

Connecticut Food Bank Membership Requirements and Application Information

We are pleased that your agency is interested in becoming a member of Connecticut Food Bank. After reviewing the following information you should be able to determine whether or not your agency meets the criteria to request an application for membership.

To be eligible for membership at Connecticut Food Bank, an agency must be able to provide a copy of its IRS 501(c)(3) letter of nonprofit status from the IRS (not the state tax E.I.N. document) and prove that the primary mission of the agency is charitable service to the ill, needy or infants (minor children). The agency must distribute donated products free of charge for use by the ill, needy, or infants and may not sell or use donated products in exchange for money, other property, or services.

Agencies need to determine what type of program they are applying for. Programs should be in operation for at least two months and/or be able to present a detailed operational plan prior to submitting an application.

The location of a program may determine whether or not membership will be granted. If the program is in a well-served area and is unable to provide services on a different day/time than existing programs, Connecticut Food Bank may not consider membership.

Connecticut Food Bank charges an annual membership fee of \$25 per program, prorated based on when an agency becomes a member

Program Definitions:

Emergency Programs:

- Soup Kitchen- Provide a congregate meal daily, weekly or monthly
- Shelter- Provide shelter to someone that would otherwise be homeless
- Pantry- Provide non-prepared food items to anyone in need. Any agency interested in operating a pantry must allow clients to choose the food items they need and will use. Pre-packing bags is no longer an option. Client choice is the most efficient way to provide food because the person taking items will take what they know will be used.

Non-Emergency Programs

- Residential Program- Provide temporary or long time supportive housing for a variety of reasons.
- Internal Pantry - Provide non-prepared food items only to clients in a residential or transitional program.
- Day Program- Program providing service during the day such as a senior center, day care or after school program. Provide either a snack or meal.

Requirements for **ALL** Programs:

1. Food must be kept in a secure room at room temperature (50-70°). Food and non food items must be kept separate. All items need to be at least six (6) inches from the floor. Suggest using shelving to allow for cleaning. If pallets are used- they need to be changed out every 6 months and marked with the change date.

2. Must have at least one functioning refrigerator and freezer dedicated to the program (a combo unit is acceptable) with working thermometers in place. There needs to be written temperature logs for each unit with weekly recordings *at minimum*. If there is an out of range reading, there needs to be a documented explanation.
3. Coordinator of the program must have access to the Internet & email.
4. Must shop at Connecticut Food Bank at least once a month.
5. Connecticut Food Bank invoices must be kept on file for up to three years. These will be checked at the annual site visit. A non-shopping staff or volunteer should check the invoice when the food arrives at the program to ensure all the items are there and sign as confirmation.
6. Cannot be located in a private residence of any kind. Connecticut Food Bank items cannot go to a staff or volunteer's residence for ANY reason.
7. Must be registered with 211 Infoline. They are the largest, most convenient resource for services available to the public and you can't help people if they can't find you.
8. Emergency programs must post *at minimum* an 8.5 x 11 inch (letter sized) sign indicating the day and hours of operation along with a contact name and number. Any phone message or website must also indicate the days and hours of operation.
9. Must provide additional resource information or services beyond food. If someone is coming to your program for food assistance, they need other services as well. Ideally programs will provide case management or invite other agencies in for on-site SNAP screenings. At minimum programs must hand out SNAP outreach materials, 211 information and lists of other programs in the area.
10. Clients and meals must be accurately tracked and reported. Pantries should utilize the Connecticut Food Bank client tracking sheet or a similar system if it's already in place. It's imperative to properly track the number of separate individuals served each month. Soup kitchens/meal programs must have a consistent meal count method such as people count or plate count.
11. Connecticut Food Bank Monthly Statistical Reports need to be submitted by the 15th of each month for the previous month. A program will not be allowed to shop if they fall two months behind in submitting statistics.
12. Programs need to be open to Connecticut Food Bank staff visits. We normally schedule our site visits, but we may stop by without prior notice.

13. Program staff and volunteers need to have food safety training. Food safety is a very important aspect of any program. The intensity of training depends on program type:

- a. Emergency and internal pantries need to have *at least* one person pass “Food Safety for Pantries”- a manual and test Connecticut Food Bank provides.
- b. Soup kitchens and programs serving meals to 20 or more people need to have *at least* one Qualified Food Operator certified staff or volunteer on location during meal preparation times. Certification can be obtained through ServSafe or other recognized Food Safety Institution. **All** people involved in the cooking process need to have some form of general food safety understanding.
- c. Programs serving meals/snacks to less than 20 people need to have *at least* one staff or volunteer on location during meal preparation times certified through the ServSafe Food Handlers course. **All** people involved in the cooking process need to have some form of general food safety understanding.

In addition to the above requirements **Pantries** must also:

1. Allow clients to choose all the items they would like to take. People don't eat the same foods, so they shouldn't have to take something they won't eat. Instead of spending hours packing bags, you can spend that time with the client as they pack their own bag. It's more user-friendly for them and more enjoyable for you.
2. Must be open and allow clients to come *at least* once per month for the entire year. Ideally programs would be open weekly.
3. Operating days and hours need to be consistent. Example: 3rd Wednesday at Noon or 2nd Saturday at 1 p.m.
4. Must be serving at least 30 households monthly. Connecticut Food Bank may make exceptions if there's not a similar program in the area.

In addition to the above **requirements Soup Kitchens and Residential Feeding Programs** must also:

1. Have kitchen approved by the local Health Department or submit something in writing from the Health Department saying an inspection isn't required. Inspection records need to be reviewed during the food bank site visit.
2. Must be open at least once a month on consistent days. Example: 3rd Wednesday or 4th Saturday.
3. Connecticut Food Bank makes food safety a high priority and kitchens need to be properly equipped with:
 - a. A three (3) bay stainless steel/aluminum sink (Wash, Rinse, Sanitize)
 - b. A separate hand washing station with soap and paper towels
 - c. Latex or plastic gloves for food preparation/cooking.
 - d. Access to Hot & Cold water supplies.
 - e. A dishwasher- if using reusable plates, cups and utensils.
 - f. Proper pest controls in place

(Some exceptions may be made depending on Health Department approval)

Food Products Offered by Connecticut Food Bank:

Donated Product - The primary source of food found at Connecticut Food Bank is donations from all facets of the food industry. The products are obtained from the local food industry through the efforts of our Food Procurement Department and largely through membership in Feeding America, the national food bank network. There is a **shared maintenance fee** which varies with the product picked up that helps cover warehouse operating expenses. Bread, produce and various dairy products are free to all agencies.

TEFAP- Federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture makes commodity foods available to the State of Connecticut, who in turn has selected Connecticut Food Bank to distribute the food in our service areas. Connecticut Food Bank first provides food to agencies with service locations categorized as emergency feeding programs, which include emergency shelters, soup kitchens and pantries.

Connecticut Food Bank's Nutrition Assistance Program (CTNAP) - this program provides credit to agencies providing emergency food services in order to purchase high protein foods for distribution. Agencies receiving CTNAP food pay a handling fee of \$.05 per pound for the food. Each region of the State receives a percent of the overall food available based on census and poverty statistics. Allocations of food to recipient agencies are determined by the number of individuals and the number of meals they serve as reported on required monthly statistics submitted to Connecticut Food Bank.

Buying Club - a program for the purchase of rarely-donated foods at wholesale prices. This program is open to all agencies. Agencies must be members in good standing before applying for this program.

<p>If you feel that your agency can meet all requirements you may call the Programs Department for an application. Completing an application doesn't guarantee membership. Please note, Connecticut Food Bank does not accept membership applications from September – December.</p>
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