

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

DISTRIBUTION SITE MANUAL

For Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens, and Shelters

State Fiscal year: 2026

July 1st, 2025 – June 30th, 2026

THIS MANUAL MUST BE KEPT ON SITE AND AVAILABLE TO SITE PERSONNEL AT ALL TIMES.

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INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) partners with regional food banks to distribute USDA Foods received from the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) across the state through a fair-share allocation system. These food banks, in turn, establish agreements with local distribution sites – including food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters – that seek to enhance their capacity to serve individuals and families in need. Participation in this no-cost program is voluntary; however, it requires full adherence to the regulations and guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), IDHS, and the individual food bank.

The State of Illinois contracts with seven regional food banks for the administration of TEFAP: Central Illinois Food Bank, Eastern Illinois Food Bank, Greater Chicago Food Depository, Northern Illinois Food Bank, River Bend Food Bank, St. Louis Area Food Bank, and Tri-State Food Bank.

Each participating distribution site must sign a contract – an agreement between the distribution site and the administering regional food bank – at the beginning of each State Fiscal Year (SFY), which runs from July 1 through June 30. Additionally, program rules and compliance training – including instruction on Civil Rights and non-discrimination requirements – is mandatory on an annual basis.

Monthly allocations of USDA Foods to distribution sites are contingent upon ongoing compliance with contractual obligations and applicable regulations. To ensure compliance, distribution sites are subject to monitoring by IDHS, the contracted food bank, and federal oversight personnel.

FEDERALLY FUNDED GRANT PROGRAMS

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) plays a vital role in addressing hunger and reducing food insecurity throughout Illinois. Originally established to support American farmers and stabilize agricultural markets, the program is federally funded and administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The USDA purchases food through subsidy and price-support programs and distributes it to states across the country. In Illinois, the USDA has designated the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to manage the allocation and oversight of food distribution. TEFAP provides free food to regional food banks, which then distribute the food to approved distribution sites statewide. The program significantly enhances both the quantity and variety of food available to eligible recipients at no cost.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

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The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is also federally funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Through this program, food banks receive funding based on a fair-share formula for the purpose of purchasing food. All food purchased with TANF funds must be distributed to households that include a pregnant woman and/or at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the same household.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

As recipients of federal funding, all organizations participating in TEFAP and TANF – including food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters – are required to fully comply with all applicable civil rights and non-discrimination laws. Upholding these principles is central to USDA policy and is mandatory at every stage of food distribution.

Civil Rights Laws, Regulations, and Executive Orders

Civil Rights Instruction 113-1 issued Nov. 8, 2005: The purpose of this Instruction is to establish and convey policy and provide guidance and direction to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and its recipients and ensure compliance with and enforcement of the prohibition against discrimination in all FNS nutrition programs and activities, whether federally funded in whole or not.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d to 2000d-6, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance; and USDA Implementing Regulation, 7 CFR Part 15, Subpart A and Subpart C.

Americans with Disabilities Act (28 CFR Part 35, Title II, Subtitle A), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all services, programs, and activities provided to the public by State and local governments, except public transportation services.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681 et. seq.), which prohibits discrimination based on sex under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance; and USDA Implementing Regulation, 7 CFR Part 15 a.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination based on disability; and USDA Implementing Regulation, 7 CFR Part 15 b.

Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (45 CFR Part 91), which prohibits discrimination based on age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), and Department of Justice (DOJ) Memorandum dated January 28, 1999, entitled, “Policy Guidance Document - Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Related Statutes in Block Grant Type Programs.”

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Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, which clarifies the intent of Congress as it relates to the scope of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related nondiscrimination statutes to ensure nondiscrimination in all programs and activities of a recipient, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

The Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is an entitlement program available to all low-income individuals and families who meet the income, resource, and eligibility requirements as specified under the Act and corresponding regulations. The Act prohibits discrimination against any applicant or participant in any aspect of program administration for reasons of age, race, color, sex, handicap, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.

Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 65 F.R. 50123, August 16, 2000. This is the Federal Register cite for Department of Justice guidance for Executive Order 13166, Improving Access To Services For Persons With Limited English Proficiency, signed on August 11, 2000. Additional authorities can be found in the specific Program Appendices of the FNS 113-1 Instruction.

