



# 2024 CHOICE PANTRY TOOLKIT

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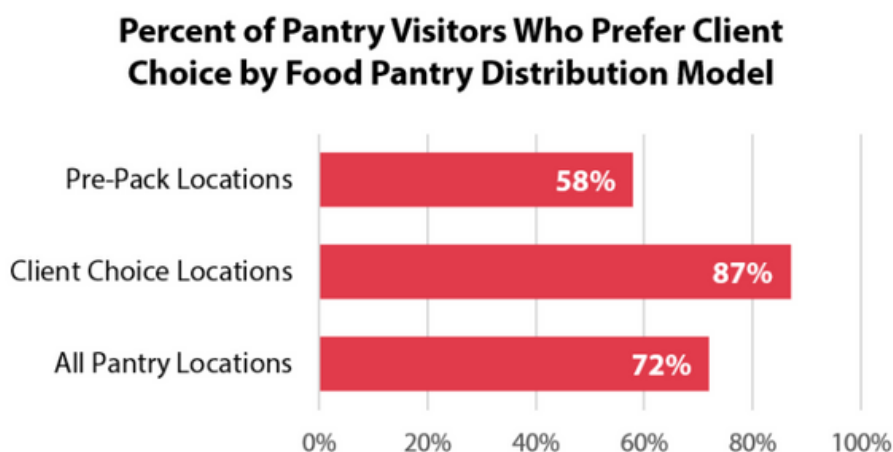
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# Introduction

## What is a choice pantry?

A choice pantry allows neighbors to select some or all of their food. By allowing neighbors to select food, it promotes dignity and respect for individual food preferences. Instead of receiving a prepacked or standard bag of groceries, neighbors can take items that they like, refuse items they don't like, or refuse items they cannot eat due to health/personal/cultural reasons.

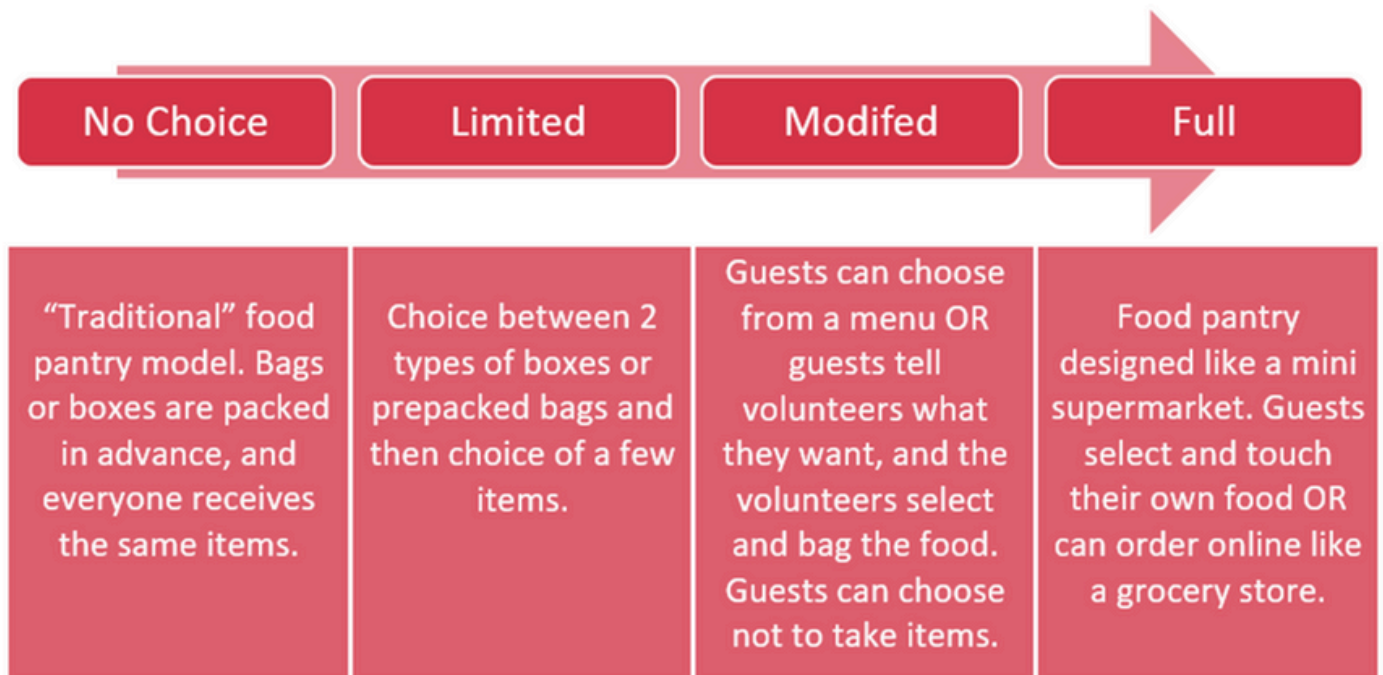
According to the 2023 Lancaster County Community Hunger Mapping Report, 72% of all respondents to the pantry visitor survey prefer neighbor choice shopping models. Additionally, 87% of neighbor choice pantry visitors prefer neighbor choice models while 58% of pre-pack food pantry visitors prefer neighbor choice. Choice pantry models are preferred by pantry visitors, regardless of what type of pantry distribution they currently attend.



The goal of this Choice Pantry Toolkit is to provide food pantries with best practices and tools to implement more choice. As a partner agency of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, we encourage you to explore ways to increase choice for the neighbors you serve.

Our team at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank can help your pantry take those first steps to offer more choice for the neighbors you serve. Contact your Agency Services Representative or the Nutrition Team at [NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org](mailto:NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org) for support.

# Continuum of Choice



Choice exists on a spectrum and is not a one-size-fits all approach. Some pantries may have a standard bag of groceries and allow neighbors to choose their protein or produce. Others include elements of choice by letting neighbors accept or refuse food items. Full choice models allow neighbors to shop similar to how they would shop in a grocery store. With each of these choice methods, neighbors do not have to take items that they already have, do not like, or cannot eat for personal or health reasons.

