	6 items	5 items	2 items	3 items	6 items	6 items	5 items
7	6 items	7 items	5 items	3 items	3 items	7 items	7 items	5 items
8	6 items	8 items	8 items	3 items	3 items	8 items	8 items	5 items

Adapted from the Rainbow of Colors Choice System developed by Ohio State University Extension

TOOLS **TO SUPPORT YOU**

SAMPLE CLIENT SHOPPING LIST
... appendix 6a

FOOD GROUP CATEGORIES AND PRODUCT LISTINGS
... appendix 7a

Make Healthy Choices More Visible

The way food is organized in a grocery store has been shown to impact purchasing behavior. For example, when more shelf space is given to a particular product, it increases sales of that product. In addition, strategic placement of one product over another can encourage its selection. The same principles can be applied in food pantries.

To encourage the selection of healthier foods, consider the following strategies:

- Increase the overall shelf space for foods that fall under the category of “foods and nutrients to increase”: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-sodium, no- or low-fat milk and milk products, and lean proteins such as beans and nuts, poultry, fish, and eggs.
- Place healthier food products at the beginning or front of the food pantry so they are the first things that people see and select. This will help ensure client carts or bags are not too full for healthier products once they reach the end of the pantry.



TOOLS 
TO SUPPORT YOU

**MEETING SPECIAL
DIETARY NEEDS
HANDOUT**
... appendix 8a

**HOW TO READ
NUTRITION FACTS
LABEL HANDOUT**
... appendix a

- Separate low-sodium and whole-grain packaged foods from regular items and use signage to clearly label these alternate products. This will allow clients with special dietary needs, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, to identify these preferred products.
- Display fresh produce in an appealing and accessible way with attractive containers like baskets or wood crates.
- Highlight local and garden produce.

Meeting Special Dietary Needs and Preferences

Client food preferences will vary widely depending on a number of factors including health conditions or cultural and religious beliefs. By taking into consideration common dietary needs, food pantries can ensure they are being inclusive of all possible audiences served. Common dietary needs include:

- Low-sodium
- Gluten Free
- Vegetarian and Vegan
- Halal
- Kosher

It is recommended that pantries gather feedback about what dietary needs and preferences are most common. This can be done formally by distributing a survey to all pantry clients, or informally by placement of a suggestion box or by capturing client requests. **It is important that food packages include information such as Nutrition Facts and ingredients lists to help clients with special dietary needs or preferences.**

“I myself have to be more on the healthy side. I had a heart attack in June, [my husband] had a heart attack in January, and I am diabetic. So in theory I’m supposed to really be watching what I am eating.”

— Food Pantry Client



Nutrition Education for Food Pantry Clients

To assist food pantry clients in making healthy choices, food pantries can also provide education about making healthier choices. The following strategies can be used to provide nutrition education to clients:

- Partner with your county Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program
- Prompt people to make healthier choices
- Support clients while shopping
- Offer recipes

Partner with your local Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP)

The University of Wisconsin-Extension runs a SNAP-Ed funded nutrition education program targeting individuals and families with limited incomes in 68 Wisconsin counties. The goal of this program is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP (known as FoodShare in Wisconsin) will make healthy food choices within their limited budgets and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To learn more and discuss partnership opportunities **contact your county UW-Extension Nutrition Education Coordinator: www.uwex.edu/ces/cty**

Prompt People to Make Healthier Food Choices

Point of decision prompts (sometimes known as point of purchase prompts) have been shown to influence dietary behavior. Often posted as a sign or symbol next to a product, decision prompts provide a nudge to select one particular product over another. This strategy





might also be effective in the food pantry setting. **The food pantry could post simple signs next to products reinforcing key nutrition messages**, such as “*make half your grains whole*” or “*eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.*” **Signs might also indicate healthier choices** with placement of a check mark or star, for example. Check with your local Public Health Department to see if any point of decision prompts have been implemented in your community’s grocery stores or restaurants. If so, you could build off of the criteria established for that program and utilize the same images and messages to reinforce branding.



Additional nutrition messaging can be achieved by placing posters and other educational materials around the food pantry. The USDA has developed consumer-messaging materials in both English and Spanish. Materials are available to download and print for free. Learn more at: www.choosemyplate.gov/print-materials-ordering.html



“Our County UW-Extension office helped us place apple cutouts next to the healthier products in our pantry. Some of the apples even have a little message, like “reduce sodium by rinsing canned veggies”. Our customers notice them when making their selections.”

—Holly Weber,
Adams and WI Dells Food Pantry



Support Clients While Shopping

Volunteers are regularly cited as an important factor in determining the success of a food pantry's operation. Consider how you can use volunteers in new ways to provide support to clients as they make their food selections. Volunteers could be trained in the food pantry layout and distribution and accompany clients through their visit to provide support in making healthy choices. Combined with a client-shopping list that aligns with the DGA, volunteers can answer client questions about unfamiliar food products, provide ideas on safe storage and preparation, and encourage the selection of healthier products.

“...say we had a recipe that took about two or three of these items and combined them with something else for a meal. That way we could take some odds and ends that we would never have looked at before, and throw them into the same pot. That way we could say, okay, this is weird, that's weird, and that's weird, but together they don't taste half bad.”

—Food Pantry Client

Offer Recipes alongside Food Distribution

Providing recipes is a great way to help ensure that clients select certain products (such as uncommon fruits, vegetables or dried beans). In fact, food pantry coordinators and volunteers, as well as clients, have all indicated an interest in having recipes available at the food pantry. Whenever possible, it's even better to prepare a sample recipe that clients can smell and taste.

It is important to remember that not all recipes are created equal. Recipes provided at the food pantry containing a small number of common ingredients are easier to read and prepare. Many recipes appropriate for food pantry and low-income audiences have been developed and are available for free online. **Review the sites posted in our “Selecting Recipes for Use at Food Pantries” guide for more ideas on locating appropriate recipes.**



TOOLS 
TO SUPPORT YOU

**SELECTING RECIPES FOR
USE AT FOOD PANTRIES
HANDOUT**

... *appendix 10a*



General Healthy Foods Strategy Resources

USDA: MyPlate

www.choosemyplate.gov

Donations with a Difference

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/foodbaskets>

NYC Healthy Food Donation Initiative

www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/food-donation.shtml

Cooking Matters in your Food Pantry

<http://cookingmatters.org/sites/cooking-matters.org/files/CMYFP.pdf>

Harvest to End Hunger WI

www.harvesttoendhungerwi.org

CHOP: Choosing Healthy Options

www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/programs/chop.aspx

Feeding America Healthy Food Bank Hub

<http://healthyfoodbankhub.feedingamerica.org>

Eating Better on a Budget '10 Tips' from ChooseMyPlate

www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet16EatingBetterOnABudget.pdf
(English)

www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/DGTipsheet16EatingBetterOnABudget-sp.pdf
(Spanish)

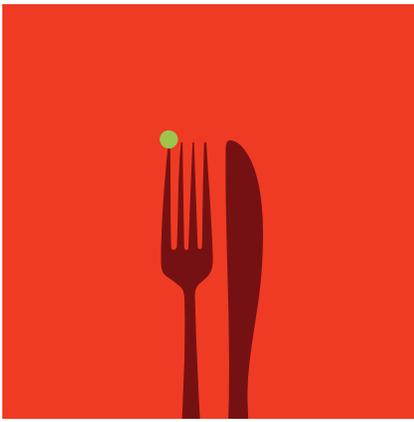
Choose MyPlate '10 Tips'

www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet1ChooseMyPlate.pdf
(English)

www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/DGTipsheet1ChooseMyPlate-sp.pdf
(Spanish)

WISCAP WI Guide to Resources for Food Pantries

<http://wiscap.org/pdfs/WISCAP%20Guide%20to%20Resources%20for%20Wisconsin%20Food%20Pantries%202.pdf>



PROMOTE SAFETY IN YOUR FOOD PANTRY



How do I help my pantry provide safe food for clients?

An important part of offering healthy food at your food pantry is making sure the food is safe to eat. Every year, foodborne illness affects more than 48 million individuals in the United States alone, and food pantry visitors may be more susceptible to serious consequences from foodborne illness than the general population. Pantries can create a safe food environment by:

- 1) Putting Safe Food on the Shelf
- 2) Transporting, Handling, and Storing Food Properly
- 3) Following the rule: When in Doubt, Throw it Out
- 4) Supporting Clients in Handling Food Safely



Putting Safe Food on the Shelf



The clients that visit your pantry will be grateful that you are providing safe, high quality food for them and their families. Federal, state, and local food safety laws help to ensure that companies that manufacture food for sale in the United States and farmers that grow fresh produce follow rules with the goal of guaranteeing a safe food supply. Food banks and food pantries are an important part of our food safety system helping to assure that safe food is distributed to those most in need. Strategies to help ensure that the food you put on the shelf is safe include:

- Establish a Food Safety Policy
- Educate your Donors
- Accept Safe Foods
- Accept Safe Produce

Establish a Food Safety Policy

A **food safety policy** can be used to guide decision making and ensure that the foods you are distributing are both safe and of high quality. A food safety policy is a statement of your commitment to procure and distribute foods that meet certain standards for safety and quality. A food safety policy can make it easier to communicate the standards you have set to donors, partner organizations, and your clients. Adopting a food safety policy is the best way to communicate to your clients, members of your organization, and partners that you are **dedicated to food safety**.

Educate your Donors

You can help ensure safe food on the shelf by providing donors with guidelines for donating safe, high quality foods. Whether a large multi-national food company, a local retailer, or a concerned citizen, everyone will feel better about their food donation if they know that the food will be safe for you to distribute to those in need.