USDA Civil Rights Authorities

USDA Departmental Regulation 4330-2, Activities Receiving USDA Financial Assistance, ensures compliance with and enforcement of the prohibition against discrimination in programs and activities funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

USDA Regulation 7 CFR Part 16, Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations, implements executive branch policy that, within the framework of constitutional church-State guidelines, religiously affiliated (or “faith-based”) organizations should be able to compete on an equal footing with other organizations for USDA assistance.

USDA Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures, establishes the civil rights accountability policy and procedures for ensuring that appropriate disciplinary or corrective actions are taken when discrimination, retaliation, civil rights violations, or related misconduct occurs.

To comply with Civil Rights requirements, food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters must:

1. Provide Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination training to staff and volunteers annually at minimum. If new staff or new volunteers are recruited, then the new associates must receive the Civil Rights training.
2. Conduct outreach to under-represented communities to make potential recipients aware of available services and days/hours of operation.
3. Place notices in local newspapers, posters, pamphlets, newsletters, websites or other electronic media.

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4. Display the “And Justice for All” poster.
5. Accommodate people with disabilities.

In compliance with federal civil rights law and the regulations and policies of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and all institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are strictly prohibited from engaging in discrimination. This prohibition applies to discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or in reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by the USDA.

Distribution sites must ensure that individuals with disabilities who require alternative methods of communication to access program information—such as Braille, large print, audiotape, or American Sign Language—are provided appropriate accommodations. In such cases, the distribution site should notify its respective food bank. If the food bank requires additional support in securing the necessary resources or services, it will contact the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) for assistance.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have speech disabilities may access USDA services through the Federal Relay Service by calling (800) 877-8339.

Recipients can request a [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) by:

1. completing the form at any USDA office,
2. calling (866) 632-9992,
3. completing the form online at [Program Discrimination Complaint Electronic Submission Portal | Home](#) or,
4. writing a letter to USDA and providing all the information requested in the form.

Recipients should submit their completed form or letter to USDA by:

Email:

program.intake@usda.gov

Mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Fax:


(202) 690-7442

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Civil Rights and Discrimination Complaint form (IL444-4530)

Form IL444-4530 needs to be completed by distribution site staff or volunteers in the event of a potential Civil Rights and/or Discrimination violation/complaint.

		
State of Illinois Department of Human Services		
THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP)- CIVIL RIGHTS AND DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT FORM		
This Civil Rights and Discrimination Complaint must be completed to alert the IDHS TEFAP Manager of any potential Civil Rights and Discrimination complaints that took place during a TEFAP distribution time frame. Email the completed form to DHS.IEF@illinois.gov.		
Person filing complaint:		Date:
Mailing Address (include City, Zip Code):		
E-mail Address:	Telephone (include Area Code):	
Name of Site:		
Site Address (include City):		
Distribution Date:	Distribution Time:	
Details of Complaint:		
Complaint taken by:		
Date complaint taken:	Time complaint taken:	
Name of Foodbank Staff or DHS Emergency Food Program Manager Contacted:		Date:
Details of resolution of complaint:		
<p>In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; orfax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; oremail: Program.Intake@usda.gov <p>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</p>		
IL444-4530 (R-12-24) The Emergency Food Assistance Program - Civil Rights and Discrimination Complaint Form Page 1 of 1 Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois -0- Copies		

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RECIPIENT ELIGIBILITY

Individuals or households residing in Illinois, including those who are unhoused, are eligible to receive food through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and/or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program if their income is at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. For soup kitchens and shelters, recipients are presumed eligible; no documentation or proof of eligibility may be required to receive a meal at these locations.

It is recommended that pantry site personnel or volunteers complete the Eligibility Sheet.

If a proxy is being utilized, a Proxy Statement must be signed by both, the neighbor and proxy. By signing, the recipient attests that:

1. income does not exceed IDHS established limits;
2. the recipient resides within Illinois;
3. information provided is accurate and in compliance with TEFAP/TANF regulations;
4. the recipient releases the USDA, the State of Illinois, and the food pantry or person distributing food from all liability resulting from receipt of food.

The recipient acknowledges the following:

- The sale or use of USDA Foods for purposes other than household consumption may subject the recipient to prosecution under applicable federal and state laws.
- Eligible recipients are entitled to be served food at least once every 30 days.

