Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin

School Pantry Program Toolkit

Mission

The mission of school pantries is to help solve child hunger by providing nutritious food to children and their families in convenient, familiar, and safe locations.

Many students are forced to deal with the anxiety that accompanies living without day-to-day necessities, often making school the least of their worries. School pantries give students the resources they need to learn and grow at home, allowing them to devote their energy and attention toward succeeding in school.

School pantries make staple grocery items available to students and their household family members at no cost. They are easy to operate, but have a big impact. The pantry itself requires minimal storage space; many schools find there is a suitable location for a pantry within their walls.

School Pantry Elements

Beginning a Program

- First determine whether or not a pantry program is the **correct approach** for addressing hunger in your community. Should you send a survey to families? Are there other programs meeting the same need you can collaborate with? Beginning a program is a large undertaking.
- Seek **approval** from the school principal and the school district administration.
- Identify **funders** and/or methods for raising funds and collecting food.
- Identify a **community partner** that is a church or non-profit organization if you plan to partner with and receive food from Second Harvest Foodbank.
- Determine the **location** of the pantry.
- Determine the **coordination team** and begin recruitment of **volunteers**.
- Determine the **method of distribution** that will work best for students and their families.
- Determine **days and hours** of distributions.
- Acquire **necessary equipment**, such as shelving, a refrigerator, and a freezer.
- Develop an **outreach** plan to inform families of the resource.
- Develop a plan for **keeping records**.
- Develop a plan for **program evaluation**.
- Acquire food and **stock pantry shelves**.

Partnerships

The school may choose to partner with a community organization in order to receive food from Second Harvest Foodbank, utilize additional volunteers, manage donations, etc. For example, responsibilities may be divided as follows:

Community Partner's Responsibilities

- **Coordination Team:** The team may consist of a pantry operations coordinator, a volunteer coordinator, an outreach and communications coordinator, and a fundraising coordinator. There should be a plan to back up each position.
- **Volunteers:** Ensure there are enough volunteers to sort food and stock shelves. Volunteers are also needed on distribution days to gather and maintain client information, set up the pantry, distribute food, and clean up.
- **Materials:** Ensure necessary materials and equipment are available, including tables, chairs, boxes, bags, pens, signs, carts, etc.
- *A community partner must agree to be financially, programmatically, and operationally responsible for the school pantry if you become a member of Second Harvest.*

School's Responsibilities

- **Space:** Locate a space for the pantry and storage. The space should be large enough for shelving and refrigeration, is temperature controlled, and can be locked.
- **Verification:** Ensure timely verification that a family who has registered to use the pantry has a child enrolled in the school (if this will be a requirement of the pantry.)
- **Communications:** Implement advertising/outreach strategies using school district resources in coordination with the Community Partner.

Benefits of Partnering with Second Harvest

Second Harvest Foodbank exists to end hunger in southwestern Wisconsin. As a partner, we agree to put forth our best effort to provide excellent customer service, as well as provide:

Agency access to more *food*:
Foodbank member agencies have **access to hundreds of food and non-food items** that comprise our four main food programs (Donated, Purchased, Field to Foodbank, Subsidized).
- **Donated:** Highly perishable items, such as fresh produce, milk, bakery, and baby food are available at **NO cost**, whereas less perishable items are available for a **Shared Maintenance Fee** of $0.18/lb or less. This fee offsets a small portion of the acquisition, storage and distribution costs of donated food, not for the food.
- **Purchased:** Items purchased by the Foodbank that are typically offered to agencies for less-than-retail prices.
- **Field to Foodbank:** In partnership with agricultural producers and the University of Wisconsin, **fresh produce** is available to agencies at **NO cost** and **canned produce** is available to agencies for the **Shared Maintenance Fee** of $0.18/pound. This fee offsets a small portion of the additional costs incurred for the product to be picked, transported, cleaned, cut, canned, labeled, and stored.
- **Subsidized:** Products purchased by the Foodbank are offered to agencies for a small fraction of the actual cost.

