



## **COVID-19 Food Pantry Recommendations**

How are partner charities planning to adjust their distributions?

West Ohio Food Bank strongly suggests you begin to plan for adjustments for your distributions. The more you can limit large community interactions and promote social distancing, the better prepared your community will be to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Think about ways you can adjust your transition your pantry to a “No Touch Model” of food distribution. Following are some suggestions/ideas.

### **Employ new models of distribution**

- Host “drive-through” pantries where residents can drive a vehicle through a distribution line. If you are worried about logistics, consult local law enforcement to ensure proper traffic control is available.
- Stage the entire distribution outside if the weather is nice. Community members can still receive food items as they walk-thru.

### **Incorporate social distancing and “no touch” practices into current distribution model**

- Pre-bag or pre-box ALL ITEMS. Second Harvest is securing plastic bags from our retail partners and via purchasing. Bags will be on our shopping list beginning 3/12 at no cost.
- Think of choice models that allow for social distancing. For example, is there a way to implement an order form with curbside pickup or something similar?
- Have volunteers wear gloves and hand food items to community members. This reduces the number of people touching a single item.
- Have community members hold their own ID rather than volunteers handling them.
- Reduce or eliminate large numbers of people standing closely in line by temporarily switching to a number system. Encourage community members to wait in their cars or away from other people until their number is called.
- Post signs discouraging people from lining up long before a distribution begins. BE CONSISTENT. Actively disperse the line if one starts to form.
- Schedule appointments to limit the number of people congregating at a pantry at one time. This may require cell phone or email information.
- Use an automated texting service to send updates to residents and agencies.

### **Ramp up your existing hygiene and cleaning practices**

- Increase the intensity and frequency of your cleaning schedule and use disinfectants on surfaces including door handles, railings, and counters on a DAILY basis. Note: some cleaning solutions are not effective against pathogens associated with COVID-19. Check the resource listed on our website to make sure your cleaning supplies will kill COVID-19.
- Clean all of your technology that is used in your pantry with a warm, damp & soapy towel. This includes laptops/screens used for registration!

### **When in doubt, don't turn anyone away!**

In addition to logistical changes needed to decrease the risk of transferring pathogens, we also must think about how the virus impacts our neighbors who are unable to work due to illness or self-quarantine.

- Err on the side of distributing more food than less – this is not the time to “save” food for later or keep a large inventory.
- Consider doubling the amount of food you normally distribute, if possible. This limits the number of times families must be out to pick up groceries.
- If you get a request to provide 14 days of food for someone who is self-quarantined, please do your best to accommodate. At a minimum, provide your regular service and refer the person to an additional pantry site in order to obtain food needed for the full 14day period.
- If a proxy shows up to take food to someone who is ill or self-quarantined, do not turn them away.
- If someone outside of your service area comes for food, do not turn them away.
- If someone is lacking photo ID and/or proof of address, do not turn them away. Rather, make a note to see that information next time.

### **How can partner charities mitigate risk to aging volunteers?**

Your older volunteers may not want to take the risk to come to distributions. This is a personal choice that should be respected; however, we understand how this may impact your distribution. Contact West Ohio Food Bank immediately if you have any anticipated changes to your regular schedule (i.e., change in day/time of event or cancellation).

The best preventative measure for aging volunteers is to require excellent personal hygiene, especially handwashing. These are the groups who are at the highest risk:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

- All volunteers should wash their hands frequently – before, during, and after distributions. • Require sick volunteers to stay home.
- Follow the “No Touch Model” as much as possible.