// ...expiration dates really puts a time limit on. It's like hurry, hurry, hurry, I gotta make this. And then when I do make it, is it even going to be good? As it's cooking: Is it going to sour everything else?"

—Food pantry client

Accept Safe Foods

Foodborne illness can affect anyone. But those who are elderly, the very young, those with compromised immune systems, and pregnant women have an even greater risk of getting sick from contaminated food. Many of the clients visiting your food pantry are in these at-risk groups. One of the most important ways you can help maintain the health of your client population is to only accept foods into your pantry that are safe to eat. Help your donors learn more about food safety by giving them a **checklist** of foods that are safe for you to pass-on to clients, and by helping them to understand that there are some foods that may be unsafe for you to distribute.

Accept Safe Produce

Fresh produce is such a treat for food pantry clients, and state and national initiatives are working to increase the availability of fresh produce for those most in need. However, increasingly, fresh produce has also been linked to foodborne illnesses. There are several tips that can help **ensure that you offer safe produce to those you serve:**

- For fresh-from-the farm fruits and vegetables, get to know the growers that will supply your food pantry. Encourage them to use Good Agricultural Practices in growing their crops. Learn more about Good Agricultural Practices at <http://datcp.wi.gov/OnFarmFoodSafety/GAPGHP/index.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>
- Set standards for produce gleaned from farmers' markets or local retailers.
- Carefully inspect fresh produce at the time of donation and do not accept visibly rotten or spoiled produce.
- Monitor produce carefully while it's in your inventory and discard anything that becomes visibly rotten or spoiled.
- Store fresh fruits and vegetables in a cool area and away from direct sunlight.
- Fresh-cut produce (produce that is peeled, sliced, or cut) should always be **kept cold (41°F or below)**.

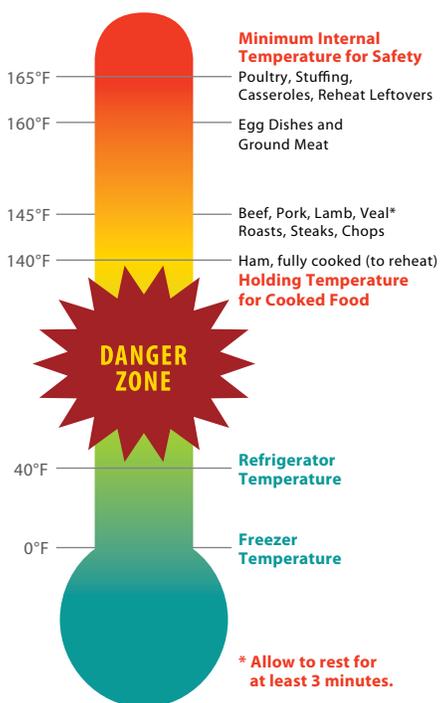
TOOLS 
TO SUPPORT YOU

DONATED FOODS CHECKLIST
... *appendix 2b*

TEN MOST UN-WANTED POSTER
... *appendix 3b*



Transport, Handle, and Store Food Properly



BASED ON AN IMAGE FROM USDA-FSIS

You can help keep donated food safe by transporting them to your pantry in a food-safe environment. Handling and storing foods in the proper way will help keep food safe for clients to enjoy. Proper temperature control is key for maintaining the safety of perishable foods such as fresh produce, prepared meals, meats and eggs, and dairy. The **Danger Zone** is the range of temperatures between 41°F and 135°F. This is the temperature range at which bacteria grow most rapidly. Strategies to help ensure that the food that you provide to clients is safe include:

- Keep Hot Foods Hot
- Keep Cold Foods Cold
- Transport Food Safely
- Handle and Store Food Safely

Keep Hot Foods Hot

Prepared meals that are delivered hot to the food pantry, or that you are transporting, must be kept hot, 135°F or higher, or chilled to 41°F or below, within 4 hours. Harmful bacteria will not grow as long foods are kept either too hot or too cold.

Help keep hot foods hot by placing in a warming tray on a serving line. Cover with foil or a lid to help maintain temperature and prevent the food from drying out. If you choose to heat casseroles or other dishes, for serving hot, **reheat to 165°F, then keep warm, at 135°F or higher.** Do not use a crock pot to re-heat foods. A crock pot does not heat up fast enough to warm foods that are cool or room temperature, but these appliances can be excellent ways to prepare soups and stews from scratch.



TOOLS
TO SUPPORT YOU 

MAKE YOUR DONATION
COUNT FACTSHEET

... *appendix 4b*

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

... *appendix 5b*

REPACKAGING HANDOUT

... *appendix 6b*

MAINTAIN A WELL-KEPT
FOOD-SAFE PANTRY

... *appendix 7b*

POLICY FOR ACCEPTING
AND TRANSPORTING
FOODS

... *appendix 8b*

Keep Cold Foods Cold

Keep perishable foods such as meats, eggs, and dairy products cold, stored at 41°F or below. An acceptable **temperature for a refrigerator is 32° to 41°F. A freezer should be set to -10°F**, or even colder. Foods that require refrigeration should not be out of cold temperature storage for more than 2 hours.

Transport Food Safely

In addition to keeping hot food hot and cold food cold, food safety when transporting food. Whether it's **remembering to pack ice packs** that you will need, having a **clean vehicle** (leave the pets at home for this trip), or **planning a driving route that will keep food from sitting out of refrigeration too long**, food safety is key when transporting food.

Handle and Store Food Safely

Storing food safely is essential. Whether maintaining the proper temperature for perishable foods or having a clean pantry environment, food pantries maintain the safety of food in their care. A health policy for volunteers, a policy on sanitation, or a policy on food repackaging can all help to ensure that food that you have worked hard to source remains safe to distribute.



“You can tell volunteers over and over again what they need to do. Once you put [the hand washing sign] up on the wall, they see it, they comment on it, and they are constantly reminded what they need to do.**”**

— Chris Kane, Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Madison, WI



TOOLS 
TO SUPPORT YOU

SAFE FOOD FOR THOSE YOU SERVE, HEALTH POLICY
... *appendix 9b*

KEEP OR TOSS POSTER
... *appendix 10b*

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE HANDLING
... *appendix 11b*

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Discard Unsafe Food

Sometimes even the best-motivated donors contribute foods that a pantry should not distribute. There may be good food safety reasons to 'keep or toss' food that is donated.

Support Clients in Handling Foods Safely

Educate Clients about Food Safety

Helping your clients make good food safety decisions is an important part of protecting public health. The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) has county-based educators who are knowledgeable about food safety and trained in educating low-income audiences. **Contact your county UW-Extension office** today to discuss opportunities for **food safety education** for pantry clients. WNEP educators also have handouts and other materials to support food safety messaging. www.uwex.edu/ces/cty



“**M**any of our guests are concerned about the safety of their food. We posted information and we talk to our guests about how long food is good for. This seems to help ease concerns.”

— Sue Steinmetz,
McFarland Food Pantry



General Safe Foods Strategy Resources

Foodsafety.gov

www.foodsafety.gov

FDA Produce Safety Posters

www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodbornIllnessContaminants/UCM174142.pdf

(English)

www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodbornIllnessContaminants/UCM297376.pdf

(Spanish)

USDA Safe Food Handling Posters

www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/fc221cc6-fda9-4df9-98bd-4b4e8b4bb247/BFS_Brochure.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

(English)

www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/1be1b03f-d678-456c-a7a7-f809cb00838c/BeFoodSafe_Brochure_SP.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

(Spanish)

University of Nebraska Extension Hand Washing Posters

http://food.unl.edu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=90eb033a-0fa3-4870-8a54-4d47e6282c36&groupId=4089482

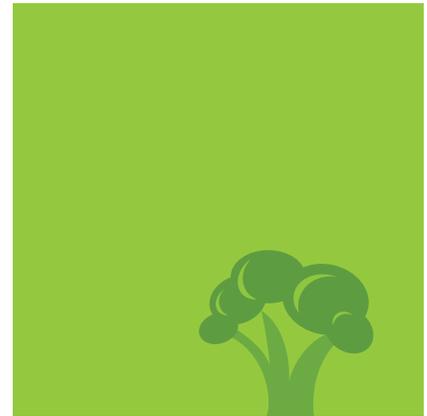
http://food.unl.edu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=64472766-71f3-4e66-a141-f72382fe8e7f&groupId=4089482

Be Food Safe '10 Tips' from ChooseMyPlate

www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet23BeFoodSafe.pdf

USDA Kitchen Thermometers & Food Safety

www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/teach-others/fsis-educational-campaigns/thermy/thermometers-and-food-safety/ct_index



STEP 3

DEVELOP YOUR ACTION PLAN

“Developing an action plan was helpful. You don’t have to do it all at once, it’s okay to take baby steps.”

— Sue Steinmetz,
McFarland Food Pantry



Use the results of your self-assessment to set goals and prioritize strategies your pantry can take to improve the nutritional quality and safety of the foods offered at the food pantry. Not all action areas need to be addressed immediately. There may be actions your food pantry is already taking that can be expanded or improved. There may be other strategies that are entirely new for the food pantry. When building your action plan, consider which strategies are timely, realistic, and achievable for your pantry. A sample action plan has been included for reference. A blank action plan template is available for you to create your own plan.

