



## **Reimagining Home Delivery: Expanding Food Access in Challenging Times**

*Do you receive frequent requests for home delivery from community members unable to access your program due to health, safety, transportation, or other challenges? Home delivery is an ongoing, unmet need in our region and one of the most frequent requests our teams at the Food Bank encounter when trying to help community members access the resources they need.*

There are many ways a food pantry or meal site can offer home delivery. Some programs are run by staff and volunteers, some operate in collaboration with community organizations and community members, and some partner with schools to send food home with students. A delivery program can be any size you wish, and you determine the number of people you can accept into your program at any given time. Some programs deliver to a handful of participants, and some serve hundreds. Regardless of the model you choose or the number of people you serve, home delivery services are a vital and much needed part of our collective work in improving food access in our community, and we're here to help you design a delivery program that aligns with your capacity, the needs of your community, and Food Bank requirements.

Member agencies participating in delivery programs use a variety of strategies for including some degree of client choice when possible. Some offer medically tailored options to specific populations. We will be happy to work with you to find an approach that works best for your unique situation.

The Food Bank understands that no program can meet every delivery need that exists in the community, and we support you in creating a delivery program that provides equitable access within your current capacity. We will not advertise your delivery plan within our network or refer guests for home delivery without your permission.

Please continue reading to learn more about delivery models, food safety, and other resources. If you'd like to receive additional support in starting or growing your home delivery program, or if you're interested in being connected with potential community partners to assist with home delivery, please reach out to Agency Recruitment & Onboarding Coordinator Kate Pousont Scarborough at [katep@foodbankwma.org](mailto:katep@foodbankwma.org) or 413-419-0139.

## Delivery Model Types

*Below are some different types of delivery programs you might consider as you design your program. You might offer one or more of these types, or combine them to create a model that meets your needs:*

- **Volunteer or Staff-based delivery program:** With this type of program, guests reach out to the member agency directly to request home delivery. The member agency signs them up according to their own protocols and capacities and assigns deliveries to volunteers or staff. Some agencies use route planning software to help coordinate each delivery while others have a regular route with regular or rotating drivers.
- **Partner-Based delivery program:** With this delivery model, a community organization or community member identifies a need within their network and agrees to deliver food to people with whom they have an established relationship. Generally, the community partner contacts the member agency to request delivery and provides the needed statistics information. (A modified name and/or address MAY ALWAYS be used in the case of a safety concern.) The delivery partner signs an agreement with the member agency to deliver food to the intended recipient(s) within an agreed upon time frame (this must be on the same day food is picked up) and follows food safety guidelines established by the Food Bank and your program. The member agency packs the food for distribution, which can be picked up just before or after a regular distribution or on a different day or time as you prefer. Examples of community partners participating in this model include case workers, clergy, community & service organizations, and personal care attendants.
- **School Based delivery program:** For this type of delivery, a member agency partners with a nearby school to provide food to be sent home with students and families. These distributions often take place on a Friday, and food must be sent home on the same day the school receives it. The school signs up students for the program, determines the best method of distributing to students and families, and reports back statistics to member agencies at each distribution or each month. Some member agencies provide pre-packed bags while others provide unbagged goods for the school staff/volunteers to pack based on allergy needs, family size, etc.
- **Congregate delivery to a satellite site:** This type of delivery is similar to the *Volunteer or Staff-based delivery* program, but in this case the member agency delivers food for multiple recipients at a site nearer to the recipients' home location such as a Senior Center, Community Center, etc. In some cases, the recipients arrive at the same time and receive food directly from member agency staff. In other cases, the host organization at the satellite site arranges for same day pick up. The host organization follows food safety and other Food Bank requirements and verifies that food was received by intended recipient.
- **Occasional-basis delivery program:** Many member agencies have a list of staff or volunteers available to make deliveries on an occasional or emergency basis and can support regular pantry guests who have a short-term or occasional delivery need.

