

BENEFITS OF USING A CLIENT CHOICE SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION IN YOUR FOOD PANTRY

For your pantry:

- Less food waste, as clients do not throw away foods they don't like or can't use
- Your pantry can monitor what foods are popular and which are not, and base future purchases on that knowledge. Therefore, money is saved as rarely selected items are not purchased as frequently
- More flexibility in what foods to purchase; no need to have enough of every item for every household
- Less staff time spent preparing food boxes can mean more time available for staying open later in the evenings or on weekends, which may be the only time the working poor can shop
- On-hand grocery inventory will reduce in size, allowing for a smaller, more organized pantry

For your clients:

- Provides a sense of dignity which can positively impact their confidence level
- Provides the opportunity to acquire and exercise skills in budgeting
- Ensures that clients get the types of food their families need, enjoy and will use
- Ensures that clients who have special food needs (e.g. diabetics) are getting the foods they need and not getting foods they can't eat
- Prevents the distribution of highly perishable foods to households unequipped with functional stoves or refrigerators
- Provides more interaction with staff and volunteers, enhancing the shopping experience and client morale

For your volunteers:

- The volunteer work is more personally rewarding and enjoyable
- They are interacting with people instead of boxes of food
- The work is less physically demanding



A common method of client choice is a system based on how much each item would cost if purchased at a typical grocery store. PLEASE NOTE: **This refers to prices that are charged at a typical grocery store and NOT the cost to the pantry from the Eastern Illinois Foodbank.** The pantry first devises cost ranges on which point values will be established, and next develops point values for each range. Each item is then given a point value, and a color-coded sticker is placed on each item based on the price range into which it falls.

Foods that cost this much	Receive this many points	And are coded with this color sticker
\$0 - \$1.00	1	red
\$1.01 - \$2.00	2	orange
\$2.01 - \$3.00	3	yellow
\$3.01 - \$4.00	4	green
\$4.01 +	5	blue

The chart below **suggests** how many points per person can be expected to feed them for 3-4 days:

Family Size	Number of Points	# of Non-food Items (not points)
1	20	2
2	40	3
3	55	4
4	70	5
5	85	6
6	100	7
7	115	8
8	130	9

Some items are not counted in the total points:

- Fresh bread and pastry products
- Fresh produce

Advantages:

- Has the potential of enabling clients to learn valuable budgeting skills.
- There are various ways to determine the total number of points to provide to each client, such as converting the value of a traditional box to points, or allotting a certain amount of points per person.
- The family is allowed a limited choice of non-food items such as shampoo, diapers or over-the-counter medicines that do not count in the total points allowed the family.

Other Considerations:

- Requires knowledge of typical grocery prices
- Volunteer time for determining values and placing stickers on items

Pantry Needs:

- Color-coded stickers
- Informational charts



With this method of client choice, the clients are able to choose whatever foods they want up to the maximum number of pounds they are allotted and a pantry volunteer weighs out the food at checkout.

The chart below suggests how many pounds per person can be expected to feed them for 3-4 days:

Family Size	Number of Pounds	# of Non-food Items (not pounds)
1	20	2
2	25	3
3	30	4
4	35	5
5	40	6
6	45	7
7	50	8
8	55	9

Some items are not counted in the total pounds:

- Fresh bread and pastry products
- Fresh produce

Advantages:

- Enables the food pantry to make use of lots of different kinds of donations.
- Food pantry can take assorted cases of food without being concerned about having enough of any one item.
- The family is allowed a limited choice of non-food items such as shampoo, diapers or over-the counter medicines that do not count in the total points allowed the family.

Other Considerations:

- Volunteer time for weighing each client's food
- Client may need to go return items to shelf or choose additional items to get to weight allowed.

Pantry Needs:

- Scale
- Informational charts



With this method of client choice, the clients are able to choose whatever foods they want within each food type up to the maximum number of pounds they are allotted and a pantry volunteer weighs out the food at checkout.