Agency access to more *services:*

- **Delivery Option:** Your order can arrive at your door for a low flat rate, per delivery
- **Online Ordering:** Place orders for food online, using our 24/7 online ordering system, AgencyExpress
- **Credits:** Receive credits to shop at Second Harvest through a variety of fundraising initiatives coordinated by Second Harvest throughout the year

- **Special Donations:** Receive special donations of food or credits from donors who wish to contribute only to Second Harvest partners, and want their donations to remain local
- **Support:** A Second Harvest team member from your area is assigned to your agency for added support
- **Advisory Services:** At your request, we can offer guidance with regard to capacity building, space evaluation, volunteer recruitment, outreach efforts, connection with other community partnerships and resources, and more

Agency access to more *resources:*

- Timely information on product recalls
- Partner Agency Conference, workshops, peer-to-peer mentoring mini-seminars
- ServSafe (Safe Food Handling) training
- Training and onsite application assistance for federal food assistance programs, such as FoodShare (also known as SNAP, the QUEST Card or Food Stamps)
- Information regarding regional or nationwide grant opportunities
- Tips on fundraising and communications from our team of professionals that you can put to use for your own agency

Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin seeks to help our member agencies be as successful and effective as possible, with regard to providing access to food to our neighbors in need. What follows is a set of requirements related to maintaining agency eligibility, organized operations, fair distribution practices, and food safety standards, to best serve those who need our help.

Outreach

Any student in your school could need the pantry at any time. Many pantries are seeing clients come through the doors who have never been in a pantry line before, so it is important to never make assumptions about the needs of a family.

Outreach can be done through **numerous avenues**. Schools could use radio, websites, social media, automated calls, newsletters, emails, fliers, or letters to **notify families about the pantry**. It may be beneficial to include a registration form with a flier so families can fill out and return the form quickly. Be sure to point out that the school pantry is not open to the general public if you plan to serve only families with children enrolled in the school or school district.

Remember to **reach out to families often**. School registration is a great time to inform families about the pantry and hand out registration forms. In addition, consider doing outreach at parent-teacher conferences and other after-school events. Fliers could also be handed out to current clients so they can share them with other families they know.

If your area has a larger population of people whose **primary language is not English**, have fliers translated into their native language and seek out bilingual members of the community to help inform them of the pantry.

On all promotional pieces, be sure to encourage people to bring their own boxes, bags, or wheeled carts to carry the food they will receive. You can also share that assistance will be provided to those who need help carrying food.

Identifying Students in Need

The information below explores the different signs and symptoms of food insecurity, which may help your teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, or school nurses refer families to the pantry.

According to the American Institute of Nutrition:
Food insecurity is the "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways."

How do I know if a student is using the pantry who does not really need it?
This is one of the most common questions that food banks and food pantries receive. People are concerned that limited resources are being used inappropriately. Again, it is important to not make assumptions because it is impossible to know all the details of a family's economic situation.

What if a family needs more help?
If a student or his or her family is in need of more food or other assistance, use 2-1-1 Information and Referral Service. In the state of Wisconsin, residents may call 2-1-1 from any land line or cell phone to inquire about resources and assistance. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

2-1-1 Information and Referral Service

2-1-1 is a free service that connects people in need with resources and assistance. Simply by dialing 2-1-1 anywhere in our state, people are linked to information about local resources available from both government and nonprofit organizations. School pantries should register with the 2-1-1 agency that covers their service area in Wisconsin.

Volunteer Services

It is up to the school or community partner to recruit and train its volunteers. It is important to remember that not every person is right for every volunteer job and you may discover this through trial and error. The point is: do not be afraid to move people around to play to their strengths. You are not always going to get it right the first time. **All volunteers should be welcoming to clients**. Requesting food assistance is often very difficult for families. You can make it easier for them by offering a kind word and a smile.

Staff and volunteers with direct, repetitive contact with children should pass a **National Background Check**. It also bears mentioning that if any volunteers exhibit underlying health conditions (coughing, sneezing, runny nose, etc.), **send them home!** They cannot be permitted to handle/distribute food or be near clients.

Below is an example of a four person **coordination team**. We also recommend that each of these strong leads has a back-up for when they are unable to be there.

1. **Pantry Operations Coordinator –** Responsible for the **overall coordination** of the school pantry. Ensure equipment is purchased and in place, order food, maintain data and records, oversee distribution, supervise team, coordinate logistics, maintain current food safety certification, and complete any reporting requirements.

2. **Volunteer Coordinator –** Regular recruitment of volunteers, coordinate volunteer shifts, send reminders, and assign volunteer jobs.

3. **Outreach and Communications Coordinator –** Advertise and promote the pantry, create and distribute fliers, distribute registration forms, maintain social media promotion, etc.

4. **Fundraising Coordinator –** Seek equipment and monetary donations for program start-up and sustainability, coordinate donations, and maintain records of donations (pounds for food and dollar amount for funds).

Volunteer Team

A small, committed volunteer base can make a huge difference. If you are in need of volunteers, a local church or service club can help. Often, other school officials or teachers are eager to assist. Some pantries may let students in detention or honor groups help unload deliveries or restock the pantry. Assisting with a pantry operation can be a productive and rewarding experience for youth.