## Reflection Questions:

1. Where does your food pantry currently fall on the Continuum of Choice?
2. Where would you like your food pantry to fall on the Continuum of Choice?

# Why Give Neighbors a Choice?

Imagine your family is food insecure and is in need of food. You have a few food items at home, but it is not enough to make complete meals for the next few days. With finances stretched thin, a trip to the grocery store is out of the question. You decide to visit a local food pantry. When you arrive at the food pantry, you are handed a pre-packed bag of food. Some of the foods you already have at home. Other items your family does not like. Items may be unfamiliar to you or aren't culturally familiar. You may need to throw out or donate back some foods due to allergies or dietary restrictions.

If you had been able to choose the food you need and like, your family could have enjoyed well-rounded, nutritious meals. You could avoid the guilt associated with food waste by declining the foods that you know your family will not eat and could have been used by another family.

## Benefits of Choice Pantries

- **Increases staff, volunteer, and donor interaction with neighbors** - Staff, volunteers, and donors get to know neighbors better by assisting with the shopping process. This is a more engaging use of time for volunteers than packing standardized boxes.
- **Less waste and greater financial efficiency** - Neighbors choose food to meet their preferences and health needs, leaving the food that they cannot use.
- **Respect for the individual is emphasized** - Neighbors feel like they are shopping for their own food. This upholds their dignity, making them more likely to utilize services in the future.
- **Increases nutrition security** – Nutrition security looks at the nutritional value and availability of foods that promote well-being. When neighbors bring home food that they prefer, that ensures that those foods will be consumed and provide them with the necessary nutrients for nourishment.

# **Neighbor Choice Pantry Model Types**

Each choice pantry model is flexible and can accommodate to your service population, available resources, inventory, pantry space, and available volunteers/staff. In this section we will review different Choice Pantry Models and spotlight some agencies in our partner network who are currently implementing these models to provide examples of what's possible.

**In this section we will highlight the following Choice Pantry Models:**

1. Grocery Store Model
2. Table Model
3. Window Model
4. Shopping List Model
5. Online Order Model
6. Drive Thru Model
7. Box Model

# 1. Grocery Store Model

## Description

Food is set up on shelves by food groups just like a grocery store. Neighbors walk through the space and take food from shelves according to the pantry guidelines. The food storage room and the neighbor shopping area can be in the same location. Volunteers can restock anytime during the pantry distribution hours. The space needs to be large enough to display foods and allow neighbors to walk through. This model allows neighbors to handle food and look at nutrition facts labels just as if they were shopping in a store. The pantry space will determine how many neighbors can shop at a time. For example, some grocery store model food pantries schedule neighbors every 15 minutes. This model is the most neighbor-friendly and dignified, as it is most like a grocery store shopping experience.

## Equipment Needs

- Walkable space
- Shelving
- Time and volunteers for stocking shelves
- Shopping carts/push carts
- Plastic bags or boxes to pack food
- Refrigerator or freezer with clear glass to view available items or a posted list of available refrigerated or frozen items

# 1. Grocery Store Model, Continued

## Steps for Implementation

1. Organize food on pantry shelves by food type or by MyPlate food groups.
2. When neighbors sign in, volunteers can provide a food card with the number of items they may take per food group/category. The pantry may also choose to display this number using signage on the shelves.
3. Allow neighbors to walk through the pantry alone or with a volunteer. Have available volunteers nearby to answer questions as they shop.
4. Like in a grocery, neighbors can “check-out” and pack their food into a bag or box with help of a pantry worker. Pantry workers can confirm that neighbors have an appropriate number of items from each food group based on their family size. Alternatively, place bags or boxes in grocery carts before the neighbor begins to shop so they can pack the boxes as they shop.

## Tips

- It is important to have team members available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and stocked.
- Team members may need to re-stock and straighten shelves during pantry hours.
- Depending on the number of neighbors served and hours of operations, appointments may be helpful to space out neighbors served.
- Food pantries should include multilingual/visual signage, engage bilingual team members, and incorporate multilingual communication options to foster low barrier service for all neighbors, regardless of their native language.
- Pantries may use different sized shopping carts that accommodate the different household sizes.

# 1. Grocery Store Model Examples

## Lebanon County Christian Ministries - Lebanon, PA



Large walkable space available for neighbors to shop comfortably



Organized shelves



Produce baskets



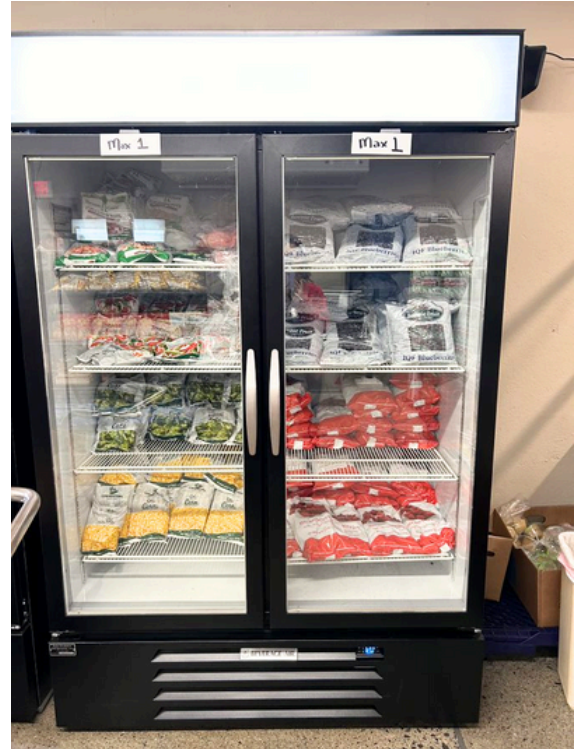
Grocery store shelving

# 1. Grocery Store Model Examples, Continued

## Lebanon County Christian Ministries - Lebanon, PA



Shopping carts available for neighbors



Window cooler for an easy view of products.