Overarching goal: provide healthier food choices to food pantry clients						
Action Area	Strategy to Implement	Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Measurement	Timeline
Procure/purchase nutritious food	Adopt, post, and communicate a nutrition policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft nutrition policy language Share nutrition policy with pantry decision makers and board of directors Implement nutrition policy practices 	Food pantry coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample nutrition policy language Decision maker buy-in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition policy is drafted, posted, and communicated to key stakeholders Procurement practices outlined in nutrition policy are followed 1-year post-policy adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy is drafted within 3 months Policy is communicated to decision makers/board of directors within 6 months Procurement practices are followed by 1-year post-policy adoption

Overarching goal: provide safe food to pantry clients						
Action Area	Strategy to Implement	Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Measurement	Timeline
Transport, handle and store food to keep it safe to eat	Control temperature for hot/cold foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase thermometer for coolers Train volunteers on safe temperatures for cold food storage Document cooler temperatures at least 1x daily 	<p>Food pantry coordinator</p> <p>Pantry volunteer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooler thermometer USDA kitchen thermometer document Temperature check checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer completes cooler temperature log at least 1x daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain cooler thermometer within 2 weeks Train volunteers within 1 month Begin to capture daily cooler temperatures within 1 month

TOOLS **TO SUPPORT YOU**

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

... appendix 3c



STEP 4

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The appended materials are a collection of tools created to support you in the implementation of the Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project. Visit us online to access the most up to date resources and editable documents: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries>

Tools to Support You

Give your
Food Pantry a
Healthy Boost





Sample Nutrition Policy for Food Pantries

Establishing a nutrition policy is the best way for your food pantry to demonstrate that you are committed to protecting the health of the people that you serve. A nutrition policy can serve as a mechanism for educating donors on acceptable food donations as well as guide food procurement practices. It is also a tool to communicate to food pantry clients about pantry operations.

Engage stakeholders

Prior to drafting your nutrition policy, consider which stakeholders will be affected by the policy and engage them in the process (example: donors, clients, staff, board, volunteers, etc.). Explain to stakeholders the purpose of developing the nutrition policy. Having stakeholder input from the get-go will help ensure successful adoption and implementation of your nutrition policy.

Develop your nutrition policy

Consider utilizing the language below to guide you in developing a nutrition policy for your food pantry.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Commit to supporting the health of our clients by prioritizing the distribution of recommended USDA's *MyPlate* foods and nutrients such as:
 - fruits and vegetables
 - whole grains
 - low-fat or no-fat dairy and milk products
 - a variety of protein foods
 - foods low in sodium
- Limit the distribution of foods with refined grains, solid fats, trans fats, added sugars, and sodium
- Seek to provide basic staples to support meal planning and preparation such as cooking oils, flour, sugar, etc.

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will not distribute:

- Sugar sweetened beverages (soda, fruit drinks, energy drinks, etc.)
- Candy

Donated products

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Encourage donations in line with USDA's *MyPlate* recommendations by regularly communicating with donors
- Actively seek fresh produce donations from community partners
- Consider the nutritional value of bulk donated products and refuse any donations that fall under food categories of products that *[FOOD PANTRY NAME]* will not distribute

Non-donated products

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Secure whole-grain cereals, breads, rice, crackers, pastas and other grains ("whole" grain listed as the first ingredient on product package)
- Secure a variety of fresh, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Secure canned fruits packed in 100% fruit juice
- Seek to purchase a variety of lean protein food items such as meat, fish, poultry, beans, and nuts
- Secure low-fat and non-fat dairy products
- Secure low-sodium or no-salt-added canned and processed products
- Prioritize the inclusion of basic staples in product purchases
- Take into consideration the cultural preferences and special dietary needs of clients

Product placement and selection

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Communicate client choice/selection practices to all new pantry clients
- Provide flexibility with choice selections to accommodate special dietary needs and cultural food practices
- Prominently place food products meeting USDA's *MyPlate* recommendations making them more visible to pantry clients
- Highlight USDA's *MyPlate* recommended foods to increase with a symbol indicating a smart choice
- Incentivize the selection of fruits and vegetables
- Distribute all fresh fruits and vegetables as a "free choice"

Identify policy authority

Identify an authoritative body responsible for the oversight and implementation of your nutrition policy. Specify the name/title of this individual directly in your drafted nutrition policy so that it is clear to whom questions should be directed.

Adopt your nutrition policy

Discuss your desire to adopt and implement a nutrition policy with your board of directors and include them in the development of the policy. Once drafted, share your nutrition policy with your organization's board of directors, leadership, or other decision makers to obtain approval. Once they sign off on the policy it will be necessary to communicate changes in your food procurement and distribution practices with all stakeholders involved in the process, including volunteers, donors, and clients. Create excitement about the nutrition policy, reinforcing the purpose and guiding principles surrounding the document.

Implement your nutrition policy

Start making changes to your food procurement and distribution practices as outlined by your nutrition policy. Document noticeable changes in inventory and client selection following your policy implementation, and continually evaluate what aspects of the nutrition policy are working well and what may need to be improved. Keep in mind that some changes may take time to fully implement.

Review and revise your nutrition policy

At least once a year, take a moment to review your nutrition policy and consider any necessary revisions. Regularly connect with stakeholders and gather their input on how well they think the nutrition policy has been implemented.



Sample Press Release — Community Food Drives

[DATE]

Boost the value of your food drive donations

[YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

{YOUR TOWN}--Community groups and social organizations often host food drives to fill local food pantry shelves this time of year. By keeping a few simple tips in mind, you can enhance the value of the food donations you make.

"It's important to remember that donated food is most helpful if it is both safe and high quality," says Barbara Ingham, food safety specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME AND TITLE].

Make sure to check the dates on packages of foods that you donate, advises Ingham [YOUR NAME]. [IF AVAILABLE, YOU COULD ADD INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE USE THE PANTRY; HOW MUCH FOOD IS NEEDED, ETC. OR SOMETHING SPECIFIC TO THE LOCAL PANTRY.]

Here are some things to look for:

- **Quality or pack dates** often designated on packages by the words "Better if used by..." and a date. Look for these dates on packaged mixes, cold cereals, peanut butter, and increasingly, on canned items like fruits and vegetables. These dates mean that after the quality date, the food will begin to lose its flavor and may even develop an off flavor. Donate only foods that are well within the quality dates marked on the package.
- **Expiration dates**, such as "Expires 2/15/13" or "Do not use after 7/9/13." Look for these dates on vitamins, yeast, baking powder and cake mixes. Do not donate foods that are past their expiration date.

- **Pull dates.** Example: "Sell by May 16." Look for these dates on perishable, refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cream, eggs, lunch meat and packaged salad mixes. Perishable foods, with the exception of garden produce, are usually not included in a food drive. If they are, choose foods that are well within the pull date.

Besides looking for a date, be sure to check the integrity of the package. To ensure that the food has not been contaminated, donate only foods from unopened packages. Avoid foods with packaging that shows signs of leakage or damage. Ingham [YOUR NAME] urges consumers not to donate canned items that have broken seams or large dents.

Your donation only makes a difference in the life of someone in need if the product donated is within the date marked and of good quality. If you question the integrity of the product or wouldn't feed it to your family— it is probably best not to donate it.

Are home-canned foods, fresh eggs or produce safe to donate? Food pantries often welcome donations of fresh produce. However, home-canned foods, meat or eggs that have not been handled by licensed food processors should not be donated.

"If you have a question about a proposed donation, contact the food pantry. Staff there will be happy to discuss whether they can accept or store the donation that you have in mind," suggests Ingham [YOUR NAME].

Amber Canto, poverty and food security specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME] suggests avoiding sugary cereals, salty noodle mixes, and fruit-flavored beverages that might be easy to donate, but difficult for families to include in nutritious meals. Instead, Canto [YOUR NAME] urges consumers to donate foods that have a stable shelf life, are full of nutrients and easy to prepare.

Good examples of foods to consider are:

- Canned vegetables, especially those without added salt.
- Fruits canned in juice, unsweetened applesauce, 100-percent fruit juice and dried fruit such as raisins or raisins.
- Canned meats and fish, such as chicken, ham or beef, tuna, and salmon. Do not donate meat canned at home.
- Peanuts and peanut butter.
- Whole grain, low-sugar cereals such as plain instant oatmeal, whole grain Os, and bran flakes.
- Whole grain or enriched pasta and instant rice— either brown or enriched. Boxed noodle and rice dishes can be an easy starting point for a one-dish meal.
- Whole grain crackers (especially reduced-sodium) and popcorn.
- Spaghetti sauce, salsa and canned beans, including baked beans.
- Reduced-sodium broth and soups.
- Salad dressings or spreads, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard lower in fat and added sugars.
- Baby food is a very welcome donation. Just be sure to donate well within the date marked on the containers.

“Food pantry clients are extremely grateful for the help that they receive through the pantries. Pantry clients welcome your donations of safe, high quality foods so that they can feed themselves and their families’ good, nutritious meals,” says Canto [YOUR NAME].

Consider donating cash to food pantries. “Pantries can often get more for their dollars, address shortages and needs and focus on high quality products with some extra financial assistance,” says Canto [YOUR NAME]. “Cash donations help food pantries offer the widest possible array of products to the individuals that they serve.”

[ADD SPECIAL NEEDS FOR YOUR PANTRY, OR OTHER INFORMATION.]

Stocking a Healthy Food Pantry Checklist

TOOL 3a



Fruits and vegetables

- Fresh or canned vegetables, low- or no-salt added
 - Carrots, sweet potatoes, corn, green peas, lima beans, asparagus, beets, green beans, mushrooms, tomatoes, mixed vegetables, etc.
- Fresh or canned fruit in 100% juice, or no sugar added
- Applesauce, no sugar added
- Dried fruit, no sugar added
- 100% fruit juice
- 100% vegetable juice

Whole grains

(first ingredient listed should say “whole” wheat, corn, etc.)