## Food Safety Guidelines for Home Delivery Programs

*Transporting and distributing hot, refrigerated, or frozen food can be challenging, especially during hot summer months. Meat, poultry, and egg products are particularly vulnerable to rapid bacterial growth due to their moisture content, pH levels, and high protein content. It is important to follow all transportation and distribution precautions below to ensure that hot foods stay hot, cold foods stay cold, and participants receive food that is safe to eat.*

### While Packing & Preparing Food for Delivery

- Food should be kept out of the Temperature Danger Zone of 41°F - 135°F, which allows harmful bacteria to grow rapidly.
- Keep refrigerated and frozen foods in cold storage for as long as possible and take out packages only when necessary for order preparation.
- No items requiring temperature control should sit out for more than **30 minutes** to prevent products from entering the Temperature Danger Zone. (Remember, these items will likely spend more time out of temperature control during delivery.)
- After order preparation, temperature sensitive items should be distributed to drivers right away or kept in a temperature-controlled environment until ready for distribution.
- The safest precaution you can take is to frequently monitor temperatures during distribution using a laser thermometer.
- Food should never be placed on the floor, whether directly or within a container such as a bag or box. Make sure to keep food on a table or shelf at all times during packing and pick up.

### During Transportation

- All vehicles must be kept clean and free from dirt, debris, and any other substance or odor that may contaminate the product. They should be disinfected as needed. No pets are permitted to be present in vehicles carrying Food Bank food for delivery.
- Food should be immediately delivered once picked up by the driver. Food may not be stored at an intermediate location (the delivery driver's house, for example) before being dropped off.

- A **freezer blanket**, an insulated shell that is used to cover frozen food during transportation, is essential if you aren't using a freezer truck or cooler to transport frozen meat. **Insulated coolers and boxes** are another option to transport temperature sensitive foods. They offer great durability and can be available in multiple sizes, allowing you to choose what works best for your operation.
- The driving time must be kept to **30 minutes or less** when food is outside of temperature controls. If food is in transport for longer than 30 minutes, **a freezer blanket or insulated bag/cooler etc. must be used.**
- Frozen food should remain **frozen solid** and not show any signs of thawing or defrosting. If frozen food has thawed during transport, it must be discarded.
- **4 hours** is the maximum time hot, cold, or frozen foods may spend outside of refrigeration. Temperature sensitive foods that are kept outside of refrigeration for more than 4 hours **must be discarded.**

#### **For Satellite Delivery Sites:**

If your program offers delivery via a partner organization or satellite site, food may be briefly stored in that program's refrigerator or freezer provided that:

- It is not a residential site
- The units are clean and kept at safe temperatures: below 40 degrees for a refrigerator and below 0 degrees for a freezer.
- Storage is brief and not overnight.
- Food is clearly labeled as Food Bank food with the name or initials of the intended recipient.
- The Food Bank has been notified and has approved the site as a storage location.

*Towns and cities may have their own regulations regarding food delivery, so **please check with the town in which your organization is located** to be sure you comply with these. You can always reach out to [agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org](mailto:agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org) if you have any questions about food safety.*



## Sample Delivery Agreement for Partner-Based Delivery Programs

For programs entering into a home delivery partnership with another organization, or with a community member picking up food for **four or more households**, a delivery agreement is needed to establish parameters.

A delivery agreement can:

- Help prevent misunderstandings about or misuse of the food.
- Provide an opportunity to clarify any questions at the outset.
- Ensure that recipients receive food that has been properly handled in a timely manner.
- Protect your organization in the case of unintended use of Food Bank food by the delivery partner.

This sample on the following page provides some examples. The terms highlighted in **yellow** indicate **requirements** for the distribution of Food Bank food, but you can adjust the language and format to fit your needs. (For example, you may choose to adopt less formal language for an agreement with a community member picking up for neighbors.) You are also welcome to add additional terms or include specific food safety information as needed for your program.



This sample document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. These examples may be adapted to fit the specific needs of your program.

