



## DEVELOP YOUR NUTRITION POLICY

### Develop your nutrition policy

Establishing a nutrition policy is the best way 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 guests about pantry operations.

### Engage stakeholders

Prior to drafting your nutrition policy, involve your stakeholders in developing the policy (example: donors, guests, staff, board, volunteers, etc.). Having stakeholder input from the beginning will help ensure successful adoption and implementation of your nutrition policy.

### How to write a nutrition policy

Consider utilizing the language below to guide you in developing a nutrition policy for your food pantry. You don't have to use all of the suggested items but one or two can give you a start!

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Commit to supporting the health of our guests by prioritizing the distribution of recommended USDA 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 and
  - foods low in sodium.
- Limit the distribution of foods with refined grains, solid fats, trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.
- Provide basic staples to support meal planning and preparation such as cooking oils, flour, spices, 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.
- 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 guests.

### **Product placement and selection**

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Communicate guest choice/selection practices to all new pantry guests.
- Provide flexibility with choice selections to accommodate special dietary needs and cultural food practices.
- Prominently place food products meeting USDA’s *MyPlate* recommendations and make them more visible to pantry guests.
- 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 guests. 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 guest 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, 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 NUTRITION POLICY FOR FOOD PANTRIES

### WELCOME TO CARITAS FOOD PANTRY

Caritas is committed to supporting the health of our guests 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

We're limiting the distribution of foods with refined grains, solid fats, added sugars, and sodium.

We seek to provide basic staples to support meal planning and preparation such as cooking oils, flour, sugar, etc.

Caritas does **not** distribute:

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

The number of food items provided is determined by your household size and should be sufficient to provide 3 days of meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). Quantities and availability may vary.

*Please let us know if you have any special dietary needs. We'll do our best to accommodate you!*

shared with permission from Caritas Food Pantry, Beloit, WI



## A FRESH APPROACH TO ENDING LOCAL HUNGER THROUGH ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

### We are committed to distributing

- fresh, whole foods such as fruits and vegetables, milk, cheese, eggs, meats, and poultry
- foods with high and healthy nutritional values
- low-sugar, low-sodium, low-fat, and whole-grain items whenever possible

### We no longer distribute:

- pop or sugar-added beverages
- candy
- bakery sweets including: cake, donuts, cookies, pastries
- ramen noodles
- chips and other salty bagged snacks
- canned pasta

Adopted by Board of Directors May, 2013

Implemented Sept, 2013

**Purpose:** The Open Door, formerly the Eagan & Lakeville Resource Centers, champion healthy choices in employees, volunteers, and clients. We believe that every person has the right to access healthy foods. A healthy, sustainable food supply decreases chronic diseases, increases productivity in the classroom and workplace, and increases health equity in our communities.

- We commit to offering a high percentage of fresh and perishable food at our food shelves.
- We commit to removing food with low to no-nutritional value from our shelves and food drives.
- We commit to offering healthy food choices at staff meetings, events, and volunteer engagement activities.
- We commit to engaging the public in a healthy, equitable, and sustainable food system.
- We commit to advocating for policy, systems, and environmental change around food justice in the hunger relief community and beyond.