Meat cooler and bagging station

# 1. Grocery Store Model Examples, Continued

## The Caring Cupboard - Palmyra, PA



Large walkable space and signs for food allotment per family size



Attractive produce display to encourage healthy eating



Shopping carts available



Recipes available for neighbors



Produce information for neighbors

# 1. Grocery Store Model Examples, Continued

## The New Love Center - Jersey Shore, PA

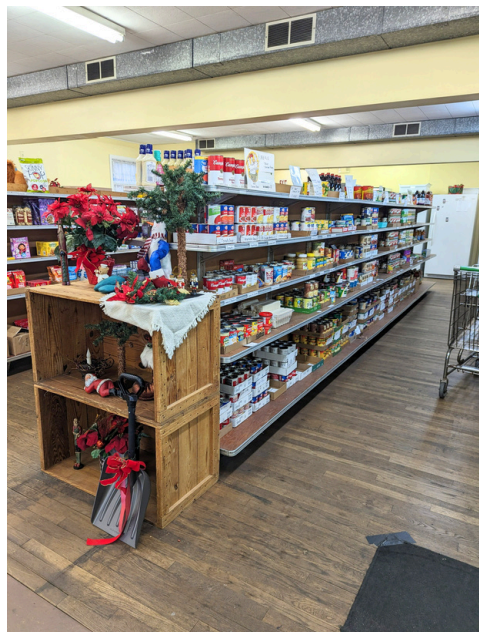


Well lit glass coolers to encourage healthy selections



Organized shelves and space to shop

## Middletown Interfaith Pantry - Middletown, PA



This space was created to closely resemble a grocery store

# 1. Grocery Store Model Examples, Continued

## Manna Food Pantry - Harrisburg, PA



Attractive produce display with nutrition information

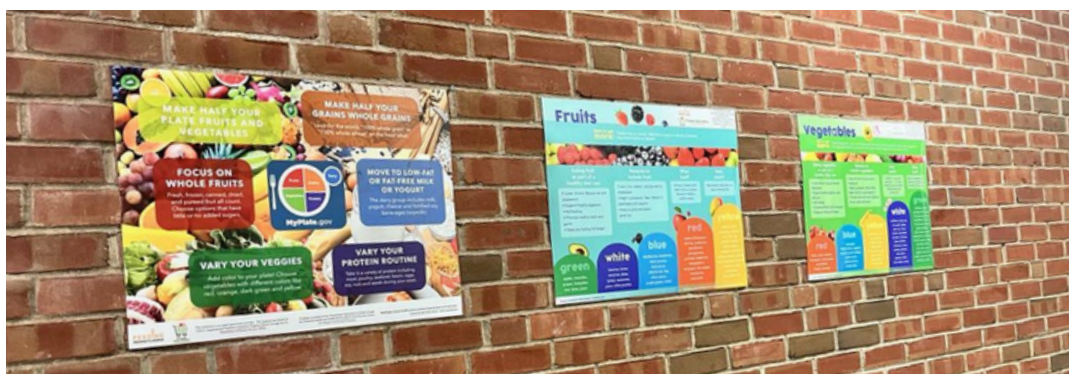


Healthy Pantry Initiative shelf tags and food allotment sign

## Sunbury YMCA Food Pantry - Sunbury, PA



Organized display of food and products available



Nutrition posters at the pantry's entrance

## 2. Table Model

### Description

If you do not have enough permanent space or equipment for a grocery store model, the table model might work best. Food is set up on tables and can be organized by MyPlate food groups or food categories. Neighbors walk by each table to select their food and pack it themselves in boxes or bags. The pantry needs enough room for neighbors to walk by each table. Pantry workers or volunteers can stand by the food tables to guide neighbors and answer questions about the food. This model can serve many neighbors at one time while allowing them to physically handle food and check nutrition facts labels. During distribution, volunteers can increase or decrease the maximum number of an item that neighbors can take based on supply of that item or based on household size.

### Equipment Needs

- Tables to display food in a U or L shape
- Time and volunteers for stocking product
- Shopping carts/push carts
- Plastic bags or boxes to pack food
- Plastic tubs, containers, or baskets to display food on tables

### Steps for Implementation

1. Organize food on tables by food categories or food groups.
2. When neighbors sign in, provide them a cart and instruct on the flow of the table setup. Provide a food card listing how many items they may take based on family size or display signage that instructs on how many items to take per household.
3. Allow neighbors to walk by the tables, choosing and packing their own food.
4. As items are selected, have volunteers replenish the food items to keep the appearance of abundance at each table station.

## 2. Table Model, Continued

### Tips

- Workers are needed before, during, and after distribution hours to set up, supervise, and take down tables.
- It is helpful if the storage room and room displaying the food on tables are in close proximity. Consider placing pallets of each item behind the tables for easy restocking or keep surplus items under each table in boxes. Dollies or carts are helpful to transport food items.
- Workers can accompany neighbors or stand by each display table for questions and support.
- If neighbors do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator, phone translation service, or signage with images posted to help with the process.

## 2. Table Model Examples

### The Loft Community Partnership - Millersville, PA



**Recipe bundle**



**Produce with recipe cards**



**Produce**



**Canned Items**



**Bread display**

## 2. Table Model Examples, Continued

### Fishing Creek United Methodist Church - Goldsboro, PA



This location uses both tables and shelving to display food. The pantry utilizes a shared space so tables and shelving must be assembled and broken down for each distribution.

## 3. Window Model

### Description

Food is displayed on shelving behind a window or counter. Neighbors choose their food by telling a volunteer or pointing to the food on the shelf. Pantry volunteers then pack food bags according to neighbor choices and household size. This model offers neighbor choice when a pantry has limited space. A consideration is that this model can only serve a small number of neighbors at a time.

### Equipment Needs

- Shelving with available foods visible
- Window or counter with a clear view of the shelving

### Steps for Implementation

1. Clearly organize food on shelves by MyPlate food groups or food categories.
2. When neighbors sign in, provide instruction on how many items to select per food category based on household. Another option is to provide an inventory list organized by food category so neighbors know which items are available and how many they can select.
3. Allow neighbors to choose food by pointing to the items on the shelves or by telling the volunteer which items they would like on the inventory list.
4. Volunteers will then select the items off the shelves and pack the food into a bag or box.