Additional ideas on how to **recruit and manage volunteers** include: making public announcements, seek volunteers with specific skills, write job descriptions, provide flexible hours and offer short-term opportunities, get current volunteers to enlist friends and family, contact local colleges, and ask to be added to a local volunteer center list.

As a guideline, keep your more outgoing people in positions where they have the most **interaction with clients** – because they will enjoy it more. You want your clients to feel welcome and cared about – and your outgoing team members will help to achieve that. These positions would include registration and sign-in, assisting clients through the pantry, and helping clients from or to their cars.

That said there is plenty of work to be done by your team members who prefer to **focus on a task** versus engaging more with clients. These are likely your go-to talents for help with set-up, clean-up, unloading the truck, tabulating the data gathered at client registration, assisting with directing traffic in the parking areas, assisting with the creation of fliers or other forms of advertising, helping to organize the volunteer database, etc.

Clients Accessing Product Who Also Provide Volunteer Services

If this practice will be permitted, consideration should be given to the follow guidelines:

    a) The distribution of products should be handled in exactly the same manner for all other eligible individuals.

    b) Individuals receiving donated product through this distribution mechanism should not be required to provide volunteer assistance in exchange for donated product.

    c) Individuals should not be given donated product as a "thank you" for their service.

    d) Volunteers are should not be allowed to "cherry pick" product.

Background Checks

Programs should conduct **National Background Checks** on staff and volunteers with direct repetitive contact with children, and ensure they pass. Perform and verify the following background checks as a minimum: Social Security History to assure proper identification, National Sexual Offender search, and Criminal History record search.

Food Safety Certification

At least one representative should complete food safety training each year. ServSafe® Manager or Food Handler trainings are recommended options to learn food safety practices. Visit www.servsafe.com for more information. Second Harvest hosts a ServSafe training annually for member agencies.

Client Confidentiality

The work that you do to serve people in your community who are struggling to make ends meet is of a sensitive nature. People are seeking your help at a **particularly vulnerable time in their lives**. It is imperative that you maintain strict codes of **confidentiality**, informing staff and volunteers to not disclose whom they have seen or served at your program.

Client intake forms must be kept in a **secure location**, where only approved staff/volunteers can access them. Specific and identifying **information about clients should never be shared** across separate agencies.

Pest Control

A school pantry should maintain a current contract for **professional pest control inspection services** wherever food and non-food products are stored, reflecting treatment as needed.

Pantry Safety

Pantries should be in a room within the school that is:

Secure: Food is to be stored in a secure location with limited access. This helps prevent theft, tampering, or other loss of product.

Fully Equipped: The pantry should contain, at the very least, proper shelving for dry storage, a refrigerator, a freezer, and storage containers (such as boxes or bags) for clients that will be explicitly used for the pantry. Additional useful equipment could include dollies, carts, and tables in order to move and sort food.

Clean: The storage area should be clean. Make sure the storage space is included in your school's regular cleaning schedule. Floors and shelves should be cleaned regularly in a manner that does not contaminate the food.

Dry: Food must be kept away from any steam, hot water pipes, or other heat sources to prevent mold and other damage to the food. Also, food should be kept 6 inches off the ground, 4 inches away from the wall, and 18 inches from the ceiling to allow for proper air flow.

Temperature Compliant: Keep accurate thermometers in the door of each freezer or refrigeration unit and dry storage area and check them daily to ensure that temperatures are always in the approved ranges. Keep temperature logs on file to document that food is always stored at the proper temperatures: refrigerator temperatures should be below 40°F and freezer temperatures should be at or below 0°F.

Pest-free: Food must be stored at least 6 inches off the ground for pest control purposes. In addition, you should make sure the pest control service that monitors your kitchen area also monitors the pantry area.

Chemical-free: Cleaning products should be stored away from food entirely.

Program Evaluation

Programs should conduct evaluation for their school pantries to find out if they are reaching their mission. Evaluation can be as simple as administering a survey at the beginning of your program and at the end of the school year to compare food security levels, attitudes towards certain foods, and information about students' attendance and behavior. It may also be helpful to survey school staff to find out their thoughts and reaction to the pantry. Evaluation can also help you find out what you may need to change in the future.

Distribution

Clients

Generally, a school pantry at an elementary school is **designed to serve families**, where a parent or guardian is responsible for picking up food from the pantry. However, a pantry may establish an age minimum for students to shop when it is evident that children are mostly responsible for providing for the family.
A different model may be used for middle or high school students that are able to shop for themselves or their families.

