



# Sample Nutrition Policy for Food Pantries

Establishing a nutrition policy is the best way for your food pantry 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 clients about pantry operations.

## Engage stakeholders

Prior to drafting your nutrition policy, consider which stakeholders will be affected by the policy and engage them in the process (example: donors, clients, staff, board, volunteers, etc.). Explain to stakeholders the purpose of developing the nutrition policy. Having stakeholder input from the get-go will help ensure successful adoption and implementation of your nutrition policy.

## Develop your nutrition policy

Consider utilizing the language below to guide you in developing a nutrition policy for your food pantry.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:*

- Commit to supporting the health of our clients 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
- Limit the distribution of foods with refined grains, solid fats, trans fats, added sugars, and sodium
- Seek to provide basic staples to support meal planning and preparation such as cooking oils, flour, sugar, 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
- Seek to 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 clients

## Product placement and selection

[FOOD PANTRY NAME] will:

- Communicate client choice/selection practices to all new pantry clients
- Provide flexibility with choice selections to accommodate special dietary needs and cultural food practices
- Prominently place food products meeting USDA's *MyPlate* recommendations making them more visible to pantry clients
- 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 clients. 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 client 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, take a moment to 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.