### Tips

- It is important to have pantry workers and volunteers available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and stocked.
- Pantry workers may need to restock and straighten shelves during pantry hours.
- Depending on the number of neighbors served and hours of operations, appointments may be helpful to space out neighbors served.
- Food pantries should include multilingual/visual signage, engage bilingual team members, and incorporate multilingual communication options to foster low barrier service for all neighbors, regardless of their native language.

### 3. Window Model Examples

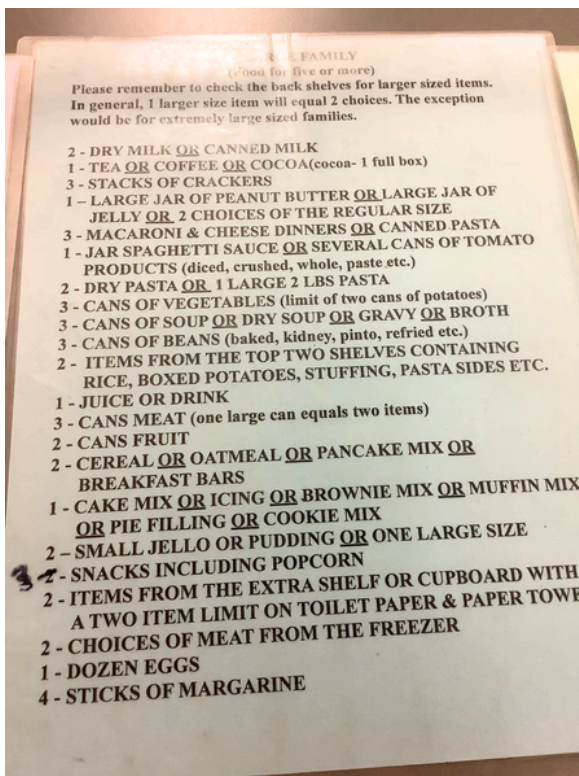
#### Hummelstown Ministerium - Hummelstown, PA



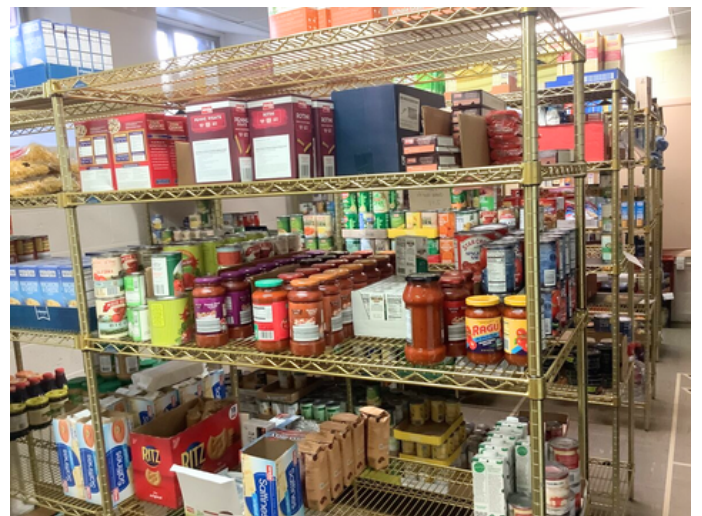
Service window



Shopping carts available for neighbors to walk to their car



Inventory list for neighbors



Food storage

## 4. Shopping List Model

### Description

Neighbors choose food items from an inventory list. The list can be posted on a whiteboard or on a printed sheet. Neighbors circle or indicate to the volunteers which items they would like, and the volunteers gather and pack the items for the neighbors. This choice model works best when space is limited.

### Equipment Needs

- Paper list, whiteboard, or chalkboard to share food items available.
- Boxes or bags for packing food.

### Steps for Implementation

1. Organize food by MyPlate food group or food categories.
2. Create an inventory list with items on-hand.
3. When neighbors sign in, provide them with the inventory sheet or direct them to the list posted on a whiteboard or chalkboard.
4. Have volunteers pack the items into boxes or bags while neighbors wait.
5. Confirm that all items are accurate before handing the food to your neighbor.

### Tips

- If serving a large population, a volunteer assembly line is encouraged to pack food orders.
- Food pantries should include multilingual/visual signage, engage bilingual team members, and incorporate multilingual communication options to foster low barrier service for all neighbors, regardless of their native language.
- Setting appointments may be beneficial to avoid long wait times for neighbors.

# 4. Shopping List Model Examples

## DuBois Area Food Pantry - DuBois, PA

SEQ. #	NAME		(# ADULTS		# CHILDREN	) TOTAL # IN HOUSEHOLD	
GOVERNMENT FOOD		SANDY TWP	JEFFERSON	NEW APPLICANT		DOG FOOD	CAT FOOD
SECTION 1			● SWEETENED CEREAL	▲ LESS SWEETENED CEREAL	★ OLD FASHIONED OATMEAL	★ INSTANT OATMEAL, LOWER SUGAR, MAPLE & BROWN SUGAR	★ RAISINS
	▲ BAKING MIX	▲ FLOUR	▲ GLUTEN-FREE FLOUR	▲ IMITATION SUGAR	★ CANNED MILK	▲ CANOLA OIL	● PANCAKE SYRUP
SECTION 2	▲ INSTANT POTATOES	▲ CRACKERS	★ TEA BAGS	● TUNA HELPER	● HAMBURGER HELPER		
	★ BROTH CHICKEN - BEEF	★ BEEF, CAN	★ CHICKEN, CAN	★ SALMON, CAN	★ TUNA, CAN	★ PORK, CAN	
	▲ CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP	● MUSH-ROOM SOUP	▲ BEEF VEGETABLE SOUP	★ CHICKEN & RICE SOUP	▲ TOMATO SOUP	▲ VEGETABLE SOUP	● CREAM OF CHICKEN SOUP
SECTION 3	▲ SPAGHETTI	★ NUTRITIOUS PASTA	▲ NOODLES	★ QUINOA (BOIL IN BAG)	▲ RICE	● MAC & CHEESE	▲ MACARONI
	★ GREEN BEANS	▲ PEAS	★ MIXED VEGETABLES	▲ WHOLE CORN	★ CANNED TOMATOES	▲ PORK & BEANS	▲ WHITE POTATOES
	★ BEETS	★ SWEET POTATOES	★ BUTTER BEANS	★ CARROTS	▲ CREAM CORN	★ KIDNEY BEANS	★ SAUERKRAUT
SECTION 4	★ CANNED MIXED FRUIT	★ CANNED PEARS	★ CANNED PEACHES	★ PUMPKIN	▲ CRANBERRY SAUCE	★ UNSWEETENED APPLESAUCE	★ CANNED MANDARIN ORANGES
	▲ JUICE	▲ MAYONNAISE	★ MUSTARD	★ KETCHUP	● JELLY	▲ PEANUT BUTTER	★ SPAGHETTI SAUCE
	★ FRANK'S HOT SAUCE	▲ RANCH	▲ 1000 ISLAND	▲ FRENCH	▲ ITALIAN	★ CHILI BEANS	★ SALSA, MILD
							★ BLACK BEANS
TOILET PAPER							
TURN OVER →							
★ = HEALTHY, EAT FREELY    ▲ = NOT GOOD, EAT IN MODERATION    ● = UNHEALTHY, EAT RARELY							

