

A detailed, close-up photograph of several snowflakes against a dark blue background. The snowflakes are intricate, six-pointed crystalline structures with fine, feathery details. The lighting highlights their delicate, glass-like texture.

WINTER DISTRIBUTIONS

BEST PRACTICES

PARTNERING TO END HUNGER



Good Shepherd

FOOD BANK OF MAINE

DRIVE-UP MODEL:

There are agencies that are able to accommodate a drive-through or open-air distribution model. Below, find some tricks and tips to help clients get it and out quickly, while keeping everyone safe!

- Clients must remain in vehicle
- Offer the food distribution point at the pantry entryway so food moves the shortest distance
 - If the distribution point cannot happen at the entryway, consider a pop-up tent or other shelter, especially during inclement weather
- Have one or two volunteers direct traffic, or consider some solid, clear and legible signage as a substitute
 - Have traffic flow in a "U" if at all possible so there is no crossing or backing up of vehicles (remaining cautious of moving cars)
 - If space is limited, have a designated parking area with numbered parking spots
 - Arrange for reliable plow service so access is clear even after inclement weather
 - Be sure to sand/salt walkways regularly
- Have a volunteer act as a greeter; station by entryway for brief intake and to determine number in client's household
 - Consider having a call-ahead intake process, especially if using appointment scheduling
- Prepacked items can be loaded into trunk of car
- Intake forms can be completed by volunteers & signed "on behalf of" attendees
- Outdoor volunteers should wear bright/fluorescent clothing and should rotate with indoor volunteers to keep warm
- Purchase/provide folding chairs, canopies and heaters for the comfort and safety of outdoor volunteers
- Volunteers can load boxes/bags directly in to trunk, for a contactless experience
- Have volunteers come in a day or two before distribution days to prepack/prepare bags/boxes of product
- Use a laminated/plastic covered menu to allow for client selection while maintaining social distance; remember to sanitize menu after each use

ACCOMMODATING CLIENT-CHOICE OR AN INDOOR PANTRY:

For some agencies, indoor distributions will be resumed in the winter months. With a little bit of planning and precautionary consideration, client choice and indoor models can operate safely. For a list of recommended precautionary recommendations, please see "COVID-19 Safety Precautions" at the bottom of this document

- Distribute a choice-menu identifying items generally available
 - Use a laminated/plastic covered menu to allow for client selection while maintaining social distance; remember to sanitize menu after each use
- Provide a standard box of shelf-stable items (scaled to household size) while accommodating choice of both refrigerated and frozen items
- Post available offerings on website, Facebook, or distribute to clients in advance
- Provide ability for clients to make selections prior to arrival
 - Call-in selections
 - Submit a form online (this option works well for those offering delivery as well)
 - Consider a mail-in option
- Volunteers can pack items for clients, to minimize unnecessary food contact
- If a client is unable/unwilling to wear a mask, deliver food to their vehicle and place in trunk
- Eliminate waiting rooms, instead have clients wait in cars. Use a number system to alert clients of their turn
- Bag/prepack produce
- Allow only one client from each family/household to be in the facility
- Limit the amount of individuals in the facility at a time ([see "COVID-19 Safety Precautions" below for CDC recommendations](#))



REDUCING THE LINE:

Whether operating a Drive-through model, or an indoor model, there are steps you can take to minimize overcrowding or bottlenecking, and improve or speed-up the flow of the distribution.

- Consider booking appointments for either in-pantry or drive-up visits
 - Typically, 3-5 people can be serviced per quarter hour (so max 20 per hour)
 - Having four time slots per 15 minutes, with one extra reserved for someone who 'just shows up' can be effective
 - Scheduling can occur:
 - During the current visit for next distribution
 - Via phone
 - [Online](#)
 - Through volunteer outreach
- "Just-in-time" appointments can be made using restaurant-style [wireless paging system](#)
- Consider having a call ahead intake process, especially if using appointment scheduling
- Encourage attendees to pick-up for family members or neighbors, reducing the total number of people in attendance
- Build out a robust delivery program:
 - Establish efficient delivery routes
 - Recruit willing volunteers
 - Set up delivery times/appointments to ensure patrons will be home to bring in food right away
 - Volunteer should text or call prior to dropping food on doorstep to ensure food is attended to and to confirm delivery is received
- Give an abundance of food so clients need to come less frequently
- Expand hours or add distribution days to help stagger clients and volunteers
- Bags and/or boxes are placed curbside or on a table with client's name (first or last, or first with last four digits of phone number) and clients will pick up their food product there (if using a table, remember to sanitize the table regularly after food is taken)



COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS:

It is important to practice the precautions shared below, especially those recommended by the CDC. These precautions allow the food distribution, regardless of model, operate as safely as possible for staff, volunteers and clients.

