

Food Pantry Procedures Revised June 8, 2015

The objective of the Bayside Food Pantry is to provide nutritious food to area families in crisis. It is heart-breaking to think of any man, woman, or child going without the basic necessities of food – to them even one meal can be a huge blessing in their lives. But at the same time we need to establish policies to ensure we reach the most needy families and make efficient use of our limited resources. What follows are our policies for our front office personnel (usually the receptionist or church secretary), who are the “face” of kindness and charity to those we help.

AREA SERVED: There are several food pantries in our city. Therefore, it makes sense that we restrict the area we serve to avoid overlap. We serve people within the zip codes of 23451, 23452, 23455, and 23462. We make an exception for any request made by a member of our church, or for families referred to us by Virginia Beach Social Services. If the request does not meet these rules, please refer to the Food Pantry Zip Code Resource Book (in the orange Food Pantry binder) to help the needy family find the right resource to contact.

WHAT WE PROVIDE: Normally our shoppers pack groceries to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner for three days. Every six weeks, however, we serve families referred to us by Virginia Beach Social Services, and for them we provide groceries for seven days.

HOW OFTEN DO WE HELP THE SAME FAMILY? The Bayside Food Pantry will assist the same family once every three months. There are exceptions – known by a church member, in a crisis period, are elderly or handicapped, on a very limited fixed income, etc.. Decisions on exceptions will be made by the Food Pantry Co-Chairs and noted in the database.

WHAT TO DO WHEN FOLKS REQUEST HELP:

- The receptionist/church secretary will receive the food pantry request, fill out the designated form (located in the Food Pantry folder labeled “Incoming Calls”) and either accept for shopping at that time, or inform the person that we will call them back after a decision has been reached.
 - Before accepting the request, check the Food Pantry database (located on the computer, or a recent print out located in the orange Food Pantry binder) to ensure they are not on the “DO NOT HELP” list.
 - Before accepting the request, determine if it is Social Services week – if it is, explain to the requester that we are on call for Social Services and will take their information (i.e. fill out the form) and fulfill their request *if* we do not get a referral from Social Services. Keep up to two (non-Social Services) requests in back-up. If Social Services does not call that day, call the requester and tell them we can help them that day (make sure they still want it and can pick up). Provide the form to the shopper noting that it is not a Social Services family, and to provide three days of meals only.
 - The cut off time for accepting requests for the day is 10:30 am. If a request is received after 10:30 am, consider it for the next day. An exception to this is for Social Services week – if Social Services has not called by 10:30 am, the receptionist or church secretary should call them (Michelle Wilson, 385-3201) to ask if they have anyone in need. If they do not, fulfill one of your back-up requests explained above.
- Once a request has been accepted, wait for the shopper to call in (usually by 10:45 am) to inform them they have a family to shop for. If the shopper doesn’t call in by 11:30, call them. The shopper’s name and phone number is listed on the Food Pantry calendar for the month (located in the orange Food Pantry binder). If the shopper cannot be reached, call one of the Food Pantry Co-Chairs for assistance.
- During adverse weather conditions (imminent hurricane or snow storm), the Food Pantry may need to be put on hold depending on the circumstances. If there is no risk to the safety of the receptionist/church secretary (taking and receiving the requesters), shoppers or requesters, fulfill the request. Otherwise, ask the requester to call back after the danger is over.
- Call the requester if there is a change in the pick-up time – i.e. church closing early.

WHAT TO DO WHEN FOLKS ARRIVE TO PICK UP THEIR FOOD:

- Inform the requestor that grocery pick-up time is 3 pm, unless other special arrangements have been made and approved by the shopper.
- When the requestor arrives, ask for the ID of the food recipient. Check it against the Food Pantry form (name, address, zip code). Any discrepancies must be noted on the form and may be grounds for placement on the “DO NOT HELP” list.
- If the requestor has a car, ask them to drive over to the side door near the kitchen, and come in that door to meet you. The non-perishable groceries will be in shopping carts in the kitchen near the Food Pantry. If there are perishable groceries they will be indicated on a slip of paper stapled to the shopping cart bags, and will be in the Food Pantry refrigerator or freezer. All bags should have the name of the requestor on them – please check in the unlikely event we are serving two requests that day.
- Allow the requestor to take the carts to load the groceries in their car. Ensure return of the carts to the kitchen.
- Place completed form in the folder labeled “Completed FP Shopping” (located in desk filing drawer).

WHAT IF THE REQUESTOR DOES NOT SHOW UP? Unfortunately this happens – infrequently. Do not call the requestor. If they call and explain that they are having difficulty coming in that day, tell them we can hold them until 10:30 am the next day. If the requestor is a no-show, note this information on their form. The requestor will be able to request groceries again in three months – but if they are a no-show twice they are put on the “DO NOT HELP” list. Use unpicked-up groceries to fulfill the request for the next day.

WHAT IF THERE IS A UNSCHEDULED WALK-IN? We can usually help these folks even in addition to our regular caller, following these rules:

- Walk-in requestor should meet with the receptionist, church secretary, or other staff member to discuss their need.
- A Food Pantry form should be filled out just the same as for those calling in. Food needs will be fulfilled using non-perishable groceries available in the Food Pantry only. Particularly in these cases, ask about their transportation – folks on foot or on a bike cannot carry as many groceries. Use your discretion. Sometimes all they can handle is a few ready-to-eat items.
- Groceries can be packed by any church staff/volunteers - the receptionist, church secretary, staff member, or shopper (if already at the church). When packing the groceries, note the family information on the recap form on the counter in the Food Pantry. And please check expiration dates on cans and packages given to requestors – don’t give expired food.

Procedures revised and approved by the Community Service Ministry on June 8, 2015