- Whole-grain and enriched pasta
- Brown or wild rice
- Whole-grain cold cereals with low sugar
- Whole-grain hot cereals, oatmeal, Cream of wheat, grits
- Whole-grain crackers
- Corn or whole-grain tortillas, non-refrigerated
- Quinoa
- Barley
- Popcorn
- Whole-grain granola bars

Dairy

- Low-fat or non-fat shelf stable milk, powdered or UHT
- Low-fat soy milk, unflavored
- Low fat pressurized cheese made from milk, non-refrigerated

Protein food items

- Fresh or canned meats and fish packed in water (chicken, tuna, salmon, sardines, etc.)
- Canned beans, low-sodium
- Dried beans/peas (black beans, black-eye peas, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), kidney beans, navy beans, lentils, etc.)
- Nuts and seeds, low- or no-salt added (almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, pecans, etc.)
- Nut butter (peanut, almond)

Other items

- Spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce, low- or no salt-added
- Canned and shelf-stable soups and broths, low- or no salt-added
- Vegetable oil
- Flour
- Sugar
- Spices

Please do not donate: rusty or unlabeled cans, homemade items, noncommercial canned or packaged items, open or used items, alcoholic beverages, and outdated or expired product.



Adapted from NYC Healthy Food Donation Initiative Food Donation Checklist accessed online at www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/food-donation.shtml

Stocking a Healthy Food Pantry Donor Letter

TOOL 4a



We thank you for your organization's interest in hosting a community food drive. The [NAME] food pantry is committed to supporting the health and well-being of our clients and our community by offering healthier food choices at our pantry. Please assist in stocking our food pantry shelves with more nutritious foods and limiting donations of less nutritious foods.

Please consider giving more of the following foods:



Fruits and vegetables

- Fresh or canned vegetables, low- or no-salt added
- Carrots, sweet potatoes, corn, green peas, lima beans, asparagus, beets, green beans, mushrooms, tomatoes, mixed vegetables, etc.
- Fresh or canned fruit in 100% juice, or no sugar added
- Applesauce, no sugar added
- Dried fruit, no sugar added
- 100% fruit juice
- 100% vegetable juice

Dairy

- Low-fat or non-fat shelf stable milk, powdered or UHT
- Low-fat soy milk, unflavored
- Low fat pressurized cheese made from milk, non-refrigerated

Whole grains

- Whole-grain and enriched pasta
- Brown or wild rice
- Whole-grain cold cereals with low sugar
- Whole-grain hot cereals, oatmeal, Cream of wheat, grits

- Whole-grain crackers
- Corn or whole-grain tortillas, non-refrigerated
- Quinoa
- Barley
- Popcorn
- Whole-grain granola bars

Protein food items

- Fresh or canned meats and fish packed in water (chicken, tuna, salmon, sardines, etc.)
- Canned beans, low-sodium
- Dried beans/peas (black beans, black-eye peas, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), kidney beans, navy beans, lentils, etc.)
- Nuts and seeds, low- or no-salt added (almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, pecans, etc.)
- Nut butter (peanut, almond)

Other items

- Spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce, low- or no salt-added
- Canned and shelf-stable soups and broths, low- or no salt-added
- Cooking oils such as olive, vegetable, or canola oil

Please limit donations of the following foods:

- Sugary drinks (soda, fruit-flavored drinks, energy/sports drinks, sweetened teas, etc.)
- Candy
- Unhealthy snacks (chips, cookies, and other foods high in fat, sodium, sugar, calories)

Please do not donate: rusty or unlabeled cans, homemade items, noncommercial canned or packaged items, open or used items, alcoholic beverages, and outdated or expired products.

Adapted from NYC Healthy Food Donation Initiative, Food Donation Letter www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/food-donation.shtml



Healthier Sample Sack Hunger Donation Drive Packages

breakfast

- Oatmeal
- Canned fruit or 100% fruit juice

lunch

- Canned tuna
- Mayonaise
- Canned vegetable
- Canned fruit

dinner

- Pasta
- Pasta sauce
- Canned vegetable
- Canned meatball

breakfast

- Box of cereal
- Shelf stable milk
- Canned fruit or 100% fruit juice

lunch

- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Rice cakes
- Canned vegetable
- Canned fruit

dinner

- Rice
- Canned chicken
- Canned vegetable
- Seasoning packet





Client Shopping Checklist

Use the chart below to guide the development of your client shopping checklist that meets the USDA's *My Plate* recommendations. The number of food items listed by household size should be sufficient to provide 3 days of meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). A full listing of food items per category follows. Consider providing seasonal fresh produce as a free choice (i.e. does not count towards limits in table),

as well as building in incentives to promote fruit and vegetable, whole-grain and low-sodium product selection.

Ideally, the pantry should be arranged so that food items are shelved according to the food groups specified below. Signs and stickers can be used to color code the shelves according to food group and to reinforce the messages delivered by *MyPlate*.

Family size	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat, beans, peanut butter, & eggs	Dairy, yogurt & cheese	Grains	Meal makers (soups, meals in a box)	Misc. (oils, snacks, sweets, condiments, staples)	Personal items
1	2 items	3 items	4 items	1 item	2 items	3 items	3 items	3 items
2	2 items	3 items	4 items	1 item	2 items	3 items	3 items	3 items
3	3 items	3 items	5 items	1 item	2 items	4 items	4 items	3 items
4	5 items	3 items	5 items	1 item	2 items	4 items	5 items	4 items
5	4 items	5 items	5 items	2 items	3 items	5 items	6 items	4 items
6	5 items	6 items	5 items	2 items	3 items	6 items	6 items	5 items
7	6 items	7 items	5 items	3 items	3 items	7 items	7 items	5 items
8	6 items	8 items	8 items	3 items	3 items	8 items	8 items	5 items



Adapted from the Rainbow of Colors Choice System developed by Ohio State University Extension



Food Group Categories and Product Listing

Fruits

- Applesauce
- Canned and shelf stable fruits
 - Fruit cocktail
 - Peaches
 - Pears
 - Pineapple
 - Grapefruit
- Dried fruit
 - Raisins
 - Apricots
 - Cranberries
 - Banana chips
- 100% fruit juice
- Fresh fruits

Vegetables

- Canned vegetables
 - Dark greens
 - Carrots
 - Pumpkin
 - Sweet potatoes
 - Corn
 - Green peas
 - Lima beans
 - Asparagus
 - Beets
 - Green beans
 - Mushrooms
 - Tomatoes
- Potatoes
- 100% vegetable juice (i.e. carrot, tomato)
- Fresh vegetables

Dairy

- Fluid milk
- Evaporated or canned milk
- Non-fat dry milk
- Cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Yogurt
- Soy milk

Grains

- Bread
- Rice
- Pasta
- Oatmeal
- Grits
- Cream of Wheat
- Cold cereal
- Breakfast or granola bars
- Crackers
- Muffin, cornbread, or pancake mix
- Pitas
- Bagels
- Pretzels
- Stuffing Mix
- Tortillas
- Popcorn

Protein foods

- Eggs
- Frozen or refrigerated meat/fish
- Canned meats and fish packed in water
 - Chicken
 - Tuna
 - Salmon
 - Sardines
 - Vienna Sausages
 - Spam
- Canned and dry beans
 - Black beans
 - Black-eye peas
 - Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
 - Kidney beans
 - Navy beans
 - Lentils
 - White beans
- Nuts and seeds
 - Almonds
 - Peanuts
 - Sunflower seeds
 - Pumpkin seeds
 - Pecans
 - Walnuts
 - Sesame seeds
 - Pistachios
 - Mixed nuts
- Nut butter (peanut, almond, etc)
- Chunky soup with meat, chicken, and chili

Meal makers & condiments

- Vegetable soup
- Broth
- Creamed soups
- Canned stews
- Spaghetti sauce
- Meal mixes (Tuna Helper, Hamburger Helper, Sloppy Joe mix, Macaroni & Cheese)

Staples, spices & condiments

- Baking mixes
- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Sugar
- Flour
- Oil (Vegetable and Olive)
- Mayonnaise
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Gravy
- Salsa
- Salad dressings
- Spices

Snack & sweets

- Cookies
- Bakery items
- Chips

Meeting Special Dietary Needs

TOOL 8a



Client food preferences will vary widely depending on a number of factors. Certain health conditions may require special diets. Cultural and religious beliefs and practices may also influence what an individual chooses to consume. By taking into consideration common dietary needs, food pantries can ensure they are being inclusive of all possible audiences served. Below you will find listings of sample food products meeting specific dietary needs.

Low sodium

Most Americans consume more sodium than recommended. While we could all lower our sodium intake, some individuals may have to be particularly careful about how much sodium they consume for health reasons. This includes individuals with hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, as well as individuals over the age of 51.

Look for “Low sodium” or “No salt added” on labels of the following products:

- canned chicken in water, no salt added
- canned beans, no salt added
- tomato paste, sauce, and stewed tomatoes, no salt added
- green beans, sweet peas, no salt added
- various soup varieties, no salt added

Gluten intolerance

Gluten is a protein found in certain grains. Individuals with diagnosed celiac disease cannot eat foods containing gluten. They need to avoid the following grains: wheat, barley, and rye. Some processed foods will also contain gluten. Possible sources of gluten in processed food products include: bouillon cubes, brown rice syrup, candy, deli meats and hot dogs, gravy, rice mixes, sauces, seasoned snack foods, and soup.