If you will only allow families with children enrolled in the school to shop at the pantry, ask politely about a client's connection to the school. If a client admits that he or she does not live in the same household as a student, **allow him or her to only shop once** and provide information about other services in the community. You can also verify student enrollment with the school through information provided on the registration rom.

Families should have an **area where they can wait** after they have signed in. It should be organized so that people can easily be directed to the pantry area. Families may be given numbers so they can **keep their place in line** after signing in; a volunteer would then call their number when it is their turn to be served.

Hours

We recommend that **distributions occur at least weekly** and at times most convenient for your families. We encourage school pantries to allow families to receive food as often as needed.

Maintaining consistent distribution dates and hours from month to month will make it easier for families to know when to shop. Also, you may reach the most families in need by staying open beyond typical working hours. Families are very busy and will need flexibility from the pantry. Having weekly distributions and allowing families to shop as often as needed will help families budget their time and finances throughout the month.

Frequently, **families will show up early** for a pantry. For some, it is because they fear they might not get food if they are not in line early, and for others it is their opportunity to socialize. Depending on where the pantry site is located, you may have to consider how to discourage people from arriving too early.

School pantry distributions often occur after school so as not to interfere with classes, but early birds could create challenges for buses and parents seeking to pick up their children. Families attempting to park at the school may also be a concern. Consider how you might address these realities, depending on where your pantry is located and the time that it is scheduled to provide service.

Registration Form

Having families fill out registration forms may be useful for reporting or evaluation purposes, or in case there is a food recall. Forms can be sent and filled out before the pantry launches, throughout the school year (at the office, for example), or during a distribution.

Keeping electronic records is a great way to stay organized, keep client information confidential, and gather data for funders and evaluation.

Client Choice Model

This model is built on the idea of allowing families to choose their own food. Many choice pantries resemble small grocery stores, with products arrayed on shelves and in coolers/freezers, from which clients can fill boxes or bags. This model reduces waste since families can choose what they will eat, aligns with the changing products available from donations, and allows for client dignity. It also helps the pantry stretch its inventory further because families are only taking food they like and will eat.

Setting up a pantry with a choice model is easy! One model is to simply have families shop for whatever items they need – this allows for the most flexibility and least amount of waste. There are also other models with a lot of flexibility, so you can implement a system that works for your school.

Example 1: Product Categorization

a. Product is categorized and a laminated sign is created for each category (cheese, pasta, meat, etc.)
b. Each card has different colored boxes. These colors coordinate with a colored card the family receives based on its size.
c. In each colored box a number is written for the maximum number of items a family can select from that category of food.
d. For example, a family of 1-2 is orange. The category card labeled "Pasta" has a "1" written in the orange box, indicating that the family is able to select one pasta choice.

Example 2: Points System

a. Each type of item in the pantry could be designated a certain point value, e.g. canned fruit = 1 point, meat = 2 points. Each area in the pantry usually has a maximum number of points that can be used, e.g. dry items are up to 10 points, dairy items are up to 5 points.
b. Signs should be placed on shelves to denote the value of each item.
c. Families are assigned points based on the number of household members they report at sign-in. For example, households of 0-4 could receive 15 points, and households of 5+ could receive 20 points. Please post a sign that has the household breakdown information on it.

Example 3: Menu-based System

a. Create a menu or shopping list of the items that are available for distribution.
b. Students or families can check off the items that they need and return the form, and a pantry volunteer can fill the order.
c. A points system, similar to above, could be used, or the list could include the maximum number of items one could choose from a category based on their household size. For example, a family with 5 people could pick up to 4 cans of vegetables, up to 2 jars of spaghetti sauce, and up to 3 packages of meat.
d. This method is well-suited to pantries with limited shopping space.

Pantry Lay-out

Consider how the arrangement of shelving and refrigeration can **maximize distribution efficiency**. If your pantry is large enough, establish a circular rotation that will allow clients to enter, shop, and exit as smoothly as possible. If your pantry is smaller, consider a "farmers' market" distribution where some or most of the pantry items are laid out on tables in a separate space, such as a gym, during distribution hours.

Generally, you should follow these guidelines in setting up your pantry:

- All food should be on shelves or tables, not on the floor. Any perishable products that may spoil need to be stored in a cooler or freezer.

- Heavier items should be placed on lower shelves and lighter items on higher shelves, in case something falls.
- The pantry should flow easily, with a set route for people to enter and exit the area.
- Offer fresh produce along with healthier choices first, such as low-fat dairy and lean proteins. Families should fill their bags with these items before choosing snacks or less healthy options.
- Prevent cross-contamination by keeping meat separate from produce.

