More Resources & Recommendations for Food Pantries: COVID-19

Updated March 19, 2020

This is the second document Indy Hunger Network has created with recommendations for local food pantries during the coronavirus pandemic. Below are updated suggestions, based on conversations with our partners, recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and strategies adopted by other hunger relief organizations.

- Keep the community informed about your pantry. If your pantry closes or changes hours, please contact asindorf@indyhunger.org as soon as possible. Indy Hunger Network is keeping an updated list of available food resources during this crisis on our website at www.indyhunger.org/find-help. This list is updated daily to make sure that we are sharing the most up-to-date information at all times.

- Encourage vulnerable volunteers to stay home. This includes anyone over the age of 60, anyone who is pregnant, and anyone who has cancer, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or diabetes. If this leaves you with no volunteers and you need help recruiting temporary volunteers during this time, please contact asindorf@indyhunger.org.

- Remove or streamline intake procedures. Keep track of the number of households served, but eliminate as much of the intake process as possible. (Please note that pantries distributing TEFAP commodities should follow guidance from the Indiana State Department of Health regarding intake requirements for TEFAP.) Food pantry clients may self-quarantine in the event of further viral spread, meaning that they will no longer be able to safely access the pantry in person. Recognize that a friend or family member may act as a proxy shopper for these clients and could be unable to present typical required documentation.

- Advertise shopping by proxy for anyone who feels sick, has been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, is pregnant, is over age 60, or has underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk. Consider posting proxy information on your website, Facebook page, and in your pre-packed pantry boxes.

- Sanitize anything clients, staff, or volunteers touch, including pens and iPads. Wipe down frequently touched items between each use. Details on cleaning and disinfection recommendations for community organizations can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/COVIDsanitize.

- Distribute information about symptoms and prevention measures. Materials can be found and printed here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html. If anyone experiences COVID-19 symptoms, they should call the ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center at 317-233-7125 (317-233-1325 after hours). Materials on COVID-19 can be placed in each client's pre-packed pantry box.

- Require volunteers to wear gloves at all times. Rubber gloves can be sanitized and reused if disposable gloves are limited. Allow food to be touched only by gloved volunteers.

- Increase the amount of food distributed to each client in order to decrease the number of visits each client makes this month.

- If your pantry is also a soup kitchen, distribute meals to go instead of in a congregate setting.

- Temporarily stop receiving used clothes, books, and other items for the pantry.

- Establish protective measures for vulnerable populations, such as home delivery. People at higher risk include those over 60 years of age or who are pregnant as well as individuals with underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems. The pantries which already offer home delivery do not currently have the capacity to take on more deliveries, so this service will need to be offered by additional pantries.

- Restrict all interpersonal contact, including handshakes.

- Ensure that handwashing stations (or hand sanitizer) are available at the pantry for volunteers.

- Distribute sanitizer, tissues, or cleaning products to those you serve.

- Distribute pre-packed bags or boxes of food instead of using client choice methods.

- If possible, have pre-packed boxes of food available for clients who have dietary restrictions–specifically folks who are diabetic, have dairy allergies, or have gluten allergies. See [this document](#) for information about serving clients with diabetes, and [this document](#) for information on food allergies.

- Do not allow clients to sit and/or wait inside the pantry. If possible, move the food pantry to the parking lot by bringing pre-bagged food to clients' cars or switching to a drive-through model.

- Connect clients to other resources. For example, consider including Community Compass flyers in the pre-packed bags. To print flyers, visit www.indyhunger.org/compass. If you do not have access to a printer but want to distribute flyers, contact asindorf@indyhunger.org to have flyers delivered to your pantry.

- Check with the Indiana State Department of Health regularly to see new developments and recommendations: https://tinyurl.com/ISDHcovid.

- For more recommendations and resources for community organizations, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html.