

TEFAP Winter Food Distribution Survey Results

The following is a summary of the responses from the Winter Food Distribution Survey. This information is a compilation of data from approximately 209 surveys collected from the Survey Monkey as well as e-mailed responses.

Link to the survey monkey:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-g4_1H6bUhX3eVx80H4jD57pDjxR9mmKOi4o1o8z_yw/edit?usp=sharing

How does the pantry distribute food outdoors?

Methods of receiving food at TEFAP pantries varies across the board, but most pantries have been able to implement some form of “no contact” service that fits their particular location and follows the present TEFAP guidelines.

Most pantries are distributing food by drive-up or walk-up service. Some pantries provide appointment only distribution. If by appointment, the participant schedules a pick up ahead of time with the pantry. At this point, a volunteer or staff person gathers information pertaining to family size and allergies (if possible).

Upon arrival the participant (by appointment or not) receives food in one of the following ways (mostly):

- Drive-up to curb or window
- Walk-up to tables in entry way or outside

At this point, a staff or volunteer determines eligibility allowing the participant to self-declare, checks id and then gets information regarding family size and allergies (if possible). Appointment only facilities already have family size and allergy related information from phone call, so this saves time.

If possible, the pantry allows for some personal choice. It is dependent on the individual inventory at the pantry. An example is that one pantry is able to offer a choice of frozen meat options. Some pantries provide a shopping list for participants. Most pantries are prepacking bags or boxes and adding the fresh, refrigerated and frozen goods on an as needed basis.

After eligibility and family size are determined, the volunteer that gathered this information goes into the pantry food packing area is located and informs the staff/volunteers who are prepping the food distribution of the order. The commodities are then bagged or boxed up for delivery.

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At this point, a variety of processes is implemented dependent on the particular pantry logistics. If the pantry is distributing through a curbside method most facilities bring out the food in a cart. Most pantries will load the bags/boxes into the trunk, but ask the participants to unload food items into the backseat on their own if that is where they want them loaded in the vehicle. Some pantries meet participants at the door with a cart and have them take the cart and food items to their vehicle, unload the items and return the carts to the pantry building. Once returned the carts are being sanitized in between use.

If the style of service is a walk-up style of distribution, the procedure is mainly the same except that the participant is solely responsible for transporting food items back to their vehicle most of the time.

Will your pantry be able to implement “no contact” service into the winter months?

Out of 209 responses to the Winter Food Distribution Survey, the following results were determined:

- 162 out of 209 respondents stated they would be continuing “no contact” distribution.
- 27 of 209 respondents stated they are unsure if they will be able to continue “no contact” distribution.
- 15 out of 209 respondents stated they would not be able to continue “no contact” distribution.

****Note:** Errors in survey data entry made some surveys unusable accounting for the fact that the recorded responses above do not match the total reported number of responses.

Some additional comments to note are as follows:

- Investing in outdoor structures such as canopies, tents, sheds, heaters, weatherproof signs, plastic doorway sheeting normally used in freezers and coolers as well as a bell apparatus used to signify when cars have arrived to the food distribution area.
- Getting warmer clothes for volunteers.
- May be more closures throughout the winter months.
- May add hours to accommodate longer process.
- Conversion to appointment only.
- Electronic check in service.
- Transitioning to combination of appointments with drive up or walk in service.
- Number cards on vehicles utilized to keep orders straight.
- Working with local health officials to put together a plan for winter distribution.
- Bring inside with safety precautions put in place: masks, social distancing, face shields and Plexiglas installed to protect volunteers/staff, small groups only, signage to show direction of flow of traffic, etc.

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What challenges do you see with providing “no contact” service into the winter months?

Common responses related to the challenges of “no contact” food distribution in winter:

Weather related:

- Cold, snow, ice=general weather concerns.
- Weather causing difficulties for handicapped individuals.
- Concerns with keeping parking lot clear of snow, salting areas to remove ice.
- Hard to gather and record information when weather is cold and rainy.
- Food getting wet outdoors.

Volunteer related:

- Turnover/shortage of volunteers.
- Physically more difficult for volunteers-longer hours, heavier lifting, etc.
- Lack of younger volunteers now that school is back in session.
- Miss contact/greater communications with participants.

Participant related:

- Lack of choice for participants.
- Difficult to transport groceries.
- Appointment pick up is challenging for individuals without cell phones.
- Receiving food items they cannot use or do not want.
- Miss contact/greater communications with staff and volunteers.

Pantry related:

- Social distancing.
- Concern about serving “normal numbers” if participation goes back up.
- Increased costs associated with safety and sanitation measures. Examples: carts, cleaning supplies, PPE supplies, warming equipment, etc.
- Participants late for appointments/slows process.
- Lack of data resulting in less detailed data analysis.
- Increased need for space associated with food storage.
- Increased food waste due to lack of “personal choice”.
- Miss contact/greater communications with participants.