TEFAP/TANF FOOD DISTRIBUTION

USDA Foods Receipt and Distribution

Food pantries must agree to receive a fair-share allotment of USDA Foods each month. USDA foods serve as a supplement to existing food distribution and must be mixed together with donated and purchased food for each distribution. All food distribution must be completed in accordance with TEFAP/ TANF rules and regulations. Food pantries are requested to distribute a reasonable amount of food to households based on household size.

Food pantries:

1. must pick-up or receive fair-share allotment in a timely manner every month;
2. can request an overall reduction to fair share if storage is an issue;
3. cannot pick/choose USDA distributed foods;

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4. cannot decline or refuse their assigned fair-share allotment.

Distribution Forms

Eligibility Sheet (FY26 form - Addendum 1)

Food pantries must document all food distribution. Some food pantries are utilizing electronic platforms rather than having recipients verbally self-attest for the hard copy of the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement. All information required on the hard copy is also required on electronic platforms.

Documentation requirements of recipients must be limited to the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement provided by IDHS. Refrain from altering or combining State provided documentation.

Food pantries are responsible for obtaining recipient information (completion of the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement), but are not responsible for the accuracy of recipients' entries. USDA and the State of Illinois hold the recipient responsible (self-attestation & self-declaration) for the accuracy of information provided on the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement.

The Eligibility Sheet is the only document used to determine TEFAP eligibility unless the recipient is unable to physically arrive at the food pantry. If a recipient is disabled, aged, and/or infirm or works during distribution times, the recipient can appoint a person to be a proxy. Refer to the "Proxy Statement" section of this manual for more information.

Food pantries must ensure that the current fiscal year Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement is being utilized. Food pantry staff or volunteers can enter all Eligibility Sheet information on behalf of the recipient including the name of the recipient after a verbal self-attestation.

Proxy Statement (FY26 form - Addendum 2)

If a recipient is disabled, aged, and/or infirm or works during distribution time frame(s), the recipient can appoint a person to be a Proxy. The Proxy Statement must be completed in lieu of the Eligibility Sheet. Every recipient must complete (and sign) the Proxy Statement in its entirety, self-attesting that their income is below the maximum monthly gross income. The Proxy Statement shows a table with income ceilings for various household sizes.

Recipients can be served via delivery by food pantry staff or by Proxy.

1. Proxy Service – a Proxy Statement authorizes an alternate person to pick up food for the recipient. Information from the Proxy Statement should be entered onto the Eligibility Sheet at each Proxy pick-up. (This tracks the date of the most recent recipient distribution and provides required data for pantry recording purposes.) If the data is not transferred onto the Eligibility Sheet, it must be collected and added to the monthly service data report.

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2. Delivery Service – food pantries may deliver food to homebound recipients provided that the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement documents are completed upon each delivery.

Recipients must complete a Proxy Statement to include the following:

1. recipient name,
2. number of all recipients in the household;
3. name of person (proxy) designated to pick up food for recipient;
4. number of children 18 years or younger in the household;
5. if they receive SNAP benefits

Food pantry staff must ensure that:

1. the Proxy Statement being submitted is for the most current Fiscal Year; number of all recipients in the household;
2. the recipient completed the form in its entirety including a signature; number of children 18 years or younger in the household;
3. the proxy signs the Proxy Statement in the presence of food pantry staff when food is distributed;
4. If the above has been completed, the food pantry staff enters the “Distribution Date” and signs the Proxy Statement.

Proof of Income

Self-attestation is the accepted means of documenting income eligibility. Income levels for various household sizes are pre-printed on the Eligibility Sheet and Proxy Statement. Food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters are prohibited from verifying income. The verbal self-attestation recorded on the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement confirms that the household receiving USDA Foods has a monthly income at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, based on the household's size.

Proof of Identity and Residency

In accordance with the final rules issued by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on October 31st, 2024, as published in the Federal Code of Regulations at 7 CFR 251.5(b), and further clarified by FNS guidance, a participant’s length of Illinois state residency, address, or identification documents may not be used as eligibility criteria for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

If a TEFAP participant's address is required for enrollment in a separate, non-TEFAP program, or for TEFAP foods delivery, the distribution site must first determine TEFAP eligibility before requesting any address information. TEFAP participants must attest to being residents of the state of Illinois. This can be verified by the individual affirming their residency within the service area, providing a ZIP code or county of residence, or through self-attestation of Illinois state residency.