Order form featuring SWAP food rankings



Neighbor registration window



Organized storage area



Volunteer assembly line to gather orders

# 4. Shopping List Model Examples

## Huntington Area Food Pantry - Huntington, PA

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Assistance \_\_\_\_\_ Children \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ 2021 Client No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Food Stamps \_\_\_\_\_ Adults \_\_\_\_\_  
Med. Asst. \_\_\_\_\_ Elderly \_\_\_\_\_  
Soc. Sec. \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**QUANTITY**

____ Mac & Cheese	____ Cereal	<u>Juice</u>	<u>Cereal</u>
____ Treet	____ Fruit	____ Fruit Punch	____ Rainbow Trees.
____ Tuna	____ Juice	____ Apple	____ Raisin Bran
____ Noodles	____ Peanut Butter	____ Cranberry	____ Oatmeal
____ Cream Soup	____ Dry Milk	____ Tomato	____ Pancakes
____ Pork	____ Vegetables	____ Orange	
____ Spaghetti	____ Hand Soap		
____ Sauce	____ Toilet Tissue		
____ Canned Beef	____ Extra Meat		
____ Chicken, Soup	____ Broth		
____ Saltines			

**NOTICE!!!!!! PLEASE DO NOT DOUBLE MEALS!!!!!!**

<b>Pick (4) Meals</b>	<b>Pick (4) Vegetables</b>		
____ Treet & Mac & Cheese	____ Baked Beans	____ Corn	____ Dry Milk
____ Tuna, Noodles & Soup	____ Beans	____ Peas	
____ Pork, Sauerkraut & Potatoes	____ Butter Beans	____ Canned Potatoes	
____ Spaghetti & Sauce	____ Green Beans	____ Instant Potatoes	
____ Chicken, Corn, Noodles & Broth	____ Kidney Beans	____ Scalloped Potatoes	
____ Beef, Noodles, Mix Veg. & Broth	____ Northern Beans	____ Mixed Vegetables	
	____ Carrots	____ Tomatoes	
		____ Sauerkraut	



Volunteers gathering order items

Order form



Food storage and packing area

## 5. Online Order Model

### Description

Neighbors can select the foods they would like online using an online ordering application or an online form like Google Forms or Microsoft Forms. The food pantry receives the online order request via email and volunteers can fill those orders based on the items selected. The neighbor can organize a pickup time that works best with their schedule. This model offers choice when space is limited.

### Equipment Needs

- Computer to update the online ordering list. This could be through an online ordering software or a free online form like Google Forms or Microsoft Forms.
- You may need a printer to print out the orders.
- Bags or boxes to pack the orders.
- A space for volunteers to pack boxes and to hold the items for pickup.

### Steps for Implementation

1. Make the online ordering form accessible for neighbors by posting information on how to order on your pantry website or on your social media page.
2. Decide on how to best set up the online ordering form. This could be a list of specific products if you have a consistent inventory, or if you have a lot of variation in products, organize the online ordering form based on MyPlate food groups or food categories. Items listed don't need to be specific brands, but rather the types of food.
3. For example: Grains Category – white rice, brown rice, cereal, white bread, whole grain bread
4. Assign limits for the number of items to select based on household sizes.
5. For example: 1-2 person household – Grains Category – 3 items
6. On the online ordering form, include a field for neighbors to include information about dietary restrictions and allergies. This way, the volunteers packing can be aware when selecting specific foods.
7. Print the order or have it on a large screen so volunteers can pack the boxes.
8. Have orders packed in advance of the neighbor's scheduled pickup time.

## 5. Online Order Model, Continued

### Tips

- Online ordering is a great option to have in addition to any in-person food distributions available. This type of service may be preferred by neighbors who may not feel comfortable coming inside to shop or prefer contactless pickup.
- Online forms such as, Google Forms or Microsoft Forms, provides translation to incorporate multilingual communication options for neighbors. These online forms also give the option to include images of items that you have on hand.

# 5. Online Order Model Examples

## Waynesboro Community and Human Services - Waynesboro, PA

WCHS Food Bank Form Family size 1-2

Please call our office (717-762-6941) within 1 week to set up an appointment for pick up or this order will be canceled. All orders will be put away 24 hours after your scheduled pickup time unless other arrangements have been made.

Separate order forms based on family size

Dietary Needs - Please indicate below if you need sugar free, gluten free or have any allergies.