Make sure to check labels carefully for ingredients containing gluten and err on the side of caution if unsure. The following food items are generally okay for those with a gluten intolerance:

- fresh eggs, fresh meats/fish and poultry (not breaded, battered, or marinated)
- fruits and vegetables
- grains: amaranth, buckwheat, rice, quinoa, flax, cornmeal, oats
- soy

Vegetarian and vegan

There are many types of vegetarians. Most vegetarians follow a mostly plant-based diet and never or rarely eat meat, fish, or poultry. Individuals following a vegan diet avoid any animal-based products, including milk and dairy, and other foods with ingredients from animal sources, like gelatin. Some common acceptable items for vegetarian and vegans include:

- fruits and vegetables
- nuts and seeds
- beans and legumes
- grains—quinoa, rice, oats, rice
- meat and dairy free soups
- soy and tofu

Dietary beliefs

There are certain beliefs people have about how food is prepared, processed, and consumed whether for personal, cultural, or religious reasons. To ensure foods meet the criteria defined by these beliefs 3rd party certification agencies exist to approve, monitor, and regulate foods. We will look at Kosher and Halal below.

Remember that not all items by a certified brand will be Kosher or Halal. It is important to check labels carefully.

- If the label does not clearly state that a product is Halal or Kosher then assume it is not unless you have received written confirmation from the company that produces that product or their approved third party certifier.
- Third party certifiers have websites that are a great resource allowing you to search for certified products and/or contact customer service if you have a question

Halal

Halal foods are those that Muslims are allowed to eat or drink under Islamic law, which dictates both what foods are permitted and how the food must be processed and prepared. Pork is the most common example of non-halal food.

Common brands are Abbot, Baskin Robbins, Organic Valley, Campbell, English Biscuits, Nestle, Olympia, Wonderful, and National.



Popular certifiers

- IFANCA
www.ifanca.org
- USA Halal Chamber of Commerce, Inc
www.ushalalcertification.com/offical-notices.html

Remember that Halal is a 3rd party certification. This means that any Halal certified product would have to state that on the label. This can be called out in many different ways, some examples are below:

Kosher

Kosher foods are those that follow Jewish dietary law. Kosher foods must also meet specific criteria for how it is processed and prepared, and may forbid certain animal products from being consumed.

Common brands are Athenos, CapriSun, Dalla Costa, Dasinu, Nantucket Nectars, Hunts Tomatoes, Yoplait, Tropicana, Country Time Lemonade, Rose's, Upper Crust Bakery, Crown Naturals, Matt's, MegaFood, Eden, Ortega, Swiss Miss, Blue Diamond, and Minute Maid.

Remember that Kosher is a 3rd party certification. This means that any Kosher certified product would have to have a symbol on the label notating that the product is kosher. There are multiple 3rd party certifiers who have symbols that denote a product is kosher. Some examples are below:

Popular certifiers

- OK Kosher,
www.ok.org
- Orthodox Union (OU)
<http://oukosher.org>





Point of Decision Prompts

Point of decision prompts, such as a sign or symbol next to a product, can be utilized to highlight healthy food choices and encourage food pantry clients to select these items. Many communities have begun to implement point of decision prompts in grocery stores and restaurants. **Contact your local public health department to learn about existing initiatives and how they can be adapted to the pantry setting.**

Highlight the following food items with a symbol:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains (items with the first ingredient listed as “whole” wheat, corn, etc.)
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy
- Lean protein foods, such as lean beef and pork, chicken, turkey, beans, fish, or tofu.

Be sure to communicate to pantry clients what the symbol stands for to guide their decision making when making food selections. Add the symbol to your client shopping list and/or post a sign letting clients know to look for this symbol to guide them in making healthier choices at the food pantry.



Look for this symbol to guide you in making healthy food selections today!

In addition to highlighting certain food products with a symbol, you might consider posting nutrition education messages next to key food products to reinforce the recommendations established by USDA's *MyPlate*. USDA has tested consumer education messages and has a 10 tips series available for free download on their website. www.choosemyplate.gov/print-materials-ordering.html

Examples of key messages include:

- Make half your plate veggies and fruits
- Add lean protein
- Include whole grains
- Don't forget the low-fat dairy
- Avoid extra fat
- Try new foods
- Satisfy your sweet tooth with naturally sweet fruit



How to Select Recipes for the Food Pantry

When you consider providing recipes to food pantry clients, use the following checklist to guide your decision.

Are the recipes consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans?

- Encourage eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, skim or low-fat milk and lean meats.
- Use salt sparingly or designate “optional” if possible.
- Minimize the use of foods with low nutritional value and high in solid fat and/or added sugar such as whipped topping, chocolate syrup or cream cheese.
- Follow food safety guidelines. Recipes should not include unsafe practices, such as using uncooked eggs in the finished product or marinating meat at room temperature.

Are the recipes appropriate for your clients?

- Ingredients should be familiar and readily available.
- The recipe should not specify brand names.
- Choose recipes that do not use expensive equipment or ingredients.
- Consider the cultural preferences of your clients.
- Consider client’s experience with food preparation.
- Choose recipes that are quick and easy. If possible, choose recipes with fewer than eight ingredients and can be prepared in less than 45 minutes.
- Pre-testing recipes is highly recommended to make sure the product is the quality you expect.

Are the recipes written clearly?

- The ingredients are listed in the order they will be used.
- Measurements are spelled out rather than abbreviated (i.e. use tablespoon rather than Tbsp.)
- The recipe specifies sizes of cans.
- The method of preparation is described using short, simple, numbered steps. Pan sizes, temperature and baking time are specified.
- The recipe states expected yield in number and size of servings.
- The recipe includes Nutrition Facts.

Use recipes from public sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture or National Institutes of Health.

Get permission to reprint any recipes that are copyright protected. State your source on the recipe.

Examples of public sources for recipes:

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/foodsense>

<http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov>

<http://www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/facts>

<http://recipes.extension.iastate.edu>

Adapted from: *How to Select and Use Recipes in Nutrition Education*, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program, 2007.

Tools to Support You

Promote
Food Safety
in Your Pantry



Food Safety Policy for Food Pantries

TOOL 1b



Establishing a **food safety policy** is the best way for your food pantry to ensure that you are protecting the health of the people that you serve. Having a food safety policy in place will encourage donations and will help your pantry operate smoothly.

[Food Pantry name] will accept the following foods:

- Foods in their original, sealed package with an ingredient label and code date.
- Manufactured food that is clearly within the 'Use By' or 'Sell By' date.
- Perishable foods in sealed packages with donor information and product dating.
- Perishable foods where temperature control has been strictly maintained.
- Fresh produce grown using good agricultural practices, that is free of decay, and reasonably clean.

[Food Pantry name] will not accept the following foods:

- Home canned or home preserved foods
- Home prepared meals or desserts
- Foods with evidence of spoilage
- Rotten fruits and vegetables
- Opened packages of food
- Foods in crushed, dented, rusted or broken/open containers

- Foods where there is evidence of product leakage
- Foods where there is evidence of insect damage or infestation
- Foods past their 'Best By' or 'Use By' date
- Packages of food that are excessively dirty or soiled
- Foods not from a retail business

[Food Pantry name] will:

- Maintain a clean, well-kept facility
- Transport, handle, and store food in a food-safe manner
- Handle, store and distribute produce safely
- Keep up-to-date records of food inventory
- Keep appropriate temperature records
- Update policy documents as needed, keep signed health policy documents on hand
- Store non-food items and chemicals away from food
- Repackage food only where allowed and following a food-safe policy
- Discard food that is potentially unsafe for distribution (not place it on the 'free' shelf for pantry clients)

Signed: _____
Food Pantry representative

Date: _____

Donated Food Checklist for Safety & Quality

TOOL 2b



Both **safety** (whether a food is free of disease-causing bacteria and their toxins) and **quality** (whether a food looks and smells acceptable to eat) should be kept in mind when examining donated food.

**Signs that food may be UNSAFE to eat.
Discard these foods.**

Foods stored at room temperature

Cans

- Crushed so they will not stack
- Crushed at the end seam
- Dents with sharp edges
- Dents deep enough to rest a finger in
- Severe rust pits
- Swollen or bulging ends
- Holes, fractures, or punctures
- Evidence of leakage
- Signs of spoilage when opened (spurting; unusual odor or appearance)
- Baby food or formula past expiration
- Missing label

Glass jars

- Home-canned foods
- Raised, crooked, or loosened lid
- Damaged tamper-resistant seal
- Cracks or chips
- Signs of spoilage (discolored food or cloudy liquid)
- Dirt under the rim
- Baby food past the expiration date

Paperboard cartons

- Packages that are opened
- Evidence of insects
- Baby food past the expiration date

Plastic containers

- Damaged tamper-resistant seal
- Signs of spoilage (mold, off odor)
- Baby food past the expiration date

Foods stored in the freezer

- Evidence of thawing and warm-holding (ice crystals on food that is soft to the touch, leaking packages)
- Unsuitable packaging

Foods stored in the refrigerator

- Lukewarm food (above 41° F)
- Signs of spoilage (unusual odor or appearance, molds)
- Unsuitable containers (and/or covers) Uncertain handling "history" (questionable reputation of food source)
- Damaged tamper-resistant seals (commercially packaged foods)

IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

- Don't rely on look or smell. Foods that cause food poisoning may look fine and smell acceptable. Never taste suspicious foods!
- **Never** accept food that is home-canned or prepared by an unlicensed food processor.
- **Never** place potentially unsafe food products on the 'free' shelf for clients to take if they wish. Products which do not meet distribution standards should be **discarded**.

10 Most Unwanted



STOP! Don't donate these foods to the pantry.

