



 **Westport**
Food Pantry

VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK

DRAFT
2/23



WESTPORT FOOD PANTRY





We are pleased you are in the process of becoming a volunteer for the Westport Food Pantry and hope you have a positive and rewarding experience. This handbook serves as a guideline of relevant information that will help foster success in your volunteer position. It is a summary of the more important guidelines and is not intended to be all-inclusive.

About Westport Food Pantry

The Westport Food Pantry was created in April 2020 by the Town of Westport as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Located at the Town Hall Annex Gym it was created and directed by Dana Stewart, Westport's Recreation Director and assisted by dedicated volunteers. In Sept 2020 the pantry moved to its current home at the Westport Grange on Main Rd. The WFP is a registered charitable organization in Massachusetts and has 501c3 designation from the IRS.

What does it mean to be "food insecure"?

The United States Department of Agriculture uses the term "food insecure" to refer to households that experience reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet and/or disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. A household experiences food insecurity if the people in it have limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

Hunger is often a consequence of food insecurity.

That is, individuals who are living in a food insecure circumstance may experience hunger. But someone who is food insecure is not necessarily always hungry. Rather, food insecure individuals may be uncertain about when or how they will be able to obtain food, or may lack access to sufficient food amounts or nutritional quality at certain times during a month or year.

By focusing efforts on those who are food insecure, and not just those who are hungry, you recognize that all people need access to safe and nutritious food throughout the year.

(Source: USDA Economic Research Service. More Information at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm>)

"Most families are not visiting pantries to meet temporary, acute food needs - instead, for the majority of people seeking food assistance, pantries are a part of a households' longer-term strategies to supplement monthly shortfalls in food."

Feeding America



Food Pantries Are Now a Consistent Source of Food for Some People

Traditionally, food pantries have existed to provide emergency food to families experiencing temporary setbacks. In recent years, this paradigm has shifted; what was once emergency aid is now a source of food that families rely upon regularly.

For most pantry customers, the need for food is chronic and persistent, not a momentary crisis. Even for households receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, the monthly allotment is often not enough to meet food needs; thus, regular pantry visits have become a supplementary method people use to feed their families.

Likewise, many families are considered “working poor.” In spite of working multiple jobs, they still have difficulty making ends meet. If a food pantry can provide extra groceries, then the money saved can be spent on other necessities of life.

The Covid pandemic threw a new group of people into food insecurity. With the sudden lose of jobs, unemployment benefits running out, families that thought they were financially secure found themselves without income and food. Remember, not having access to safe, edible food is ALWAYS an emergency, regardless of the duration of the need. What is most important is meeting customers’ needs as generously as our budget allows.

Days and Hours of Operation

The WFP is open Monday–Thursday.

Mondays we distribute grocery bags to our customer. Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays, volunteers are on-site to receive donations. A grocery drop box is on-site for people to use at their convenience. The drop box is checked daily.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:45-11 AM	9AM-11 AM	9:30 AM-11:30 AM	9AM-11 AM
Set-up and food distribution. Take-in truck deliveries when available.	Receiving donations, sorting, double bagging for Thur.	Receiving donations and sorting, unloading food delivery	Bagging groceries, receiving donations, food pick-up

Volunteer Jobs

There are a variety of task that volunteers can contribute to pantry operations. These include:



- Distributing groceries to customers
- Greeting those that are contributing food items to the pantry
- Sorting and stocking shelves and freezers
- Unloading trucks
- Housekeeping chores such as sweeping, cleaning tables, breaking down cardboard boxes
- Helping with clerical task
- Drivers to collect food from larger organizations
- Shift leaders to open and close the pantry, oversee the mornings work.

Volunteer Sign In

Volunteers sign in and log their hours for each shift. This information is helpful when writing grants. We can state the overall number of hours worked / needed to sustain the pantries operation and a dollar amount can be attached to those hours..

We are currently a traditional model (prepacked) food pantry

Currently there are no requirements to receive groceries. We do collect some customer information to keep track of the number of families and individuals served.

Prepacking

Customers are given prepacked grocery bags based on the number of people in the household. This model was initially chosen due to limited staff and the Covid pandemic. Recipients remain in their car as volunteers place grocery bags in the car trunk.

