

COVID-19 Distribution and Intake Recommendations

Our primary responsibility during the pandemic is to support and sustain our vital network and ensure food access for the thousands of clients who depend on our services. As we consider how to maintain our essential services to meet the needs of the people we serve, identifying and implementing “light touch or no-touch distribution” models can help make food distribution safer for both volunteers and clients. Below are some food distribution ideas that limit interaction and how to implement them.

We’re here to help. Please reach out to your Partner Services Coordinator if you change your distribution schedule or need help moving to an alternative distribution model.

Food Distribution Ideas

1. Drive-thru Pantry

Many agencies in our network have organized a drive-thru pantry, which can be implemented with little equipment and volunteer support. Pantries that have moved to drive-thru service have been able to operate with 1/3 of the volunteer capacity!

- **Equipment**

To move your distribution outside, your pantry should have folding tables, large white boards with instructions and directional signs to keep traffic moving. Walkie-talkies can help volunteers communicate while reinforcing social distancing.

* For inclement weather, consider using a canopy tent or overhang. Food can also be stored inside and walked out to each car as it drives up

- **Food**

Pre-bag or box non-perishable foods **before** distribution. Perishable foods like fresh produce can also be pre-packed, but need to be stored accordingly.



This photo highlights new distribution ideas including: a drive-thru model, use of a tent, pre-packed food bags, and a volunteer wearing gloves and keeping 6+ feet distance from others.

Set up packing stations so volunteers can keep proper distance between each other. Provide gloves for volunteers to wear while packing, especially when handling fresh produce.

Consider distributing more food than usual to minimize the number of times clients need to visit the pantry. If your pantry needs more food than you typically order, contact your **Branch Manager** to discuss options.



- **Distribution Logistics**

Determine a safe and effective traffic pattern for clients to follow. Consult local law enforcement to ensure proper traffic control is available. This is also a good time to see if law enforcement may be available to help as volunteers to distribute food.

Gather required client information and distribute food with “low/no touch” methods such as:

- calling clients while they wait in their cars to gather information
- having a volunteer write client name/information instead of sharing pen with client
- having clients (who are able) load food from the ground or a shopping cart into their own car once volunteer is 6+ feet away
- placing food in client’s open trunk. If needed, have client provide keys to volunteer to unlock door/trunk. Volunteer should wear gloves and change them regularly.

Sanitize all points of contact (such as shopping carts, tables, or doors) after each client interaction with disinfecting wipes or a water and bleach solution

- To make a diluted bleach solution, mix 1/3 cup bleach with a gallon of water (or 4 teaspoons bleach with a quart of water)

- **Communicating Changes In Your Services to Clients**

It is important to make your clients aware if you have changes in operating hours or distribution methods. Connect with clients and your community through social media or your organization’s website, have volunteers contact clients via email or phone (this is a great volunteer activity that can be done remotely!), and/or include flyers in food boxes that communicate changes in distribution. Most importantly, notify your **Partner Services Coordinator** at the Food Bank of any changes that you make to your food distribution.

2.) Home Delivery

Some vulnerable clients (those who are 65+ and/or with medical conditions) may no longer be able to or want to visit your pantry in person. To continue to provide food to these clients, some food pantries are organizing delivery to client’s homes. Following social distancing guidelines, pantries are making “door-step” deliveries.

- **Equipment**

For home delivery, you will need a vehicle, and the size will depend on the number of deliveries that will be made during each trip and the size of the boxes. Depending on the size of the food boxes, you may want to consider using moving dollies. We also recommend wearing disposable gloves when delivering the box or sanitizing hands with hand sanitizer between deliveries.



- **Food**

Consider distributing more food than usual to minimize the number of times clients need a delivery. If your pantry needs more food than you typically order, contact your **Branch Manager** to discuss options. When using the door-step delivery, leave non-perishable foods, only. Do not leave any food out in the rain.