Foods to Encourage

Each distribution should include a variety of healthy food options for families. Healthy choices are often cost-prohibitive to pantry clients, but they are essential for child development.

Be generous with items such as produce and dairy. These are **healthy options for clients that they need and want.** In addition, recipe cards or nutrition education materials can help clients take confidence in choosing healthier options when they are shopping from the pantry.

Obesity is a major public health problem in the U.S. Low-income and food insecure people are especially vulnerable due to the additional risk factors associated with poverty, including limited resources, limited access to healthy and affordable foods, and limited opportunities for physical activity. In addition, households with limited resources to buy enough food often try to stretch their food budgets by purchasing cheap, energy-dense foods that are filling – meaning that they try to maximize their calories per dollar in order to stave off hunger (Food Research and Action Center, 2014). School pantries can help balance children's diets among the meals they have at home with the healthy and nutritious meals they have at school.

Examples of food items that school pantries may <u>not</u> want to offer include:
- Cookies, cakes, doughnuts
- Some snacks (snack cakes, potato chips)
- Candy
- Frozen treats and ice cream
- Sugary/high calorie drinks (soda, Kool-Aid)

Recommended foods to offer at a school pantry include:

Fruits and Vegetables

- Fresh with nothing added
- 100% Fruit or Vegetable Juice
- Canned, Dried or Frozen with no partially hydrogenated oils that meet the criteria below:
  - **Sodium**: ≤230mg
  - **Total Sugar**: Fruit in lite syrup or 100% Juice or ≤12g
  - **Sat Fat**: ≤ 2g
  - **Trans Fat**: 0g

Grains

- 100% whole grain (Rolled Oats, Barley, Wild Rice)
- Bread & Pasta with "whole grain" listed as the first ingredient & with:
- >10% DVor ≥2.5g fiber
- Cereal with "whole grain" listed as the first ingredient & >3g of dietary fiber
- Bread, Pasta & Cereal that meet the criteria below:
  - **Sodium:** ≤230mg
  - **Total Sugar:** Bread/Pasta ≤ 0g Cereal ≤ 12g
  - **Sat Fat:** ≤ 2g
  - **Trans Fat:** 0g

Protein

- Eggs
- Nuts, Seeds, Beans and Lentils with nothing added
- Beans, Meat, Poultry and Seafood that meet criteria below:
  - **Sodium** ≤ 480mg
  - **Sat Fat**: ≤2g
  - **Trans Fat**: 0g
- Nuts/Seeds responding spreads that meet the criteria below:
  - **Sodium:** ≤230mg
  - **Total Sugar:** <4g per 2T/1oz
  - **Trans Fat**: 0g

Dairy

- Unflavored/Unsweetened low-fat (1%), or skim/non-fat milk or yogurt
- Flavored skim/non-fat milk or yogurt
- Unsweetened milk substitutes (e.g. Soy)
- Cheese that meets the criteria below:
  - **Sodium**: ≤ 480mg
  - **Sat Fat**: ≤3g | **Trans Fat**: 0g
- Flavored milk, milk substitutes, and yogurt, that meets the criteria below:
  - **Sodium:** ≤480mg
  - **Total Sugar:** ≤ 22g(milk) ≤ 30g(yogurt)
  - **Saturated Fat:** ≤ 3g
  - **Trans Fat**: 0g

Leftover Food

Store any shelf-stable items for the next distribution. Discard any produce or other perishable foods when it is no longer good to distribute. **Donated food should not be used for any purpose besides the school pantry, including staff meetings, bake sales, volunteer appreciation, etc.**

Non-Food Items

Personal hygiene, cleaning, and miscellaneous non-food products can be offered at a school pantry. Many families often need these products as well as food. Food as well as personal hygiene and cleaning products are often the most flexible part of a family's budget; therefore a family may choose not to purchase those items if they need to pay their rent, electricity, or medical bills instead.

Food Safety Guidelines

We recommend that all school pantries abide by food safety standards found in this section. The following food safety information has been taken from the ServSafe® Food Handler Guide for Food Banking handbook.

Foodborne Illness

The purpose of food safety is to protect the public from foodborne illness.

There are three reasons why school pantries must take food safety seriously:

1. Food traveling through the emergency network passes through many hands. There are numerous potential places for contamination and temperature abuse.

2. The emergency food network encounters some products, usually through salvage and gleaning programs that may be unfit for human consumption (e.g., bulging cans, torn boxes of food).