Family Size	1-2	3-4	5 or more	
Number of Grocery Bags	1 bag	2 bags	3 bags	



Transitioning to Customer Choice Indoors

WFP's goal is to move to the customer choice model of food distribution. The customer choice concept gives customers the option of choosing the food and supplies that are most needed by their families. Our current prepackaged model does not take into account the needs of each customer. Prepackaged grocery bags may contain items the customer's household already has, is unfamiliar with, allergic to, unable to use due to dietary restrictions or is able to get from another source. Customer Choice is a way to display food and allow customers to select food based on their needs and dietary restrictions. It establishes a welcoming environment and an atmosphere of dignity.

Inclement Weather

WFP will follow the guidelines of the Westport Public Schools. Notification is usually announced by local news stations, as well as located on the Westport Public Schools website. If the district cancels or delays the opening of schools, the food pantry will not be open.

What is in our Grocery Bag

Eggs, whole wheat bread, cereal, pasta, sauce, beans, corn, green beans, peanut butter, tuna, mac n cheese, and canned fruit are purchased weekly by us. Other food items are included as we receive them; Farm to Family produce boxes, soups from Blount, produce from local farms, and a constant assortment of items from the Westport community.

Packing Grocery Bags for Customers

The general rule of grocery bag packing is heavy items and larger boxes on the bottom, lighter items on top. Here's a sample list of layers to keep in mind:

Lower Layer: Cereal, canned goods, boxed pasta

Middle Layer: medium and small boxed goods, and cans, bagged rice, mac & cheese.

Top Layer (light items): anything that might mush and anything that goes crunch such as: bagged cereal, bagged pasta. Canned tuna on top is fine.

Safety Policies & Procedures

- **Use the ramp for bringing all items out of or into the pantry**
- All accidents and injuries must be reported immediately to the pantry director.
- Volunteers must wash their hands after handling fresh food items and visiting the restroom, and observe good housekeeping habits.
- Report any safety hazards you see immediately to a shift leader or pantry director.
- Use proper lifting techniques: when lifting heavy objects, use your legs to push upwards, keep your back straight and your body balanced. Don't attempt to lift heavy boxes or items without



assistance. Any person with physical or medical limitations will not exceed the limits set by their doctor under any circumstances.

Food Safety

When food is donated all product dates need to be checked. Most foods are good past the date printed on the package, however we can not distribute these items at this time. Follow the FIFO (first in first out) or FEFO (first expired first out) systems for inventory.

If you would not purchase a particular food item due to it's product date or package/can appearance then do not give it to our customers. When in doubt throw it out.

Product dates

According to the The Food Safety and Inspection Service (part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture), product dates are not a guide for safe use (except for infant formula, baby food, medicine). The dates are a quality issue. Dates on packaging tell a consumer how long they can store the food and consume it when it is still at its best.

Best if Used By/Before indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

Sell-By tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It's best, of course, to buy food before it reaches the sell-by date It is not a safety date.

Use-By is the date recommended for the use of the product while at best quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula.

Freeze-By indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

Is this Food Still Good

Keep	Throw Away
Goods that have not expired	Goods that have expired
Small dents in cans are okay	Sharp dents can break the cans inner protective lining. Dented cans where the top is warped, or the can is bulging, rust that cannot be wiped away.
Boxed items where the flap is slightly unglued, but food item is not falling out, especially when the food item is in a sealed bag inside the box	Holes, torn packages, broken seals, signs of leaking
	Home made containers, missing or unreadable labels



Food Storage

Proper food storage is an integral part of food safety. It insures that the food we serve to customers will be healthy and safe to eat.

- Store all grocery products at least a foot from walls and at least 6 inches off the floor.
- Store non-food items on separate shelving units from food.
- Use thermometers and regularly monitor the temperature of refrigerators (40°F or lower) and freezers (0°F or lower). Dry storage should be between 50–70 degrees.

Volunteer Conduct

The impressions volunteers make on those they serve and work with reflects directly on the good will and reputation of the WFP. All words and deeds should work to build our reputation for quality, kindness and respect. In addition to being non-discriminatory, all should project a non-judgmental and empathetic attitude treating all with dignity. You are the face and heart of the WFP.

