

# 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. 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.*
- ***For residential facilities, a paid staff member or non-residential volunteer must be present. The agency representative must have access to all required records and be able to answer all questions regarding the operations of the facility including questions regarding funding and demographics.***
- ***If your facility has a feline companion within the premises, please let us know as one of our representatives has an allergy and will need to medicate ahead of time. (Outside Cats are not a concern)***

### **WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- Typical visits last 45-60 minutes. We update our records and ask questions regarding your ability to meet the need in your area and address any concerns or questions you may have.

### **WHAT WE LOOK FOR:**

- We ask to see your Food Bank invoices for the audit period (2 years' worth for regular agencies, **3 years for USDA agencies**).
- We ask to see where your food is stored and look for a secure, pest-free and clean environment as well as pest control logs
- We look for thermometers and temperature logs on freezers, refrigerators and dry storage areas
- We look to see that food is kept 4-6" off the ground and is also away from the wall
- We review your process for Demographic Tracking and monthly reporting of the demographic info.
- **For USDA agencies**, we also look at your Client Eligibility forms (including evidence of the annual re-certification of clients), your monthly inventories, your clear shelf/area labeling of USDA inventory to separate it from the rest of your inventory, evidence of "unit" tracking, presence of the required "Justice for All" and non-discrimination posters.
- For residential or soup kitchen agencies where food is prepared for the clients, we look for Feeding Event records (which can take multiple forms, typically something like weekly menus).

## 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. Remember that “combo” units require TWO logs -- one for the freezer section, one for the refrigerator.

### **What are you looking for on our Eligibility forms?**

(NOTE THAT EFFECTIVE 10/1/2022, Eligibility Forms are **only** required of USDA agencies). 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.