

FOOD BANK OF NORTH ALABAMA

SITE VISIT TIP SHEET

Site visits ensure our agency feeding partners (food pantries, soup kitchens, backpack programs, residence programs) maintain safe and effective programs. The Food Bank of North Alabama requires site inspections for all new agencies before being approved for partnership. We revisit agencies every 18-24 months and do a spot check on recordkeeping and food safety. This is the perfect time to discuss problems, questions or concerns. Such visits give us an opportunity to know our agencies on a more personal level and see the good work they are doing for our communities on a first hand basis. Additionally, agencies receiving USDA food items may be selected randomly for an audit by the USDA, so our visits keep them well-prepared.

IMPORTANT: In order to make this visit an efficient use of both our times, **please make sure ALL the records we will be reviewing are gathered up and AVAILABLE at the location we will be visiting.**

PURPOSE OF MONITORING VISIT:

- Ensure your agency remains active & successful in our common mission to address hunger in our communities. Ensure good record-keeping and proper food storage.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Typical visits last 45-60 minutes. We update our records and ask questions like how many people you serve and what your service area and reach is within your community.
- Visits are normally every other year, though we may visit more frequently as necessary .

WHAT WE LOOK FOR:

- We ask to see your Food Bank invoices and Client Eligibility forms (for the last **TWO years**)
- We ask to see where your food is stored and look for a secure, pest-free and clean environment
- We look for thermometers and temperature logs on freezers, refrigerators and dry storage areas
- We look to see that food is off the ground (4-6 inches) and away from the wall
- We look for monthly inventory reports (for USDA agencies only)



SITE VISIT FAQ's

What are some of the types of Food Storage issues I must pay special attention to?

We sometimes see problems with food temp logs, either not filled out routinely or missing for certain units. You are required to take weekly (regular program) or daily (USDA program) temp readings of ALL your storage units, which includes refrigerators and freezers, but also dry storage areas. All must have their own temp log and their own thermometer, and readings must be within the acceptable ranges.

What are you looking for on our Eligibility forms?

We sometimes see problems with these forms not being *completely* filled out, including missing means tests or poverty level notations, or missing client signatures on the back when they pick up food.

We have seen some pantries who are confused about the annual update of the eligibility form. The form gets updated and the new version sent to agencies around July of every year. At that point, EVERY client must re-certify, using the new form. Even clients you have seen repeatedly the prior year must fill out a new form and recertify when the new form comes out each year.

What unique issues do you see with Backpack programs or Soup Kitchens?

With backpack programs, we want to see that you are filing your annual reports and that you are still following all food safety practices, including temp logs. Soup kitchens must keep "Feeding Event" records, which show how many people were fed at each event, and what food bank food was used at that event.

Can I separate items like oatmeal packets or fruit cups from their original package and give them out?

In a word: No. Federal law says you cannot distribute food (except FRESH produce) that has lost its labeling information. Common problems are individual fruit cups, oatmeal packets, or sleeves of saltine crackers that once removed from their original box have NO ingredient, manufacturing, nutrition, etc information. (Besides being a legal issue, it creates additional liability for your agency in terms of potential food allergens). You may surmount this issue in one of two ways: Use a copier to make copies of the original information and tape it to the individual cups or packets – OR – simply do not distribute individual packets - instead give a client the full, intact package of food instead of separating them out.

We're moving or have moved our pantry to a new location (in same building or in a new location entirely) – is that an issue?

You are required to notify the Food Bank of changes to your program, which includes any location changes. It's important that we visit your new storage location **before** you begin distributing food from it, so we can ensure that it meets the same storage standards of your previous storage location. If you move your food storage location, even within the same building, call us immediately so we can schedule a quick inspection visit.

