



The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) 2023-2024 Food Pantry Guidance

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with free emergency food assistance. TEFAP is administered in New York State by the New York State Office of General Services, OGS. OGS administers the offerings of food commodities to the food banks in New York State. Food Bank supplements its wholesale and donated inventories with USDA products that support the needs of our communities. Food Bank offers eligible partner agencies access to TEFAP's USDA commodities program through the online shopping list. Each eligible agency that has options to receive TEFAP product support must meet program eligibility and operational standards imposed by the USDA and enforced by OGS and the Food Bank of Central New York (Food Bank).

The following advice has been prepared by the Food Bank, based on current federal policy. This document is advice only and does not replace the required TEFAP Recipient Agency (RA) Agreement. This advice is specifically prepared for food pantry-type programs, and not for prepared meal sites. All information contained herein is subject to change, with or without notice.

Eligibility to participate in the USDA / TEFAP program

Recipient Agencies (RA) that source food through the USDA's TEFAP commodities program are eligible to distribute USDA TEFAP foods through the Food Bank when the following conditions are met.

- The food program or sponsor maintains 501 C3 designation.
- The food program meets "open to the public" criteria.
- The food program provides a fair and equitable food package.

Neighbors are eligible to receive food assistance through an emergency food program if:

- they meet the established income guidelines for their household size; or,
- they participate in one of the other means-tested programs listed on the TEFAP Intake Form.

Please note, in all cases, the income guidelines apply at the time the form is being completed. Income *is not* to be based on previous years, months, or weeks income – but should instead be based on the household income at the time the form is being completed.

Intake Guidance

The USDA has mandated that programs that distribute USDA foods to be prepared at home (groceries) are to use the approved Intake Form. OGS Food Distribution does not allow any alterations to the intake form.

The Intake Form is a self-declaration – neighbors are not required to provide proof of eligibility to receive pantry services. The food program may require proof an individual is living in the household by asking to see a piece of mail, a report card with an address, or benefits cards. If this process is adopted, it must be applied to all households seeking food assistance.

The USDA requires the TEFAP Intake Form to be completed by neighbors once per year. Food pantries may ask neighbors to complete a form at each visit, or once per year. The TEFAP Intake Form will be updated annually. You should verbally ask if updates are needed during the year. You can have a recipient update the information if it has changed.

Food pantries are allowed to use a supplemental intake form (one is available on the Food Bank's website) in addition to the TEFAP Intake Form. However, food pantries are not allowed to use their form to circumvent federal policy for TEFAP food distribution.

Food pantries may use the Food Bank-provided Service Insights® platform for digital intakes in place of the paper intake form.



USDA TEFAP Intake process:

- New pantry visitors are asked to complete the TEFAP/OGS Intake Form.
 - By completing the form, the recipient is certifying that they are eligible to receive USDA food. No further demonstration of eligibility is allowed.
 - Signatures are optional on the part of the neighbors.
- Food pantries may ask a client to demonstrate that they live in the food pantry's declared service area. Photo IDs cannot be required;
 - "Homeless persons or people who have just arrived in the area may not be able to provide an address [7 CFR 251.10 (a) (3)]." They can still receive pantry services/food.
- Files for other assistance programs operated by the partner agency (SNAP or WIC, for example) must be kept separately from the food pantry intake process.
- **Privacy requirements:** Food programs are prohibited from photocopying or sharing client mail, bills, IDs/birth certificates, or other information and/or proof of address. Pay stubs cannot be requested.

Fair and equitable practices must be in place for the distribution of food products. This includes information that can be easily viewed by the public.

- **Required signage:** Justice for All poster, income guidelines, program bill of rights in a visible location
- **Alternative language option forms** are available on The Food Bank website
- **Implement strategies to receive ongoing client feedback** about service hours, accessibility, food preferences and allergies, and culturally responsive foods through dialogue and surveys
- **"Proxy" pick-ups** are allowed and may be a designated person/household member. The proxy process must be applied equally, and available to all persons requesting assistance.
- **Hours of availability must be visibly posted:** Engage in community outreach with local papers, social media calendars, outreach, 211, radio, schools, and other non-profits
- **Alternative hours** such as evenings or weekends are recommended to reduce wait times and provide access for working participants
- **A posted emergency phone number** for emergency food access after-hours
- **Prohibited:**
 - Intimidating signage and/or implications that a prospective recipient's confidential information will be shared with other people, organizations, or federal agencies.
 - Language intimidating to immigrants, ESL households, and protected classes according to The Civil Rights Act of 1964.
 - Donations solicitation through requests, signs, donation boxes, or pamphlets in areas where food is served or distributed



Record-keeping

- **Report required service numbers:** monthly and on time (by the 10th).
- **Provide updated agency contact information** whenever information changes, including 501c3 status, new coordinators, authorized agency executives, addresses, emails, and/or phone numbers
- **The following documents must be kept on-site and updated annually:**
 - TEFAP Agreements
 - Food Safety training logs
 - Civil Rights training logs
- **The following documents must be updated regularly & kept on-site.**
 - **Ambient temperature logs** for dry store room temperature (the days the program is open).
 - **Temperature Logs** for freezers and refrigerators (the days the program is open).
 - **Pest Control Logs** documentation of a pest management plan for long-term pest suppression with a licensed contractor.

Record-keeping storage:

- **Intake Forms** must be kept in a secure place for the current fiscal year (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) and a minimum of the 3 previous years. Programs may use an approved electronic database/intake form such as Service Insights.
- **Delivery Invoices/receipts** must be kept for 7 years
- **Temperature Logs** must be kept for 90 days

Definitions:

- **501c3 status or sponsor:** Tax-exempt status of the non-profit or sponsor/umbrella organization
- **Designated Coordinator or liaison:** The designated site coordinator and/or contact
- **Authorized signature/executive:** Leadership mandated by a Board of Directors to represent the organization
- **Pantries:** provide food for recipients to prepare on their own
- **Soup kitchens/feeding sites/senior programs:** provide prepared meals
- **Mobile pantries:** distributions of food held where community need dictates
- **Fresh Food sites:** fresh produce, dairy, and bread for immediate distribution to recipients
- **Backpack programs:** provide take-home grocery items and snacks for weekends and holidays
- **Afterschool programs:** provide snacks or meals to youth