3. Many people who visit emergency food programs are especially vulnerable to foodborne illness. These people include young children, senior citizens, and people with chronic illnesses.

What you should know about food safety and foodborne illnesses:

- In 2011, the Center for Disease Control estimated that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.
- Harmful bacteria and viruses are the main culprits of foodborne illness.
- Foods with harmful organisms often show no changes in odor, taste, or appearance compared to unaffected foods.
- Pathogens grow fast in temperatures between 41°F and 135°F. This temperature range is called the *Temperature Danger Zone*. Our goal is to keep food out of the temperature danger zone as much as possible.
- Freezing slows down the growth of pathogens in food. Cooking to proper temperatures is the only sure way to kill pathogens.
- Bacteria need moisture, nutrients, warmth, and time to grow. Bacteria can double every half-hour.
- Potentially hazardous foods to be aware of include meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products, baked potatoes, cooked rice, and ready-to-eat foods that will not be cooked before serving.
- Leading causes of foodborne illness are: Improper cooling of food, infected workers, inadequate cooking, and failure to keep hot foods hot.
- Food workers play a vital role in preventing foodborne illness through conscientious food preparation habits and good personal hygiene.

Product Receiving

When food is brought to your school, it is essential that you keep refrigerated and frozen food out of the temperature danger zone as much as possible.

Transfer refrigerated and freezer products to cold storage within **30 minutes** after unloading.

Product Evaluation: Deciding if Food is Fit for Consumption

We encourage school pantries to look over all items before distribution. Fresh produce and bakery are two food items pantries should look through, because they can appear just fine one day, but some items (like berries or artisan breads that have no preservatives) can take a turn by the next day. Also, we recommend that school pantries do not **repackage product** from larger to smaller portions, or from one type of packaging to another to reduce potential contamination.

Below are some guidelines for determining whether or not you should keep a product. Whenever you have trouble making a decision, it is always best to follow the old adage: ***When in doubt, throw it out!***

The first thing you want to do when examining food is to look for any problems in, on, and around the containers: ***contamination*** (spills, leaks, etc.), ***pest infestation*** (gnaw marks, droppings, carcasses),

significant damage (rips, fractures, sharp dents), and *deterioration* (rotten odors, discoloration). If any of these conditions are present, throw the product away.

The following items **should be thrown away** if these conditions are present:

- Infant formulas and infant food **beyond date printed on container.**
- **Unlabeled** ammonia, bleach, and other household chemicals.
- **Leaking** personal care items such as shampoo, hand lotion and liquid soap.
- Aerosol container **missing** the outer lid and/or the inner button, *unless these pieces can be replaced.*
- Cans, jars, bottles, and packages **without the manufacturer's list of ingredients.**
- Food service items in **torn containers** such as paper plates, napkins, cups, plastic silverware, sandwich bags, plastic wrap, foil, etc.
- Personal hygiene items in **broken, punctured or open containers** such as toothpaste, mouthwash, diapers, sanitary napkins, and vitamins.
- Paper products such as tissues and paper towels in **torn containers** and which **have been or may have been exposed to contamination**.
- **Food items that are mixed in boxes with non-food items** that **have been or may have been exposed to contamination** (example: bleach mixed with crackers).

More detailed information for evaluating specific food and non-food items:

Canned Goods

Look over cans carefully. Examine the side and top seams for any damage or bulging. Check for excessive rust or stains.

DISCARD cans under the following circumstances:

- No label/handwritten label
- Bulging end or body
- Pitted rust
- Punctures
- Pull-top lids have dents or fractures
- Moderate to severe dents on side and top seams
- Sharp, deep dents on can body
- Buckled ends

- Label cannot be read
- End of can moves in and out when pressed
- Leaks
- Deep razor cuts or scratches

ACCEPT cans with:
- Rust or stains that can be removed
- Flat, shallow dents on can body

For cans with light stains or rust that can be removed, wash cans with a sponge using warm, soapy water. Dry with a disposable towel.

Glass and Plastic Jars and Bottles (ex. spaghetti sauce, mayonnaise, salad dressing)
There are three parts of jars and bottles that must be examined: the outside body, the lid, and the inside contents.

DISCARD glass and plastic jars and bottles under the following circumstances:

Outside:
- No label or handwritten label
- Leaks (stained label)
- Cracks or chips

Lid:
- Missing, chipped, or cracked lid (*unless there is a clean dry intact foil seal protecting the contents and a replacement lid can be found*)
- Loose, dented, or crooked lid (*unless there is a clean dry intact foil seal protecting the*
- *contents and a replacement lid can be found*)
- Bulging lids or raised buttons
- Lid with pitted rust
- Dirt or stain around and underneath lid

Inside (Hold containers up to light):
- Mold (clumps, string-like growths)
- Discoloration
- Unusual product separation
- Foreign objects in contents

For glass jars and bottles with light stains or rust that is not under the lid and can be removed, wash jars and bottles with a sponge using warm, soapy water. Dry with a disposable towel.