- Provide a supply of masks, sanitizer and disposable gloves for staff, volunteers and clients
- Staff, volunteers and clients should wear masks properly, according to CDC guidelines
- Staff, volunteers and clients should maintain social distancing, remaining 6 feet apart
- Clients selecting their own produce should wear disposable gloves in addition to masks
- Require staff and volunteers to properly wash their hands upon arrival for their shift and encourage frequent handwashing/sanitizing throughout shift
- Consider establishing a staff & volunteer wellness screening process prior to the start of shifts
- Consider rearranging the inside of the pantry to allow volunteers to maintain social distancing when pre-packing boxes
- Refer to the [CDC's Considerations for Food Pantries and Food Distribution Sites](#) for more information
- If agency plans to host inside choice model distributions, they should refer to the [CDC's information for grocery store and food retail employees](#) for additional safety precautions during COVID-19
- For cleaning and disinfection, agencies should refer to the [CDC's Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection](#)
- Use signage to remind staff, volunteers & clients about social distancing, wearing masks and proper hand washing- [CDC Print Resources](#)
- Develop a sick policy for volunteers/patrons taking into consideration CDC recommendations:
 - [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)
 - [When to Quarantine](#)
 - [When You Can Be Around Others After You Had or Likely Had COVID-19](#)
 - [Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure](#)
 - [What To Do If You Are Sick](#)
 - [Considerations for Community Based Organizations](#)
- Limit the total occupancy of buildings to 5 persons per 1,000 square feet of visitor-accessible space. Review Maine's occupancy guidelines, [here](#)
- Have a sign-in sheet for staff, volunteers and clients, with name and contact information for contact tracing should someone contract COVID-19
- Minimize shared touch surfaces, i.e. pens, pencils, paper, reference materials, and computer screens
- Clean/sanitize restrooms on regular basis, considering increased frequency

COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS: (CONTINUED)



- Have separate restrooms for staff/volunteers and clients, if possible Provide handwashing signs at every sink
- Clean frequently touched surfaces – tables, chairs, light switches, countertops, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, pens, pencils and computer screens at least daily and more often if possible
- Use floor decals for traffic patterns and safe social distancing
- For older and higher risk volunteers, consider remote volunteer opportunities like:
 - Writing thank you cards
 - Doing patron intake over the phone
 - Taking patron food orders via phone or online
 - Managing delivery routes
 - Calling patrons to schedule appointments for pickup or delivery
 - Researching grant opportunities
 - Entering retail receipt reports online through GSFb website
 - Ordering/managing agency supplies or food
 - Writing volunteer job descriptions or handbook that your agency has always wanted to establish
 - Establishing or maintaining social media accounts to support raising awareness about the agency and build community support
- Provide conspicuous, noticeable signage around policies and procedures. Signage should be provided in multiple languages, if necessary. Policies and procedures can include:
 - Mask use
 - Occupancy limits
 - Physical distancing
 - Not coming to pantry/meal site if sick or exposed to someone who is sick
- If operations have resumed inside, proactively create a plan of action should there be resurgence. Be ready to resume curbside/no contact distribution with prepacked boxes, etc.

COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS: (CONTINUED)

- Have rotating teams of volunteers. This can help contain potential infection to one team, allowing operations to continue with other teams while one team should need to quarantine
- Create a communication plan in the event the facility needs to close. Include pertinent information like:
 - Alternate pantries
 - Neighboring food assistance programs
 - General Assistance phone numbers
 - Anticipated re-opening date
 - Updates to voicemail, email out-of-office messages, etc.