Your answer

Accommodate allergies and health conditions by asking for dietary needs

Frozen Meats - As Available- Pick 2

☐ Chicken legs or thighs

☐ Whole chicken

☐ Ham

☐ Hot dogs

☐ Ground beef

☐ Sausage

☐ Pulled pork

☐ Pork chops

☐ Fish sticks

☐ Bacon

Fresh Produce - as available

☐ Apples

☐ Potatoes

Separate sections for different food categories

Toiletries - as available

☐ Shampoo

☐ Conditioner

☐ Toothbrushes (1 for each family member)

☐ Toothpaste

☐ Dental floss

☐ Bar soap

☐ Body wash

☐ Moisturizer

☐ Deodorant

☐ Sanitary napkins

☐ Tampons

Baby items- Need to be a diaper bank client

Yes

Baby wipes

Non-food items can also be offered

## 6. Drive Thru Model

### Description

Drive thru distribution models became popular during the COVID -19 pandemic to limit in-person contact, but are still used today to distribute food to neighbors. Neighbors stay in their own vehicles and follow a drive thru system to receive food items. This could look like a standardized prepacked box of food items with additional add-on items they can choose from. This model is beneficial for pantries with little to no indoor space, but a large enough parking lot to accommodate many cars at one time.

### Equipment Needs

- Tables to set the food on.
- A tent or awning to keep the food dry and out of direct sunlight.
- Freezer blankets to keep cold foods temperature safe.
- Temperature guns to keep temperature control of food items.
- Boxes or carts to help transfer food from tables to cars.
- Traffic cones and signage to direct the traffic of cars.

### Steps for Implementation

1. Decide on a traffic pattern that will be safe for neighbors and volunteers. If the parking lot will not accommodate all cars waiting to go through the drive thru, you may need to contact your local police station to make sure that traffic on any main roads won't be disrupted.
2. Set up enough tables and tents to accommodate the quantity of food being distributed. Make sure food is not touching the ground and is set up on tables or pallets.
3. If food items are displayed on tables, use containers or baskets to organize the items. Categorize items based on MyPlate food groups or food type.
4. While cars wait their turn, volunteers can conduct intake with neighbors. Providing food tastings or other types of nutrition education can help when wait times are long.
5. As cars go through the line, volunteers at each station gather the items and place them in the trunk of the car.

## 6. Drive Thru Model, Continued

### Tips

- Severe weather can impact your distribution. You may consider postponing it for the safety of your neighbors and volunteers. Determine a good system to notify neighbors when distribution is cancelled or postponed.
- During warmer weather days, make sure cold food stays cold and check food temperatures frequently.
- If neighbors do not speak or read English, a translated food item list or images of foods can be useful to select items. Using a phone translation service is also recommended to communicate with your neighbor to ensure their food preferences are captured accurately.

## 6. Drive Thru Model Examples

### Redeemed Christian Church of God - Harrisburg, PA



Neighbors drive through the distribution line. Volunteers ask if the neighbor would like the item and then place boxes in the trunk.

## 7. Box Model

### Description

This is a partial choice model that allows neighbors to choose some of their food. Some food items are packed in standardized boxes and equally distributed to neighbors. Neighbors can then choose food items in addition to the box. Neighbors can choose their food from a shopping list or from a selection of items on a table or shelf.

### Equipment Needs

- Boxes to pack food
- Tables, a list, or shelves so neighbors can select additional food items

### Steps for Implementation

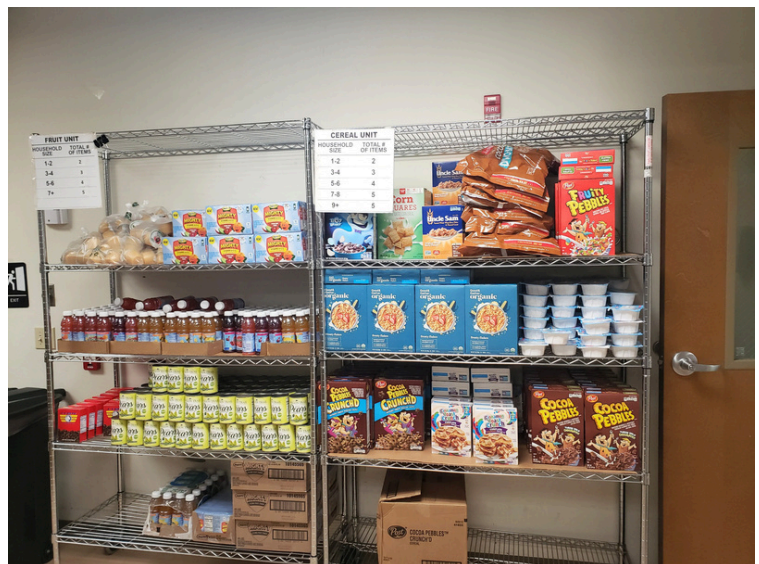
1. Determine which foods would be most appropriate to go in a standardized box. These foods would be considered staple items that can be used to build different types of meals and are cross-cultural.
2. Display the food items that neighbors can choose in addition to the food box. For example: produce, frozen meats, dairy products, specialty food items, etc.
3. Provide clear instructions on how many items neighbors can choose. This could be determined based on household size or the quantity of the items available.

### Tips

- Food pantries should include multilingual/visual signage, engage bilingual team members, and incorporate multilingual communication options to foster low barrier service for all neighbors, regardless of their native language.

## 7. Box Model Examples

### Northern Dauphin Food Pantry - Elizabethville, PA



The Northern Dauphin Food Pantry operates through a box model. They gather neighbor intake information to determine any special dietary needs or food preferences and tailor the box to the neighbor.

# Getting Started

## FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

### **How will we know what food to stock? Will we have to increase our variety of food?**

To learn what types of food to stock in your pantry, you can conduct a simple survey with neighbors to determine their food preferences. This will help determine which items are most requested. Offering choice there will be an adjustment period, so after a few months, you will have a system in place to order and stock food, determine the frequency of ordering, and quantities of food to have in your inventory. Neighbor choice does not mean you have to order a greater variety of food. You can provide choice with the same foods you already offer. For example, instead of packing one can of corn, peas, and carrots in every bag, you can allow neighbors to choose any combination of three cans of these vegetables.