Attendance

Monday shifts are 8–11AM. Tu/W/Th are 9–11AM. Arrive on time and stay for your entire shift, there is always something to do. It may be quiet at 10AM but that does not mean it will stay that way for the next hour. If you leave early that's more work for your shift-partners. If you need to miss your shift give as much notice as you can, preferably at least 48 hours.

Dress Code

Wear clothing that is appropriate for your assignment and maintain a neat and clean appearance. For your protection wear closed toe shoes: no sandals, no flip flops.

Confidentiality

No member of WFP is permitted to use any knowledge or connections made through their position for personal advantage or gain. You may have access to confidential information that **MUST NOT** be disclosed to anyone. What happens at the pantry stays at the pantry. The exceptions, of course, are any illegal or inappropriate behavior that should be reported.

Conflict of Interest

WFP aims to avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest in all of our efforts. A conflict of interest occurs when any WFP member/volunteers personal interests – family, friendships, financial, or social factors – could compromise his or her judgment, decisions, or actions in the workplace. While working on behalf of WFP volunteers must never present partisan information supporting or endorsing political parties or candidates for office.



Proselytizing

WFP directors, volunteers, and customers hold various political, social, religious and personal beliefs. We must be respectful of those views and opinions while at the WFP. All members will refrain from advocating or proselytizing for specific political, social, and /or religious beliefs.

Performance Standards

All members of WFP are expected to act professionally and are required to meet acceptable performance standards and comply with guidelines and procedures. Should a volunteer have a grievance concerning their work environment, they should report it promptly to the pantry director. Every effort will be made to achieve an effective resolution that takes into account the dignity and fair treatment of volunteers; offers the best chance of positive problem solving; ensures compliance with federal, state, and local laws; and best serves the overall purpose of WFP.

Disciplinary Action

If disciplinary action becomes necessary, action may be taken in a manner consistent with the seriousness of the infraction. Discipline may consist of a verbal warning, written warning, or discharge.

Use of Food Bank Resources

WFP is a non-profit organization to help people with food insecurity. All donations are the property of the pantry and will be used to support our mission to our community. No pantry resources (money, gift cards, food, property, etc.) will be used for personal reasons or gain by any volunteer.

Drug/Alcohol/Smoke Free Workplace

The WFP is a drug, alcohol, smoke free environment both indoors and outdoors. This policy includes ecigarettes. Violation will result in termination.

COVID-19 Guidelines

WFP will adhere to all COVID-19 guidelines that are recommended by the CDC and /or ordered by the state governor of Massachusetts. This includes:

- Wearing masks indoors when recommended
- Social distance when you can, at least 6 feet or more



- Wash your hands with soap and water often or use hand sanitizer
- Do not report for your shift if you have a fever or are experiencing any sickness (such as persistent coughing, sneezing, sore throat, runny nose fatigue, etc.)
- Call or email the pantry director if you have the above symptoms. You may be asked to get a COVID test.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Volunteers should be able to enjoy a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, verbal and physical harassment, and sexual harassment. No volunteer should be subject to unsolicited and unwelcome conduct of any kind. Such behavior will initiate termination.

Sexual Harassment: No volunteer should be subject to unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical, or in any other form. Do not engage in or tolerate unwanted or unwelcome sexual behavior including jokes, degrading remarks, touching, requests for sexual favors, etc.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion to anyone due to race, color, religion, age, national origin, disability, covered veteran's status, marital status or any basis when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with ones work performance, creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, or otherwise adversely affects an individual's volunteer opportunities.

Any WFP member believing they have witnessed violation of this policy or are being subjected to conduct prohibited by this policy must report the conduct immediately to the pantry director. If it is the conduct of the pantry director that is being complained of, the report should be made to the President of WFP. No other person is authorized to receive or deal with such matters or to act as the complaining person's representative.

The allegations of the complaint and the identity of the persons involved will remain as confidential as possible. The results of the investigation will be communicated to involved parties. Any individual determined to have violated this policy will be asked to leave.

