Volunteers
COVID-19 Emerging and Preparedness Practices

Hold Ctrl and Click on a FAQ listed in the Table of Contents below to jump to that section of the document and view the answer.

Table of Contents

What steps can we take to protect volunteers and food safety protocols? ..............................................2

How do we plan for reduced volunteer support? ................................................................................................2

What would trigger closing our facility to volunteers? ................................................................................3

How are Food Banks determining volunteer eligibility and screening volunteers? .................................3

How are Food Banks communicating to volunteers about shelter-in-place recommendations? ............................................4
What steps can we take to protect volunteers and food safety protocols?

Updated 03/31/2020

We recommend you issue the same personal hygiene guidelines for volunteers as for employees.

**Hand Washing**
Require volunteers to wash hands upon entering the facility. Lead volunteers to handwashing facilities/stations before beginning a shift. Temporary handwashing stations can be set up per the local health department recommendations (temporary food festival set up). Contact your local health department for guidance.

**Sample hand washing guidance** for staff and volunteers to minimize exposure and infection risks during a pandemic can be found [here](#).

**Adjusting Volunteer Activities**
Food Banks have adapted their volunteer activities in several ways including pre-screening, changing shift times, lengths and sizes, taking temperature upon arrival, hand hygiene support, social distancing strategies and immediate dismissal for any symptoms. A more detailed outline on guidance for food banks to adjust volunteer activities during the COVID-19 pandemic to minimize exposure and infection risks can be found [here](#).

**Face Masks**
Disposable facemasks should be kept on-site and used only if someone (worker or attendee) becomes sick at the site. Those who become sick should be immediately isolated from staff and participants who are not sick and given a clean disposable facemask to wear.

*While this guidance was developed with information from multiple sources (e.g., network examples, subject matter experts, external health and safety organizations), food banks should consult local public health agencies, the CDC COVID-19 site, the Feeding America COVID-19 site for updates, or other sources as needed to adapt the recommendations for local implementation.*

**How do we plan for reduced volunteer support?**

Updated 3/8/20
To plan for a possible reduction in volunteer support, food bank members are ramping up food box production in advance in order to have a ready supply to draw upon later. Some members are undergoing exercises to prioritize which programs they will continue to support and which they will suspend due to reduced volunteer capacity.

**What would trigger closing our facility to volunteers?**

*Updated 3/8/20*

Make sure to follow all your local/state health department’s guidelines. Food Lifeline in Seattle may serve as an example. After Seattle and King County Public Health officials encouraged businesses to allow employees to work remotely and issued guidelines for vulnerable populations to avoid crowds, Food Lifeline closed its facility to general volunteers in early March. As of 3/7/20, it is still hosting a small crew of production volunteers.

**How are Food Banks determining volunteer eligibility and screening volunteers?**

*Updated 3/31/20*

Food Banks have been adopting new practices to assess and screen volunteers to minimize exposure and infection risk.

Many food banks are providing guidance on who can volunteer in their facility (for instance, only those in a certain age range, or specifying volunteers cannot show any symptoms of illness). **Recommendations for considering volunteer eligibility** for participating in onsite activities during a pandemic can be found [here](#).

Feeding America recommends pre-screening volunteers over the phone before they arrive to determine if they are eligible to volunteer. **Guidance for pre-screening volunteers** during a pandemic can be found [here](#).

*Food banks should assess local factors and other variables (e.g., volunteer needs, food bank capacity, etc.) and adopt recommendations that are most appropriate for their communities and needs. While this guidance was developed with information from multiple sources (e.g., network examples, subject matter experts, external health and safety organizations), food banks should consult local public health agencies, the CDC COVID-19 site, the Feeding America COVID-19 site for updates, or other sources as needed to adapt the recommendations for local implementation.*
How are Food Banks communicating to volunteers about shelter-in-place recommendations?

Updated 3/31/20

Some Food Banks are finding that some volunteers have been confused about what a Shelter-in-place order means about being able to volunteer. Communication that other Food Banks have adopted can be found below.

Two sample volunteer shelter-in-place messages templates can be found here. Thanks to the Lakeview Pantry in Chicago and Gleaners Food Bank.

If required in your community, a sample volunteer exemption template can be found here. Thanks to the Northern Illinois Food Bank.