### **Will we run out of food with neighbor choice?**

No. Your pantry can create guidelines to determine how much food neighbors can take based on household size. This ensures that your pantry is giving out consistent quantities of food per household size.

### **How can we encourage neighbors to take less popular food items to ensure turnover of product and prevent food waste?**

Increase limits on these items or label items as “free” where neighbors can take as much as they would like. Another strategy is to conduct a food tasting with the items and pair with a recipe card. This is helpful when the product is unfamiliar to your neighbors and gives them the opportunity to taste it.

Reach out to [NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org](mailto:NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org) to have a Nutrition Educator come onsite or complete a Nutrition Education Request Form at this link:

<https://www.centralpafoodbank.org/who-we-are/our-programs/nutrition-education/>

# FAQs, Continued

## **Will neighbor choice cost more for our pantry?**

Many food pantries have switched to a choice model without needing additional funds. If this is a concern for your food pantry, consider gradually adding elements of choice. You may find that this system requires fewer workers and costs less to operate.

## **Will neighbor choice mean more work for my volunteers?**

Choice changes the way that volunteers use their time. They will spend more time serving and talking with neighbors instead of packing bags. For example, if your program uses two hours to pack bags and two hours to distribute, with choice they can use all four hours to directly serve neighbors. If your volunteers are hesitant to change, consider gradually implementing choice into your pantry distribution model.

# FAQs, Continued

## Volunteer Job Descriptions

Note that the same volunteer may fill several roles. For example, the same volunteer may greet and conduct intake for the neighbor. The shopping assistant could also bag and assist in carrying food to the neighbor's car. These are some examples of volunteer job descriptions when implementing choice at a pantry.

- **Greeter** - Welcomes customers in a friendly and professional manner. Directs customers to the sign-in area and provides an overview of how the program operates to new neighbors.
- **Sign-in/Intake** - Supports neighbor with the intake form process or TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) paperwork.
- **Stocker** - Organizes and stocks shelves during distribution.
- **Product organizer** - Logs incoming food. Checks, dates, separates, and stocks food.
- **Shopping assistant** - Works directly with neighbors while they shop to build relationships and ensure neighbors take the correct number of items specified for their family size.
- **Bagger** - Bags groceries during or after shopping.
- **Carrying assistant** - Helps neighbors load their items into their vehicles.
- **Manager** - Makes sure the pantry operates smoothly and efficiently.
- **Floater** - Helps other volunteers that need help. Relieves other volunteers when they need a break.

# Additional Resources

## Setting Limits

As the need for food increases, you may consider setting limits based on household size. This ensures that there will be enough food for everyone you serve.

**Two examples of ways to set limits are:**

1. Number of items system
2. MyPlate system

### Example 1: Number of Items System

Household Size	Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Dairy	Meat	Non-meat protein	Combination Dishes (Soups/boxed meals)	Desserts /Sweets
1-2	2-3	2-3	2-3	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1
3-4	4-5	4-5	3-4	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	1
5-6	5-6	5-6	5-6	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	2
7-8	6-7	6-7	6-7	4-5	4-5	4-5	4-5	2
9-10	7-8	7-8	7-8	5-6	5-6	5-6	5-6	2

This example shows the number of items a family may receive based on their household size. For example, a household of 1-2 people can receive 2-3 fruits. This includes all fruits available: fresh, frozen, and canned.

# Additional Resources, Continued

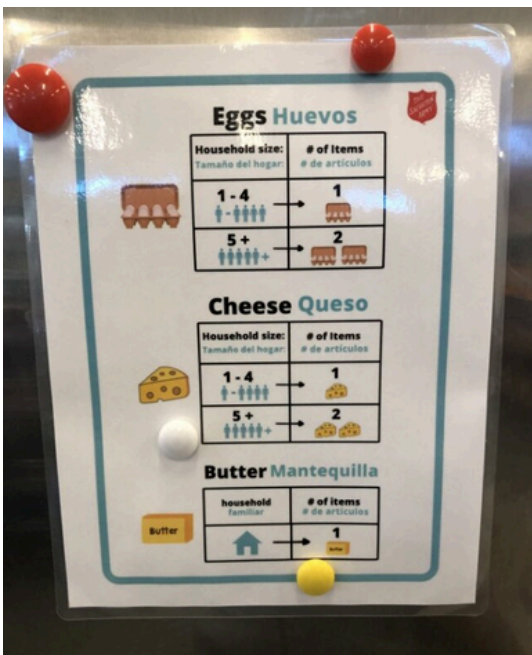
## Example 1: Number of Items System, Continued

### Juniata County Food Pantry



As a family enters the pantry, they are given a colored sticker. This sticker indicates how many people are in their household (left). They use this sticker to make their selections based on the food item (right). For example, a family of 1-2 can receive 3 Side/Main items from the shelf.

### The Salvation Army Harrisburg

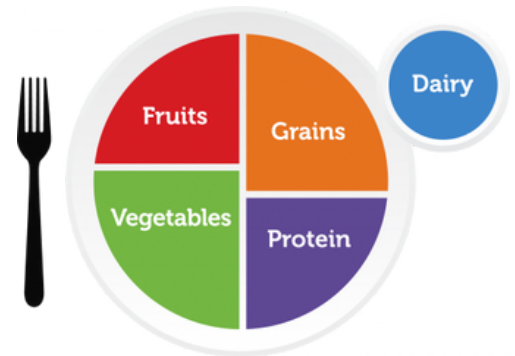


A family follows the cards above to make their selection. A household of 1 can choose up to 2 grains, 1 egg, 1 cheese, and 1 butter.