1. Home-canned or home-preserved foods
2. Home-prepared meals or desserts
3. Spoiled foods
4. Rotten fruits and vegetables (or those on their way out)
5. Opened packages of food
6. Foods in crushed, dented, rusted containers
7. Foods past their 'Best By' date
8. Foods past their 'Use By' date
9. Packages of food that are dirty or soiled
10. Foods not from a retail business



Make your Donation Count

Your food pantry donation is an important contribution to those in need in your community. Many pantries have food safety policies that will not allow them to distribute foods that are of poor quality or that may be unsafe. Make your donation count by donating only safe, high quality foods. Not all pantries can accept perishable items—call ahead to **Make your Donation Count! Give:**

Shelf stable foods

- Shelf-stable packaged foods in their **original packages** with the **label intact**. Packaging should be unopened and not damaged.
- Packaged foods that are within the sell-by or use-by date.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables grown using good gardening practices.
- Bakery items that can be safely stored at room temperature. Check with the pantry before donating custard- or crème-filled bakery items or desserts topped with whipped cream. Do not donate home-prepared bakery items or those from an unlicensed retailer.

Perishable foods

- Perishable foods such as deli items, frozen meats, and fresh-cut produce in their **original packages** with the label intact. Packaging should be unopened and not damaged.
- Perishable foods should be within the sell-by or use-by date.
- Meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs should come from a licensed processor.
- Milk and juice must be pasteurized.

Fresh fruits and vegetables

- Fresh-cut fruits and vegetables that have been kept cold and in their original/unopened package.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables that is free of visible dirt, ripe, and with a remaining shelf life of at least 3-5 days.
- Donated garden produce grown using good gardening practices. **Do not use fresh, uncomposted manure for fertilizer.**

Do not donate:

- Home-canned or home-prepared foods
- Foods from unlicensed dealers
- Foods that are spoiled or rotten (or getting that way)
- Foods past their 'Use by' or 'Sell by' date



Sample Press Release for Community Food Drives

[DATE]

Boost the value of your food drive donations

[YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

{YOUR TOWN}--Community groups and social organizations often host food drives to fill local food pantry shelves this time of year. By keeping a few simple tips in mind, you can enhance the value of the food donations you make.

"It's important to remember that donated food is most helpful if it is both safe and high quality," says Barbara Ingham, food safety specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME AND TITLE].

Make sure to check the dates on packages of foods that you donate, advises Ingham [YOUR NAME].

[IF AVAILABLE, YOU COULD ADD INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE USE THE PANTRY; HOW MUCH FOOD IS NEEDED, ETC. OR SOMETHING SPECIFIC TO THE LOCAL PANTRY.]

Here are some other things to look for:

- **Quality or pack dates** often designated on packages by the words "Better if used by..." and a date. Look for these dates on packaged mixes, cold cereals, peanut butter, and increasingly, on canned items like fruits and vegetables. These dates mean that after the quality date, the food will begin to lose its flavor and may even develop an off flavor. Donate only foods that are well within the quality dates marked on the package.

- **Expiration dates**, such as "Expires 2/15/13" or "Do not use after 7/9/13." Look for these dates on vitamins, yeast, baking powder and cake mixes. Do not donate foods that are past their expiration date.
- **Pull dates.** Example: "Sell by May 16." Look for these dates on perishable, refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cream, eggs, lunch meat and packaged salad mixes. Perishable foods, with the exception of garden produce, are usually not included in a food drive. If they are, choose foods that are well within the pull date.

Besides looking for a date, be sure to check the integrity of the package. To ensure that the food has not been contaminated, donate only foods from unopened packages. Avoid foods with packaging that shows signs of leakage or damage. Ingham [YOUR NAME] urges consumers not to donate canned items that have broken seams or large dents.

Your donation only makes a difference in the life of someone in need if the product donated is within the date marked and of good quality. If you question the integrity of the product or wouldn't feed it to your family— it is probably best not to donate it.

Are home-canned foods, fresh eggs or produce safe to donate? Food pantries often welcome donations of fresh produce. However, home-canned foods, meat or eggs that have not been handled by licensed food processors should not be donated.

"If you have a question about a proposed donation, contact the food pantry. Staff there will be happy to discuss whether they can accept or store the donation that you have in mind," suggests Ingham [YOUR NAME].

Amber Canto, poverty and food security specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME] suggests avoiding sugary cereals, salty noodle mixes, and fruit-flavored beverages that might be easy to donate, but difficult for families to include in nutritious meals. Instead, Canto [YOUR NAME] urges consumers to donate foods that have a stable shelf life, are full of nutrients and easy to prepare.

Good examples of foods to consider are:

- Canned vegetables, especially those without added salt.
- Fruits canned in juice, unsweetened applesauce, 100-percent fruit juice and dried fruit such as raisins or raisins.
- Canned meats and fish, such as chicken, ham or beef, tuna, and salmon. Do not donate meat canned at home.
- Peanuts and peanut butter.
- Whole grain, low-sugar cereals such as plain instant oatmeal, whole grain Os, and bran flakes.
- Whole grain or enriched pasta and instant rice— either brown or enriched. Boxed noodle and rice dishes can be an easy starting point for a one-dish meal.
- Whole grain crackers (especially reduced-sodium) and popcorn.
- Spaghetti sauce, salsa and canned beans, including baked beans.
- Reduced-sodium broth and soups.
- Salad dressings or spreads, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard lower in fat and added sugars.
- Baby food is a very welcome donation. Just be sure to donate well within the date marked on the containers.

“Food pantry clients are extremely grateful for the help that they receive through the pantries. Pantry clients welcome your donations of safe, high quality foods so that they can feed themselves and their families’ good, nutritious meals,” says Canto [YOUR NAME].

Consider donating cash to food pantries. “Pantries can often get more for their dollars, address shortages and needs and focus on high quality products with some extra financial assistance,” says Canto [YOUR NAME]. “Cash donations help food pantries offer the widest possible array of products to the individuals that they serve.”

[ADD SPECIAL NEEDS FOR YOUR PANTRY, OR OTHER INFORMATION.]

Repackaging Bulk Food Product Policy

TOOL 6b



Pantries should **only** repackaging bulk food if they can do so safely and if allowed under their contract. Items received from TEFAP and from Feeding America network food banks cannot be repackaged! The agreements signed that allow you to receive foods from these programs **prohibit** you from breaking down meat, repackaging food from cans or jars, etc. The one exception is **fresh produce**. See instructions below on handling fresh and fresh-cut produce.

The procedures below apply only to non-TEFAP commodities and foods not from a Feeding America member food bank. You can not repackage food from TEFAP or a Feeding American Food Bank.

If you violate TEFAP/Feeding America contracts, you put your pantry food supply, and the clients that you serve, at risk!

Facility and equipment

- A clean room will be set aside for repackaging. Appropriately **clean and sanitize** all work surfaces prior to repack. Repeat this product between all product changeovers, **and** once every 8 hours for shelf-stable foods, and once every 4 hours for foods requiring temperature control.
- Ensure that the temperature of the room is suitable for the **food being repacked**.
- Hand wash stations **must** be operational and stocked with soap and paper towels, and a policy **must** be in place to ensure that staff and volunteers wash their hands.
- All equipment and material used for repackaging must be food-safe.
- Packaging material must be **new**, clean, and **food-safe**.

- Prior to use, any surfaces such as table-top that will come into contact with food during repackaging **must be cleaned** and **sanitized**. Repeat cleaning and sanitation between all product changeovers and whenever the facility is cleaned and sanitized.
- At the end of repackaging, all cleaned and sanitized equipment must be **stored**, covered, and in a manner to prevent contamination.
- The facility and equipment will be **sanitized** with a quaternary ammonium compound at the end of the activity. Sanitation during the repack should be with a dilute chlorine solution (1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water).

Personnel

- All staff/volunteers involved in repackaging will comply with **food safety requirements**: hair restraints and gloves will be worn; clothing/aprons will be clean; hands will be clean prior to gloving; no jewelry can be visible. Individuals will abstain from eating, drinking, and smoking around food.
- **Gloves will be worn**. Gloves will be changed between tasks. Gloves will be removed when leaving the clean room and new gloves put on upon return.
- Anyone involved in repackaging must have a **signed health policy** document on file.

Food

- Food must be handled to **prevent contamination**, and **temperature must be maintained**.
- Repackaging material must be **food-safe** and acceptable for the food product.

- The **label** for the repacked product **must include**:
 - Common name of the product
 - Name and place of manufacturer, packer, or distributor
 - Net quantity of contents in the repackaged item
 - Common or usual name of **all ingredients**. The presence of allergens **must be noted**.

Keep a copy of the original product label (bulk package) with your records in the event of a recall.

- A **permanent record** must be kept of all food that is repacked. The record must include both a sample label from the original (bulk) food and the repacked food, number of units packed, and date distributed. Time/temperature **records must be kept** for perishable foods that are repackaged.

Fresh produce

- Repackaging of bulk fresh produce is **allowed** (no license is required) and should take place in a clean facility and using new, clean, and food-safe packaging material. Statements outlined in this policy covering facility/equipment/personnel **should be followed**.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables must be handled to **prevent contamination**.
- Many fresh fruits and vegetables can be safely stored at room temperature for 2-3 days; fresh-cut produce (pre-packaged) **must be kept cold**.
- Food pantries should not peel, cut, slice or otherwise prepare fresh produce—it should be distributed intact.

Tips for repackaging food

Direct donations from local retailers or food processors can provide much-needed food items for your pantry. While these items may be repackaged, **it is almost NEVER a good idea for a food pantry to do so**. Here are some tips to help ensure that repackaging is done **safely**:

- Contact local grocery stores and food retailers that manufacture food. Ask them to partner with you and repackage food for you.