- **Distribution Logistics**

Start with developing the delivery routes and determine frequency of delivery. This information will help you decide the number of volunteers needed. This is a great time to contact your local law enforcement and/or fire department—they may be able and willing to help distribute to remote locations.

When possible, call clients to arrange a delivery time that minimizes the amount of time food spends outside. Volunteers can make these calls from home. Upon delivery, knock or ring the doorbell; please make sure to step back after doing so to maintain six feet between you and the client. If there is no response, call clients to confirm that food has been delivered.

Safe Client Intake

- **Provide clients with their Link2Feed ID numbers to simplify future visits**

A few pantries in our network have found that providing clients with their ID numbers makes service provision quicker and easier. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- A printed list of past clients can help speed up this process. See the “Print out list of clients to ease intake” bullet to learn more.
- Using a “price gun” (like grocery stores sometimes use to price products) to create a sticker with the client ID number. This ID sticker can then be placed on the back of a photo ID card.
- Write number on small, blank stickers or address labels and stick to ID
- Write the client ID number on a business card, index card, or sticky note. Ask clients to keep in this in their wallet for easy reference.

- **Encourage new clients to call ahead or register online before first pantry visit**

Pantries who are experiencing high demand and/or long lines of cars are finding success with having new clients call or pre-register prior to visiting the pantry for the first time. This approach completes the Link2Feed intake process over the phone or online, which is safe for all parties and helps to speed up distribution. To do “new client call-ahead”:

- Determine when you will accept calls and which number new clients should call
- Collect the required new client Link2Feed data during the call
 - Head of household name, date of birth, address, names and date of birth of other household members, ethnicity, and phone number
 - Provide new clients with their ID number on the phone to make food pick-up easier



To do new client online registry:

- Put an “application” link on your website to gather new client information prior to their first visit.

Spread the word about new client “call-ahead” or online registry by:

- Pantry website, social media, community groups, and/or signs at your pantry. See Volunteer Recruitment, Delegation, and Management guide for ideas of who can help spread the word.

- **Communicate new distribution and client intake processes on large signs in the parking lot**

New and existing clients want to know how to successfully go through the intake process to receive food. Use white boards or other signs to clearly describe:

- Traffic patterns and safe food pick-up details
- What information clients need to provide during intake
- Future distribution dates/details

- **Utilize “remote” volunteers**

Your regular volunteers may not be able to volunteer in person, but their skills and time can still support the pantry! Consider how volunteers can help from home, including:

- Following up with new clients (who came to the pantry but did not call ahead) by phone to gather additional information needed for Link2Feed.
- If the volunteer has access to Link2Feed, remote volunteers can be available to answer phone calls from new clients who call ahead prior to their first pantry visit.
- Sharing your pantry’s need for volunteers (if volunteers are needed) by:
 - Calling local organizations
 - Spreading the word via email or social media
 - See Volunteer Recruitment, Delegation, and Management guide for ideas
- Performing wellness check calls with clients that have provided their contact information in Link2Feed.

- **Print out list of clients to ease intake process**

BRAFB can provide you with a list of the clients who have visited your pantry in the past 12 months. You can print off this list and use it to check off clients as they receive services. This can simplify and speed up distribution. Then, a pantry volunteer can input this information into Link2Feed after the distribution.

- If using the “new client call ahead” method, consider printing off both the current client list (from BRAFB) and the new client list (collected by pantry staff). Hopefully, these two lists will account for most clients who come for distribution.
- If you would like for BRAFB to provide you with your client list, please:
 - Email Lauren Allman at lallman@brafb.org Include your pantry name and ask for your existing client list for the past 12 months.



Tips to Stay Healthy

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. And if you become sick, stay at home.
- Maintain social distance with others—about six feet—whenever possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw the used tissue away. Cough or sneeze into your inner arm (elbow) if a tissue is unavailable.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or disinfecting wipes.
- **Most importantly, wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Thank you for all you are doing to protect and support clients, volunteers, and yourselves during COVID-19!