Bagged and Sacked Food (ex. rice, sugar, flour)

Discard bags and sacks with:
- Rips, tears, or holes
- Rodent or insect damage
- Stains, spills, odd smells, or greasy appearance
- Missing or illegible labels

Boxes with an Inner Bag (ex. cereal, crackers, fruit bars)

First look for contamination or water damage on outside box. Then, look at inner bag.

Discard if inner bag is:
- Torn, leaking or contaminated
- Has moldy or foreign objects inside
- Has signs of insects present

If the outside box is soiled or damp, but the inner bag is otherwise fine, remove and repackage the inner bag in a plastic storage bag. Cut out the name of the product and ingredients from the box and insert in the plastic bag.

Boxes without an Inner Bag (ex. pasta, pancake mix, Pringles)

Discard under the following conditions:
- Open package or package that was taped prior to receiving it
- Unglued ends, razor cuts, punctures, tears, or split ends.
- Gnaw marks
- Spills, stains, odd smells, or a greasy appearance
- Boxed juices that are leaking, bulging, or soggy.

Container Dates

Many of the products have calendar dates printed on the package or can. The dates may be expiration dates, sell-by dates, or use-by dates, to name a few. **These dates refer to food quality, not food safety**. They give you an idea on how long the product will retain optimal flavor and texture. As long as the foods have been properly stored and handled, they can be used well beyond the container dates.

The following items may NEVER be held past their container date. THROW THEM AWAY:
- Infant food and formula
- Vitamin supplements

Storage Guidelines

Dry Storage
- Keep storage floor clean of dust build-up, cobwebs, and soil.
- Store all products 6" or more off the floor by means of shelves, pallets, or other platform.
- Maintain space of 4" between wall and food items.
- Maintain space of 18" between ceiling and food items.
- Target storage temperatures between 50°F and 70°F.
- Follow the First In, First Out (FIFO) process. Distribute food with oldest or closest container dates first.
- Rotate stock with every order received, or at least monthly. Avoid stockpiling.
- Keep food and paper products on separate shelves or pallets.
- Store chemicals such as window cleaner, bleach, and floor cleaner, body soap, shampoo, laundry detergent <u>in a room separate from food, where possible</u>. Otherwise, maintain 4-6 feet of space between food and chemicals.
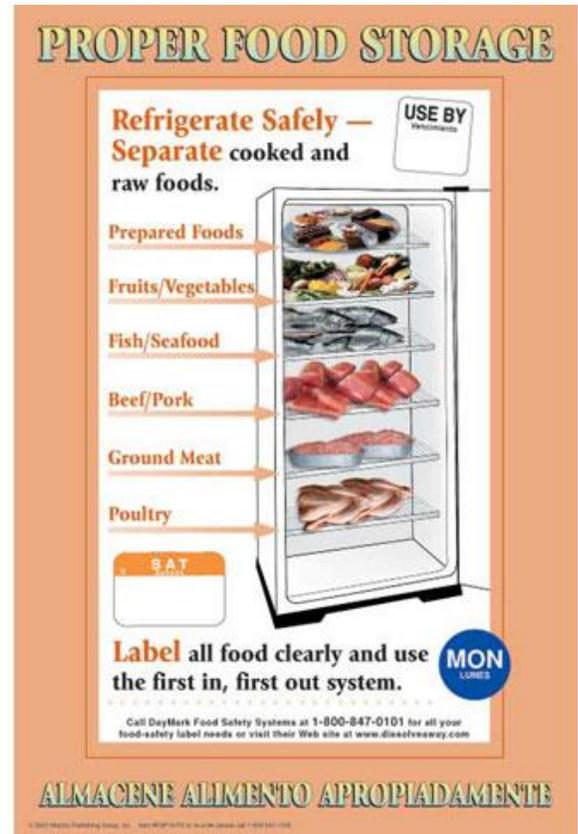
Refrigerator
- Keep refrigerator clean.
- Do not crowd refrigerator with food.
- Make sure door seals are tight.
- Maintain temperatures below 40°F, preferably at 37°F.
- Store raw meat products BELOW produce, ready-to-eat, and prepared foods.
- Equip each refrigerator with an internal thermometer (available from Second Harvest).