- Contact a local butcher shop or grocery store with a meat counter for help especially when working with meat. These businesses will have expertise in thawing large packages or subdividing meat into smaller lots.
- Work with your donor to see if they can provide the food item in more client-appropriate packaging. Your donor may not be aware of the needs of those you are serving and may welcome the chance to better serve those in need.
- Contact your local food bank. Many larger food banks have everything in place to safely repackage bulk foods. Your local food bank may be able to work directly with the donor to repackage and distribute needed food items. In this way, you will be extending the reach of your pantry by helping others outside your network.

Safe handling of food while thawing

There are times when large packages of meat may be received that need to be **partially** thawed so that they can be distributed (intact) to families. There are two approved methods for thawing food such as this:

- Meat items may be partially thawed **in the refrigerator** so that packages can be separated for distribution. Refrigerator thawing will take several hours to several days, so plan ahead. Meat must be placed on a tray or other precautions taken so that meat juice does not contaminate other foods.
- Meat may be partially thawed at **room temperature** as long as the temperature of the room **does not exceed 50°F**.
- Meat may be partially thawed in **cool** water in a sink. The water must be changed every 30 minutes and thawing must be stopped **as soon as the packages can be separated**.

Signed: _____
Food Pantry representative

Date: _____



Maintain a Well-Kept Food-Safe Pantry

Having a clean, well-kept food pantry will help your clients feel good about visiting your pantry and accepting the food that you offer.

Maintain your facility

- Keep food at least 6" off the floor, stored on pallets, platforms or shelves
- Keep food at least 4" away from walls
- Keep food at least 2 feet away from the ceiling
- Keeping floors, pallets and shelving clean
- Discard broken shelving units or pallets
- Keep carts, bins, and other food storage units clean
- Keep doors, windows, and roofs well sealed to prevent pest entry and water damage
- Keep the exterior of the building well-maintained to discourage pests
- Establish a schedule to remove garbage or waste

Best practices for food storage

- Rotate stock: First in, first out!
- Keep non-food items separate from food
- Keep thermometers in freezers, refrigeration units and dry storage areas.
 - Dry storage areas should be maintained at 50°-75°F
 - Refrigerated storage areas should be maintained at 36°-40°F
 - Frozen storage should be maintained at 0°F or colder
- Maintaining temperature logs for all areas of the facility
- Maintain records of foods received
- Store foods so as to minimize impact of light, steam, water or heat on food products
- Sweep and clean floors, including under pallets, **at least monthly**
- Clean high-traffic areas like entrance ways and walk-ways in front of shelves regularly.
- Immediately clean areas that are soiled by spillage or breakage.

Signed: _____
Food Pantry representative

Date: _____



Policy for Accepting and Transporting Foods

It's important to keep food safe while transporting it to the pantry. When you are picking up food from a food bank, a retailer, a community garden, or a farmers' market, several steps will help keep the food safe to consume.

Accept foods which meet nutrition and food safety standards

Individuals who are responsible for transporting food for the food pantry—either by picking food up at a food bank or perhaps through gleaning in the community—may need to communicate what foods the pantry is able to accept.

- Provide your driver(s) with the Food Pantry Nutrition and Food Safety Policies. Ask them to refer to these documents, if needed, when making decisions about food that is gleaned from the community.
- Regardless of whether the food pantry has a food safety policy in place, you **should not accept**:
 - Home canned foods
 - Foods prepared in a home kitchen
 - Food from an unlicensed food processor—the **exception** is fresh produce from a grower
 - Packaged foods that are not in their original labeled, sealed package.
 - Prepared foods are not packaged to prevent contamination. [Unpackaged food should not be transported in garbage bags, even for a short period of time, and even if the food is dry, e.g. bread. If necessary, arrange for delivery when the food can be properly packaged.]

- Foods where the packaging is heavily soiled or damaged so as to put the contents at-risk.
- Obviously spoiled food.
- Hot/cold foods that are not temperature controlled.

Keep your transport vehicle and transport containers clean

A clean vehicle will help prevent the food that you transport from becoming contaminated.

- Keep your **vehicle(s) clean** of dirt, insects, and animals.
- If you are using a car to transport food, consider using a clean tarp or plastic sheet to cover the area where food will be placed. This will protect both the food and your vehicle.
- If you are using a dedicated truck or van to transport food, set up a schedule to routinely clean the vehicle to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Containers** such as totes or bins that are used to transport bulk items such as produce or bread should be dedicated for food transport and should be **cleaned after each use** to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Separate** items such as raw meats from ready-to-eat foods like bread and fresh produce.
- **Do not reuse disposable containers** to transport food. Do not pick up food that is packaged inappropriately, i.e. fruit juice in a used milk container.

Maintain temperature control

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when transporting food is the importance of temperature control: **Keep hot foods hot, keep cold foods cold.**

Check the temperature of foods that are being donated to the pantry.

- Frozen or refrigerated food should be cold (**41°F or below**) and labeled (sample on right)
- If your pantry can handle **hot foods**, these must be **kept hot at 135°F or higher** and **reheated to 165°F** prior to serving. **Hot foods** must be in a food-safe container and labeled with the date of preparation and retailer/donor.
- Use **insulated containers** to transport hot or cold food. The temperature of food should be checked on receipt. Do not accept cold food that is above 41°F, or hot food that is below 135°F.
- Be sure to **keep records** of perishable foods that you receive and their origin.

Personnel

- Individuals transporting or handling food should take care to **prevent contamination.**
- Practice proper hand washing and help out only when you well (not sick).

Fresh produce

- Fresh fruits and vegetables must be handled to **prevent contamination.**
- Use dedicated boxes or bins/totes for transporting fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Do not accept obviously spoiled or rotten produce.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables that are cut, peeled, or sliced **are highly perishable and must be kept cold (below 41°F).**

Signed: _____
Food Pantry representative

Date: _____

NAME OF FOOD

DATE OF PREPARATION
(or contain 'use by' date on package)

RETAILER/DONOR

"KEEP FROZEN" OR "KEEP REFRIGERATED"



Safe Food for those you Serve

Health Policy

You are an important part of providing food pantry clients with the food that they need for themselves and their family. You can do your best to help those in need when you follow a few food safety guidelines:

Handwashing

Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and warm water after:

- Using the restroom and before handling food
- Touching animals
- Sneezing, blowing your nose and coughing
- Touching a cut or open sore
- Being outside and before starting to work with food
- Handling ready-to-eat foods like fresh fruits and vegetables
- Handling trash
- Sorting food, especially packaged items, and before handling fresh food
- Carrying boxes to and from storage or vehicles
- Handling non-food items and before handling food (even if that food is packaged)

Good hand hygiene is key to food safety!

Illness

You help protect those you serve when you take care of yourself! Do not come to the pantry, even to volunteer, if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Abdominal cramps, diarrhea, fever, vomiting
- Open, oozing sores on your hands, lower arms or any exposed body parts
- Sore throat with fever

If you have had, or are experiencing, vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice, you may not come in to work until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours or you have a written release from a medical practitioner.

You may not work with food if you have been diagnosed with Hepatitis A, *Salmonella Typhi*, *E. coli*, Norovirus, or Shigella. You must have a note from a medical practitioner to return to work.

I agree to follow the Health Policy:

Signed: _____

Date: _____



For Food Safety Sake: Keep or Toss?

Distributing and using donated products

These are recommendations only. Always inspect products and discard if signs of spoilage appear.

category	product(s)	storage and usage guidelines
Baby food	Moist food	Do not use after date on container. Refrigerate after opening. Use within 3 days once opened.
	Dry infant cereal	Do not distribute or use after date on container. Store in a cool, dry location.
	Infant formula—wet or dry	Do not distribute or use after date on container. Store in a sealed container. Keep liquid formula refrigerated after opening.
Bakery items	Breads, rolls, cakes, Danishes, cookies	Use for up to 1 week after date on package. Discard if mold appears.
Canned foods (includes trays and pouches)	Canned fruits, tomato products, and pickled foods	Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the product. Discard cans if deeply dented, or any tears or rips in flexible packages or foil tops.*
	Canned meat, poultry, fish, soup, vegetables, and pasta	Use for up to 2 years past the date marked on the product. Refrigerate after opening. Discard cans if deeply dented, or any tears or rips in flexible packaging or trays.*
Cereals, chips and crackers		Use for up to 2 years past date marked on package. Product may stale before then.
Condiments	Ketchup, mustard, mayo	Distribute up to 2 years past date. Discard discolored or separation has occurred. Refrigerate after opening.
Cream-filled pastries and cream pies	Pastries or pies with whipped cream topping or custard filling	Keep refrigerated. Safe to distribute up to 5 days past date on package if kept refrigerated.
Dry mixes	Soup, meal-in-a-box (i.e. meal helper)	Distribute up to 2 years past date marked.
	Potato, pudding, flavored rice or pasta, seasonings	Distribute 6 months past date on package. Store in a cool, dry location.
Jars	Glass	Use for up to 2 years past date on container. Refrigerate after opening. EXCEPTION for juice (see below).
	Plastic	Use for up to 2 years past date on package. Refrigerate after opening. EXCEPTION for juice (see below).
Juice	Jars, cans or juice boxes	Distribute up to 6 months past date on package. Refrigerate after opening.
Mixes (bakery)	Cake, muffin, cookie, pancake	Distribute up to 6 months after date on package. Store in a cool, dry place.
Flour	Wheat, rice, soy	Distribute up to 1 year past date on package. Store in a cool, dry place. Discard if signs of insect infestation appear.
Rice and pasta	Unflavored	Distribute up to 2 years past date on package.
Whole grains	Whole wheat flour, corn meal, oatmeal	Distribute whole wheat products up to 6 months past date; other whole-grains up to 2 years. Store in a cool, dry place.
Salad dressing		Distribute up to 2 years past date on package. Refrigerate after opening. Once opened, use within 2 months.