## Delivery Agreement between [Food Bank member] and [delivery partner]

- [Food Bank member] will be providing food intended for home delivery to [delivery partner]
- Food will be picked up at [Food Bank member] on [day/time] and distributed to the intended recipient(s). (Recipient list may be included here.)
- Food must be delivered promptly and may not be stored overnight in any location prior to distribution. Food may not be stored in a residence for any time period prior to distribution.
- If [Delivery partner] is signing up the recipient for the first time, [Delivery partner] is responsible for accurate reporting of statistics information using the sample on the following page or a similar method. **An alias, initials, and/or town of residence (rather than full address) may always be used in the case of a safety concern.** Any changes to household size etc. must be promptly reported to [Food Bank member].
- [Delivery partner] will deliver food only to the agreed upon recipient(s). If the recipient is unavailable to receive the delivery, food must be returned to [Food Bank member agency]. If that is not possible, food may be delivered to another person or family in need. Any change in recipient must be promptly reported to [Food Bank member] and correct household statistics information provided.
- If a recipient is unavailable to receive food on a regular basis, the delivery will be cancelled or reassigned to another individual.
- [Delivery partner] agrees to follow all Food Bank food safety guidelines. *(provided by Food Bank member)*
- If USDA is included in the home delivery program, all USDA policies must be followed. Pantry recipients must complete the annual eligibility declaration. **An alias or modified name may always be used.**
- It is strictly prohibited to charge any direct or indirect fees for Food Bank food, including any charge related to delivery or transportation, or the bags/boxes used to transport food. [Delivery partner] agrees that no money will be charged or accepted in exchange for food delivery.

By signing below, the parties agree to the terms, conditions, and stipulations set forth in this agreement. Violation of any of the above terms may result in the termination of the delivery agreement.

### [Food Bank member]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### [Delivery Partner]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Guidelines for Reporting Home Delivery Statistics to the Food Bank

*Statistics for home delivery recipients will be included in your usual monthly statistics entry. Agencies may use their usual method for collecting and recording statistics. No additional information is required by the Food Bank for the recipients of home delivery.*

**For agencies receiving delivery requests via third party organizations or individuals:** Below is an example of questions you can provide to the delivery partner to help gather the needed information for monthly statistics during the sign-up process. An alias, initials, and town of residence (rather than full address) may always be used in the case of a safety concern.

Name/Initials of delivery recipient: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received food from this program since Oct. 2025? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received food from [Food Bank member] this month? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people in your household:

Aged 0-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Aged 18-64 \_\_\_\_\_

Age 65+ \_\_\_\_\_

## For School-Based Delivery Programs

*When delivering food via a backpack program, the following are some important guidelines to keep in mind:*

- Food Bank food may not be stored at the school (or any other secondary location) overnight. It must go home with the student or family on the **same day** it was brought to the school.
- **Perishable foods are not suitable** for backpack distributions given the lack of ability to control the amount of time between leaving the school and arriving in a student’s refrigerator.
- Hearty produce is an exception to the above. You may send home items like apples, potatoes, squash, oranges, etc.
- While some backpack programs enjoy offering individual sized packets of foods particularly appealing to and/or easily prepared by children, that is not the only option. Many backpack programs take full advantage of available MEFAP products, offering pantry staples to support the entire household during the weekend.
- Some school programs offer an option for families to pick up food directly at the school. This is an excellent way to increase the impact of your program. Pickups could happen at regular intervals, or occasionally at pre-determined times such as during or before school vacations. If the parent/guardian is receiving the food directly, **perishable items may be included in the distribution**. In this case, perishable items should be brought to the school immediately prior to distribution. Coolers or freezer blankets should be used to ensure that this food is maintained at a safe temperature.

FAMILY MEMBERS THAT LIVE IN YOUR HOUSE		
NAME	AGE <small>(Required)</small>	ALLERGIES/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+	

  

Parent/Guardian:		Phone #	
<small>Office Use Only</small>	<small>Received:</small>	<small>Staff:</small>	



## Equitable Access to Home Delivery

The Food Bank understands that member agencies who offer delivery do so with a commitment to equity and to providing as much access to as many people as possible. Programs use a range of criteria to select delivery recipients based on their capacity. Some programs offer delivery on a first come-first served basis. Others ask prospective recipients to self-identify as needing delivery due to health, transportation, or other challenges. For partner-based programs, the partner often identifies recipients in need of delivery, who may use a modified name or address in the case of a safety concern. Many programs use a waitlist and will connect recipients as space becomes available.

To ensure equitable access within your capacity, the expectation of the Food Bank is that your program:

- **WILL** offer recipients a substantially similar level of service, and a similar quantity and quality of food when possible, across all distribution types within your program.
- **WILL NOT** engage in discrimination against any person on the grounds of *race, color, citizenship, immigration status, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military, or protected veteran status*, in the selection or service of home delivery recipients.

## Thank you!

*Thank you for considering adding home delivery to your distribution schedule. We look forward to supporting you as you grow your program to meet this pressing need. We're honored to be in partnership with you, and we appreciate your exceptional work in addressing food insecurity in Western Massachusetts.*