# Additional Resources, Continued

## Example 2: MyPlate System

Pantry Choice Household Shopping List				
	Household size	1-4	5-7	8+
Proteins	Beans	2	4	6
	Meat	2	4	6
	Nuts	As Marked On Shelf		
	Eggs	1	2	3
Fruits	Canned	2	4	6
	Frozen	1	1	1
	Fresh	2 per Household Member		
	Dried	As Marked On Shelf		
Vegetables	Canned	2	4	6
	Frozen	1	1	1
	Fresh	As Marked On Shelf		
Grains	Pasta	1	2	3
	Rice	1	1	1
	Breakfast	1	2	3
	Bread	1	1	1
Dairy	Milk	1	2	3
	Yogurt	2 Per Cups Household Member		
	Shelf Stable Milk	1	2	3
Sauces	Tomato	SM 2	SM 4	SM 6
		LG 1	LG 2	LG 3
	Tomato paste	3	6	9
	Diced Tomatoes	2	4	6
Snack Items	AS	MARKED	ON	SHELF



Items are arranged in the pantry by food group. Neighbors use this household shopping list as their guide to select the correct number of items for their family size. For example, a family of 1-4 will go to the purple section to choose their protein. They select up to 2 beans, 2 meats, 1 egg. The quantity of nuts is marked on the item.

For more information on MyPlate visit, [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)

# Additional Resources, Continued

## Key Points and Tips

1. Aim to offer a variety of foods across all food groups.
2. Focus on stocking fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, beans, and lean meats to promote health. Provide options with lower saturated fat, added sugar, and sodium when possible.
3. Offer recipes using items available in your pantry.
4. Rotate inventory based on it's date. The first items received should be the first items distributed.

## Signage

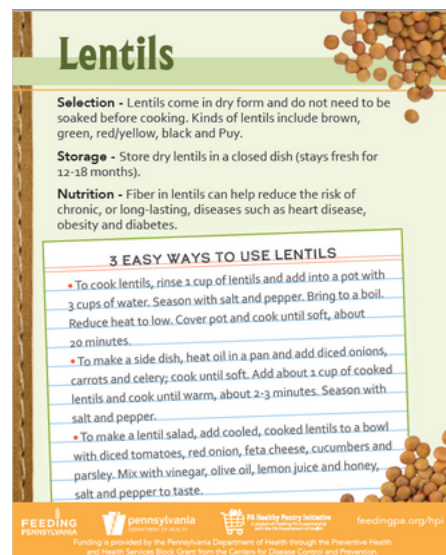
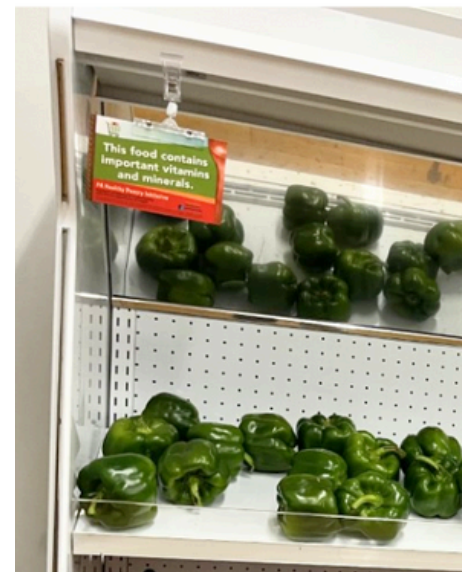
You can include additional signage indicating healthy choices within your pantry. Feeding Pennsylvania's Healthy Pantry Initiative program has signs available for your use! Signs are available in both English and Spanish and are free to download.

## Feeding Pennsylvania's Healthy Pantry Initiative



# Additional Resources, Continued

## Feeding Pennsylvania's Healthy Pantry Initiative



By visiting the Healthy Pantry Initiative Website you gain access to the shelf signs, posters, recipe cards and the Healthy Pantry Initiative Toolkit. This toolkit is your guide to implement strategies within your pantry that will improve your space, inventory, and neighbor resources.

<https://www.feedingpa.org/pa-healthy-pantry-initiative/resources-for-pantries/>

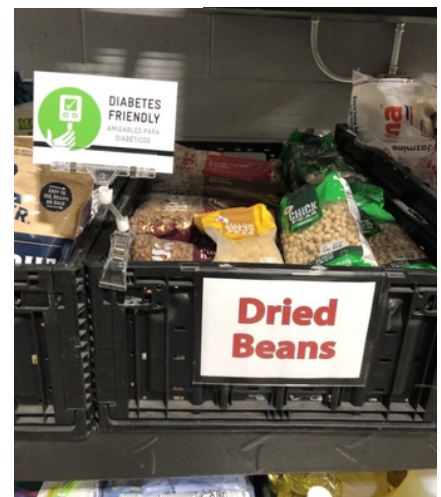


# Additional Resources, Continued

## Supporting Wellness At Pantries (SWAP)

- Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) is a stoplight nutrition ranking system designed to help promote healthy food choices at food banks and food pantries.
- Foods are ranked **Green** (Choose Often), **Yellow** (Choose Sometimes), and **Red** (Choose Rarely) based on their saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar content.
- Corresponding shelf tags display messages to be received by pantry guests. These messages inform the neighbor and help them to make healthier choices.

For more information on how to start using SWAP, please contact  
[NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org](mailto:NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org)



# Are you Ready for a Choice Pantry Model?

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Offering a choice gives our neighbors back their dignity and allows them to choose the right foods for their family. We hope this toolkit provides you with the information to improve your pantry and to better serve your neighbors.

Use this checklist to determine if your pantry is ready to start offering more choice for the neighbors you serve.

- ☐ **I believe neighbors benefit from selecting their own food at a pantry.**
- ☐ **I am willing to discuss making changes with my staff/volunteers.**
- ☐ **My staff/volunteers will work with me to put neighbor choice into action at my pantry.**
- ☐ **I have an idea which neighbor choice model would best fit my pantry's space.**
- ☐ **I can get supplies, or I already have the supplies I need to include some elements of choice.**

Contact the Nutrition Team at [NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org](mailto:NutritionTeam@centralpafoodbank.org) to discuss ways to put choice into action at your food pantry!

# **Conclusion**

## **Thank You!**

Thank you for exploring the *Choice Pantry Toolkit*. The Nutrition Team at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank hopes this toolkit can serve as a guide to educating and implementing an element of choice in your food pantry.

Thank you for playing an integral role in anti-hunger work in the communities you serve. Your efforts are creating a foundation for improved food and nutrition security for our neighbors, as well as promoting meaningful change in our communities.