A guide to refrigerated or frozen products

These are recommendations only. Always inspect products and discard if signs of spoilage appear.

category	product(s)	storage and usage guidelines
Butter and margarine		Refrigerate or freeze. If kept cold, may be edible for up to 3 months after product date.
Cheese	Soft (cottage, string, feta, cheese spread)	Distribute up to 1 week past date; use within 3 days. Keep refrigerated.
	Cream cheese (spread)	Distribute up to 2 weeks past date; use within 7 days. Refrigerate. Discard if moldy.
	Hard (Cheddar, parmesan)	Good almost indefinitely. Keep refrigerated. Discard if moldy.
	Medium (muenster, brick, mozzarella)	If kept cold, can be distributed for many months past the date. Keep refrigerated. Discard if moldy.
Eggs	Washed, from a licensed processor, dated	Distribute up to 3-5 weeks past date on carton; use within 2 weeks. Keep refrigerated.
Milk	Fluid milk	Keep refrigerated. Can be safely consumed up to 5 days past product date.
	Canned or boxed milk	Store unopened up to 1 year past date on package. Refrigerate once opened. Use within 7 days.
Soft desserts	Puddings, cheese cake	Distribute up to 1 week past date; use within 3 days. Keep refrigerated.
Yogurt & sour cream	Yogurt, smoothies, sour cream	Distribute up to 14 days past the date on the container; use within 7 days. Keep refrigerated.
Casseroles		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days, or freeze. Reheat thoroughly.
Salads, prepared	Egg, tuna, chicken	Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3-5 days.
Sandwiches		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days.
Soups & stews		Keep refrigerated. Use/distribute within 3 days, or freeze. Reheat thoroughly.
Poultry (chicken, turkey)	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Ground meat	Beef, chicken, turkey, pork, lamb	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Once cooked, use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Meat (beef, pork, lamb)	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 3-5 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use within 5 days. Keep cold.
Ham	"Cook before eating"	Cook or freeze within 7 days. Once cooked, use within 2 weeks.
	Canned (marked "keep refrigerated")	Store for up to 9 months in the refrigerator. Once cooked, use within 2 weeks.
Lunch meat	Deli sliced	Use within 2 days or freeze. Keep refrigerated.
	Pre-packaged (includes bacon and hot dogs)	Distribute up to 2 weeks past 'Sell By' date. Once opened, use or freeze within 2 days. Bacon must be thoroughly cooked before eating.
Sausage	Fresh (uncooked)	Cook or freeze within 2 days. Keep cold.
	Cooked	Use or freeze within 2 days of opening.
	Hard/dry (summer sausage)	Shelf stable. Store for 3 months on pantry shelf.

* Discard cans with deep dents, or that are bulging, leaking or with heavy rust (pitting). Deep dents have sharp edges and are large enough to rest a finger in the dent.

"Sell by": Quality date found on eggs, milk and lunch meat. Distribute by this date, with time still left for storage and use at home.

"Use by or best by": Quality date found on canned food and cereal. Except for baby food, product may be safely used and distributed well past this date.

"Use by or best by": Quality date found on canned food and cereal. Except for baby food, product may be safely used and distributed well past this date.

"Expiration date": Quality date on infant formula and vitamins. Do not distribute infant formula or vitamins past date.



Safe & Healthy: Safe Handling of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be a real treat for your family, make excellent after-school snacks, and add color and variety to the diet. Follow these tips to keep fresh fruits and vegetables safe to eat.

- **Grow fruits and vegetables using safe gardening practices.** If you have a garden, be sure to take care when growing fruits and vegetables, since they are often eaten raw. Keep dogs and cats away from growing produce, and use only composted manure for fertilizer.
- **Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables** before eating, chopping, peeling, or cooking with clean, running water. Harmful bacteria have been found on fruits and vegetables growing on farms. Don't use soap. Use a colander to rinse delicate berries. It's best not to rinse fresh produce until just before eating or preparing. Rinsed produce decays more quickly in the refrigerator.



- **Store fresh fruits and vegetables for maximum enjoyment.**
 - **Apples, peaches, pears, oranges, grapes.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Bananas.** Store on the counter for best flavor and quality.
 - **Berries.** Keep refrigerated. Berries are very perishable (and so delicious!).
 - **Green beans, green peas.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Lettuce, spinach and other leafy greens.** These items are highly perishable and must be kept in the refrigerator to ensure a safe and healthy meal.
 - **Corn-on-the-cob.** Store in the refrigerator, it loses quality rapidly.

- **Tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, summer squash.** Store in a cool location on the counter (away from direct sunlight), moving them to the refrigerator if they begin to soften or if they are chopped or sliced.
- **Herbs.** Once cut, herbs such as parsley and cilantro are very perishable and should be kept refrigerated.
- **Sweet potatoes.** Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry location. Refrigerate only after cooking.
- **White potatoes.** Store in a cool, dry location. White potatoes may be refrigerated to help prevent sprouting (spoilage).
- **Winter squash.** Store hard winter squash such as butternut or acorn squash in a cool, dry location. Winter squash may retain quality for 4 to 6 months after harvest.
- **Refrigerate all cut or prepared fruits and vegetables.** Whether you cut or peel fruits and vegetables at home, or you receive them ready-to-eat, be sure to refrigerate once it is cut or peeled. Use a reusable ice pack if you pack cut carrots or apple slices in school lunches. (Yum!) The cold temperature will keep cut produce safe and prevent spoilage.



- **Choose fruit or vegetable juices that are pasteurized.** Fruit or vegetable juices can be an easy way to add nutrients to your diet. Consume only pasteurized juices. The package will tell you the juice is pasteurized. Pasteurization destroys harmful bacteria that might be present. Juice in the refrigerator at the grocery or food pantry should be kept refrigerated. Juice from the shelf should be refrigerated after opening.



Tools to Support You

Develop Your
Action Plan



Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Self-Assessment

TOOL 1c



Use this self-assessment to identify current practices and policies that support a safe & healthy food pantry environment. The results of this self-assessment can guide the development of your action plan. Involve key staff members or volunteers that may assist in providing accurate responses to questions.

Give your pantry a healthy boost

Overarching goal: Provide healthier food choices to pantry clients.

Strategy	In place		
	Yes	To some extent	No
Stock a healthy food pantry			
Adopt, post, and communicate a nutrition policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educate your donors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Find fresh produce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage healthy choices at the food pantry			
Be flexible with choice selections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer incentives to encourage healthier choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a shopping list	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make healthy choices more visible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide options for special diets and food preferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition education for food pantry clients			
Provide nutrition education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prompt healthy choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support clients while shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer recipes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Promote food safety in your food pantry

Overarching goal: Provide safe food to pantry clients.

Strategy	In place		
	Yes	To some extent	No
Put safe food on the shelf			
Adopt, post, and communicate a food safety policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educate your donors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accept foods that are safe to eat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accept safe produce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport, handle, and store food properly			
Keep hot foods hot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep cold foods cold	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handle and store food safely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When in doubt, throw it out			
Discard unsafe food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support clients in handling food safely			
Educate clients about food safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Sources of Food Pantry Foods Self-Assessment

Use this self-assessment to estimate the relative percentage of food received from each of these sources to better understand points of leverage for improving the safety and nutritional quality of the foods you offer.

Estimate the percentage of food available at the food pantry coming from each of these sources. Reflect upon the level of control you feel you have to influence the types of food you receive from each of these sources.

Source	Percent (%) of total food inventory	Level of control		
		No control	Some control	A lot of control
TEFAP (USDA commodities)				
Food drives				
Food banks				
Commercial donors				
Other sources: (specify)				
Total	100%			

For the sources where you feel you have some or a lot of control, why do you think that is? What strategies might you use to influence what is received from these sources?

For the sources where you feel you have little or no control, why do you think that is? What would you need to do to feel you have more influence on what is received from these sources? What strategies might support you in doing this?

Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Action Plan

TOOL 3c



This template is designed to assist you in developing an action plan to implement food pantry strategies to support a safe and healthy food pantry. Use your self-assessment and other assessment results to guide your action plan, prioritizing areas that need improvement. Consider which strategies are timely, realistic, and achievable for your pantry when developing your action plan.

Action plan definitions

Action areas: What broad action areas does your food pantry want to address? Examples: procure/purchase safe and nutritious food, distribute safe/nutritious food, and support clients in safe/nutritious food decisions. These broad action areas are outlined in the self-assessment and Strategies section.

Overarching goal: Provide healthier food choices to pantry clients

Strategy to implement: What strategies does your pantry want to implement to address the identified action areas? Examples: adopt, post, and communicate a nutrition/food safety policy, educate your donors, secure fresh/safe produce, etc. These strategies are outlined in the self-assessment and Strategies section.

Tasks: What steps you will take to implement your identified strategy?

Person(s) responsible: Which individual(s) will take responsibility for implementing tasks to complete your identified strategy(ies)?

Resources needed: What resources do you currently have or will need to help you complete your strategy?

Measurement: How will you know if you have been successful at making progress towards implementation of your strategy?

Timeline: When will the task(s) be completed?

Action area	Strategy to implement	Tasks	Person(s) responsible	Resources needed	Measurement	Timeline

Overarching goal: provide safe food to pantry clients

Action area	Strategy to implement	Tasks	Person(s) responsible	Resources needed	Measurement	Timeline