



Winter COVID-19 Considerations For Food Pantries and Distribution Sites



Food pantry and mobile distribution managers should continually assess how to modify their food distributions (e.g., delivering to clients or using onsite pick-up) based on current levels of COVID-19 in each community they serve.

Below are specific tips to consider implementing where possible:

FOOD PANTRY - ONSITE DISTRIBUTION

- If possible, distribute food outdoors.
- If resources are available, consider having hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and disposable masks for clients to use upon entering.
- Consider ways to schedule client times to prevent crowds and limit the number of people onsite. Check out these free scheduling options. Setmore, google forms, SimplyBook and Calendly.
- Modify the layout, as needed, to facilitate social distancing between staff, volunteers, and clients (maintain at least 6 ft between people).
- Consider providing a drive-through model in which clients can receive a box of food placed directly in their vehicle by staff or volunteers.

FOOD PANTRY - CHOICE PANTRIES

Choice pantries are distribution sites that are set up like a grocery store where clients can choose their food while accompanied by a volunteer.

These are considered the best model for food pantries from a nutritional standpoint, but special considerations should be made for COVID-19, and pantries should operate in accordance with local public health policies.

- Use the same operational considerations (scheduling staggered shifts, mask protocols, setting up outside, etc.) as onsite distribution.
- Because choice pantries are similar in design to grocery stores, managers, staff, and volunteers should consider similar safety measures that are used at your local grocery store
 - Configure partitions with a pass-through opening at the bottom of the barrier if you have an area where the length of time and proximity to clients exceeds a brief interaction.
 - Use signage throughout the pantry at entrances, in restrooms, and in waiting rooms to remind employees and clients to maintain distances of 6 feet from others.
 - Place visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to customers where they should stand during shopping and checking out.
 - Shift stocking activities to off-peak or after hours when possible to reduce contact with clients.
 - Remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in common areas to support social distancing practices.

MOBILE DISTRIBUTION

- Outdoor distribution models remain the safest and most efficient method to serve those in need.
- Educate volunteers that even though they have limited exposure to the clients that they will have increased time around other volunteers.
- During colder months people instinctively move closer together for warmth and to lessen the effects of wind or precipitation. Remind volunteers to give each other space and to limit the amount of time that they are around other volunteers.
- If you have restrooms make sure cleaning and sanitation of the facilities will be taken care of.
- Promote layers of clothing and proper shoes that will keep feet dry and warm.



VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYEE SAFETY

- Train staff and volunteers on new procedures. If possible, conduct training virtually so all can attend without gathering together.
- Require staff and volunteers to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before, frequently during, and after shifts. Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water aren't available.
- Provide staff and volunteers disposable gloves since they may be exchanging or handling products from other people, unclean produce, or sharp edges on product packages.
 - Remind staff and volunteers to avoid touching their face while wearing gloves and to wash their hands before putting gloves on and after taking them off.
- Require staff and volunteers to wear masks, unless they have trouble breathing or are otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance.
- Limit the number of staff, volunteers, and clients at assigned times so that at least 6 feet of distance can be maintained between people.

MANAGING A SAFE AND CLEAN PANTRY

- Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and good hand hygiene at the entrance to the pantry and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Conduct frequent cleaning of employee break rooms, rest areas, and other common areas.
- Frequently clean grocery carts and baskets.



CLIENT OUTREACH

- Raise awareness about the opportunities for food distribution. Some people who have not needed an assistance before, may need it now because of changes caused by the pandemic.
- Invite existing clients to share information if their needs have changed. Some clients may need additional food supplementation at this time.
- Tell clients about any changes in how, when, or where you are distributing food. Use simple signage and resources in multiple languages and encourage word of mouth and social media outreach, if possible and applicable.
- Consider doing intake over the phone when possible.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the establishments. If the surfaces are visibly dirty, clean them prior to disinfecting. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, diluted household bleach solutions prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and are appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's directions for use.

If you have questions, concerns or would like help building a personalized strategy for your agency, contact us and we can help.

Please contact Harvesters at 816-929-3220 or customer@harvesters.org.