- Record temperatures on log sheets as frequently as possible, every day that the program is operating or at least once each week – unless no food is being stored in the unit. In this case, temperatures should be checked prior to storing any food in the unit. This will be shown at the site monitoring visit.
- Keep log of temperatures for a rolling 12 months. Do not toss them out at the end of the month. Check and log temperatures when refrigerator is not being continuously opened and closed.
- Label the receiving date of each item or case of items.
- Follow the First In, First Out (FIFO) process.

Freezer
- Keep freezers free of thick frost. Defrost when necessary.
- Do not crowd freezer with food.
- Make sure door seals are tight.
- Maintain temperatures at or BELOW 0°F.
- Store raw meat products BELOW produce, ready-to-eat, and prepared foods (see photo to right).
- Label the receiving date of each item or case of items.
- Rotate stock at least every 1-2 months, especially frozen animal products (beef, chicken, salmon, turkey, venison).
- Equip each freezer with an internal thermometer.
- Record temperatures on log sheets as frequently as possible at least once each week – unless no food is being stored in the unit. In this case, temperatures should be checked prior to storing any food in the unit.
- Keep log of temperatures for a rolling 12 months. Check and log temperatures when freezer is not being continuously opened and closed.
- If your site's refrigerator or freezer is not keeping foods at acceptable temperatures, try adjusting the setting. If this does not work, it will need to be serviced or replaced.

Food Distribution

When distributing foods, keep refrigerated and frozen foods in storage, and take out packages when requested by clients. If your food pantry needs to have refrigerated and frozen food set on tables for distribution, take out a reasonable amount of product to distribute and replenish when necessary. No refrigerated or freezer items should sit out for more than 30 minutes. Remember, these items will spend some time in transit with the person who brings them home.

Please remember: Items may appear frozen solid, but if left out for too long, the outer part will be warmed and perfect for harmful bacteria to grow.

Good Personal Hygiene

All staff and volunteers who work with food should
- Bathe or shower daily
- Use hair restraints
- Leave jewelry at home
- Wear clean clothes
- Keep fingernails clean and well-trimmed
- Wash hands and forearms frequently

If any volunteer or staff is ill, he or she should not work with food. Furthermore, any person who has an infected cut or boil on hands or fingers should avoid working with food, when possible. If not possible, gloves or other impermeable wraps can be worn over the wound to protect food.

Hand Washing

Our hands carry a lot of germs. One of the most important activities you can do to prevent food contamination is washing your hands often and correctly.

While handling food, you should wash your hands after:
- Using the toilet
- Handling raw foods
- Touching your body
- Sneezing
- Handling garbage, eating or drinking
- Touching dirty materials and equipment

To wash your hands correctly:
1. Wet hands with clean, warm water (It should be at least 100°F)
2. Apply soap
3. Scrub hands and arms vigorously
4. Rinse hands and arms thoroughly
5. Dry hands with single-use towel

Avoiding Cross-Contamination

Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful microorganisms to already cooked or ready-to-eat foods. The contamination can come from many ways such as:

- Contaminated ingredients are added to food that receives no further cooking.
- Ready-to-eat food touches contaminated surfaces.
- Contaminated food touches or drips fluids onto cooked or ready-to-eat food.
- A food handler touches contaminated food and then touches ready-to-eat food.
- Contaminated cleaning cloths touch food-contact surfaces.

To prevent cross-contamination

- Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods. For example, use different cutting boards for slicing raw chicken and cutting salad ingredients.
- Wash and sanitize all utensils and equipment after preparing raw foods and before preparing cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands and put on clean gloves after handling raw foods or equipment and before handling cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Preventing Temperature Abuse of Foods

Your goal is to keep food out of the temperature danger zone (41°F-135°F) as much as possible. This will prevent growth of harmful bacteria. Families should also remember that thawing, cooking, and cooling food at home requires careful attention.

Additional Resources

Here are some good resources to help guide your choices and educate others:

- The Food Marketing Institute and Cornell University put together the Food Keeper Brochure which provides guidelines for product life.
  http://agencies.2harvest.org/resources/documents/food_keeper_brochure.pdf

- The USDA provides important information about product dating.
  http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating

- UW Extension Food Safety website is packed with info and links to the USDA site, with even more links and tips.
  http://foodsafety.wisc.edu/

- Visit http://www.recalls.gov/list.html to sign up for Food Recall email notification as soon as they are posted.

- Visit the Healthy Food Bank Hub website to learn about recipes, nutrition education, and other tools and resources.
  http://healthyfoodbankhub._feedingamerica.org/tools-and-resources