The chart below suggests how many pounds per person can be expected to feed them for 3-4 days:

Food Type	Family of 1-3 (25 pounds)	Family of 4-6 (45 pounds)	Family of 7 or more (60 pounds)
Meat, (includes canned tuna, beef stew, etc.)	3 pounds	5 pounds	8 pounds
Other Protein (peanut butter, eggs, beans, etc.)	2 pound	4 pounds	5 pounds
Fruit & Veggies (canned or frozen)	8 pounds	14 pounds	18 pounds
Grains (cereal, pasta, rice, flour, etc.)	8 pounds	14 pounds	18 pounds
Fats, oils & sweets (cooking oil, sugar, snacks, sweet drinks, baking needs)	2 pounds	4 pounds	5 pounds
Dairy Products	2 pounds	4 pounds	6 pounds
Non-food Items (shampoo, diapers, toilet paper, cosmetics)	3 items	6 items	9 items

Some items are not counted in the total pounds:

- Fresh bread and pastry products
- Fresh produce

Advantages:

- The food pantry keeps a wide selection of items on hand, without having to keep a lot of any one item.
- It allows them to work with changes in the food supply. For instance, if meat is in short supply, they divide their total supply by the average number of families that come in, and scale back.
- The family is allowed a limited choice of non-food items such as shampoo, diapers or over-the counter medicines that do not count in the total pounds allowed the family.

Other Considerations:

- Volunteer time for weighing each client's food
- Client may need to go return items to shelf or choose additional items to get to weight allowed.

Pantry Needs:

- Scale
- Informational charts



With this method of client choice, each family is given a total number of items to choose. All volunteers have to do is count the number of items.

Suggested numbers of items for pantries to distribute:

Family of 1-3	Family of 4-6	Family of 7 or more
20 Items	40 Items	50 Items

Some items are not counted in the total items:

- Fresh bread and pastry products
- Fresh produce

Advantages:

- An uncomplicated way to start a choice system.
- The food pantry keeps a wide selection of items on hand, without having to keep a lot of any one item.
- It allows the pantry to work with changes in the food supply. For instance, if meat is in short supply, they can put a small sign on the shelf saying, "No more than 3 meat items per family, please!"
- The family is allowed a limited choice of non-food items such as shampoo, diapers or over-the counter medicines that do not count in the total pounds allowed the family.

Other Considerations:

- During the transition period, until the pantry gets a general idea of which items are more popular or less popular, there may be leftovers or some families may not get as many items as they need.

Pantry Needs:

- Informational charts



This is a limited client choice system and is the least preferred. The pantry sets up a large number of food boxes in advance, and distributes them according to family size. Clients may decline items or place them on the “free table” for others to take. The clients then also can choose a few items from the “free table” depending on what has been donated to the pantry lately.

Food Type	Family of 1-3	Family of 4-6	Family of 7-more
Veggies	2 cans	4 cans	6 cans
Soup	2 cans	4 cans	6 cans
Mac and Cheese	1 box	2 boxes	3boxes
Spaghetti or Noodles	1 pkg	1 pkg	2 pkgs
Spaghetti Sauce	1 jar	1 jar	2 jars
Meat (chili, stew, etc.)	2 cans	2 cans	3 cans
Tuna	2 cans	3 cans	4 cans
Dessert	1 box	1 box	2 boxes
Fruit	2 cans	4 cans	6 cans
Miscellaneous Items	2	4	6
Boxed Dinner	1	2	3
Boxed Potatoes or Rice	1	2	3
Peanut Butter	1	2	2
Juice	1	1	1

Choice items as available (random donated items, bread, fresh vegetables or fruit, etc.)

Advantages:

- It allows the pantry to work with changes in the food supply. For instance, if meat is in short supply, they divide their total supply by the average number of families that come in, and scale back.

Other Considerations:

- Extensive volunteer time for packing boxes
- Pantry needs to develop a system for taking items back or doing exchanges
- Potential for congestion of people around “free table”

Pantry Needs:

- Extra space not only for “free table” but also for clients to gather around the table



In this system of client choice, the pantry provides each client with a list of currently available foods and allows them to choose which items they would like by checking them off on the list. A staff member or volunteer then prepares a bag or box for the client which contains the items chosen. This works best with one of the Point or Pound systems described above. Specifically, each item on the food list would have a point value or a pound value associated with it, and the client would “shop” from the list according to their allotment.

Advantages:

- It allows the pantry to work with changes in the food supply.
- A good transitional step between the traditional “pre-box” system and a choice system, allowing clients to at least begin choosing their foods while arrangements are being made to convert the physical space to a choice-friendly space.
- Good if only a small area is available for shopping as only volunteers go into “shopping” area

Other Considerations:

- Prevents the clients from actively participating in the “browsing” of food options. Just as many of us value the visual aspects of grocery shopping, so will your clients.
- A new list with multiple copies will have to be created and printed for each food distribution

Pantry Needs:

- Access to facilities for creating, printing and copying food lists