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Distribution sites may display a map outlining their service area and allow participants to self-attest that they reside within those boundaries. If an applicant self-attests to living outside the service area but is otherwise eligible, the distribution site must provide USDA Foods at that time and can then refer the individual to a closer site for future distributions. However, should the same individual return to the original referring site, the participant must continue to be served, if they remain eligible. Under no circumstances may distribution sites request or require identification cards, Social Security numbers, pay stubs, or any documentation to verify identity, residency, or income.

Completion of the TEFAP Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement is required for all distributions of USDA Foods, whether during regular hours of operation or during expanded hours. All TEFAP recipients or site staff/volunteers must complete this form in accordance with program requirements.

Applicant and Participant Confidentiality

Confidential applicant and participation information includes information provided during the intake process for TEFAP eligibility purposes (e.g., name, number of persons in the household, household income) in addition to information collected from TEFAP applicants and participants for purposes unrelated to TEFAP eligibility (e.g., date of birth, occupation, education level, household address). Applicant and participant information is confidential regardless of the original source and exclusive of previously applicable confidentiality provided in accordance with other federal, state, or local law.

TEFAP regulations at 7 CFR 251.10(c)(2) outline that state agencies and ERAs must restrict the use and disclosure of information obtained from TEFAP applicants or participants to persons directly connected with administration or enforcement of TEFAP. This could include state agency staff conducting management evaluations and ERA staff and volunteers who process TEFAP intake forms. With the consent of the participant, state agencies and ERAs may share information obtained from TEFAP applicants and participants with other health and welfare programs for use in determining eligibility in those programs, or for program outreach. However, the state agency must sign an agreement with the administering agencies of those health and welfare programs to ensure that the information will be used only for the specified purpose, and that the agencies receiving the information will not further share it. These requirements are not intended to limit the use of data sharing for eligibility purposes; they are intended to safeguard confidential information and protect the identity of TEFAP applicants and participants.

Obtaining TEFAP applicant and participant consent for information sharing purposes

State agencies and ERAs should explicitly obtain consent from TEFAP applicants and participants to share information with other health and welfare programs for program

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eligibility purposes or for program outreach purposes. Applicant and participant consent can be achieved by incorporating a written consent question or form into the intake or sign-in process at the ERA. The consent question/form must clearly list the other health and welfare programs that will receive the applicant or participant information, the specific applicant and participant information that will be shared, and should allow the applicant or participant to easily agree to or opt out of the data sharing. The consent question/form must also clearly indicate that the receipt of USDA Foods is not contingent upon a participant's or applicant's consent to share their information.

Data sharing agreements

If state agencies want to share confidential applicant and participant information with other health and welfare programs for use in determining eligibility in those programs, they must sign agreements with those entities receiving the information to ensure that the information is only used for specified purposes and will not be shared further. These data sharing agreements should explicitly reference TEFAP confidentiality regulations at 7 CFR 251.10(c)(1) and (c)(2) and must outline how the other program(s) will protect the confidential applicant and participant information from being further shared. This should encompass both accidental and purposeful disclosure of the information. An agreement must be in place prior to sharing any applicant or participant information with another program.

Serving Unhoused Recipients

Self-declaration by unhoused recipients must be accepted. When serving unhoused recipients, food pantries should consider the types of foods that are appropriate and easy to use and prepare. However, they should not automatically assume that an unhoused recipient does not have access to appliances for cooking or storing refrigerated/frozen products. Have open, two-way communication with the recipient to provide non-discriminatory service(s).

Mobile Distribution Sites

Mobile distribution sites are only permitted to be operated by food banks. The mobile site must have:

1. An "And Justice for All poster", posted within the distribution trailer, easily visible to all recipients.
2. A copy of the Distribution Site Manual accessible to staff and volunteers.

All food bank staff and volunteers operating the mobile site must have Civil Rights training.

TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

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On the Eligibility Sheet and on the Proxy Statement, recipients are asked to identify the number of children living in the household who are 18 years of age or younger for TANF. This information is required for the receipt of TANF food when it is available. The TANF food is usually purchased in February and distributed from February/March through the end of June every year. To qualify for TANF food, a recipient must:

1. be pregnant or have at least one child 18 years of age or younger who lives with them,
2. live in Illinois (unhoused qualifies),
3. must verbally self-attest for the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement

The column for the total number of children receiving TANF food must be tallied and included in the Monthly Distribution Activity Report.

SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

IDHS encourages all distribution staff to refer non-participating SNAP recipients to the SNAP online application process or to a SNAP team for assistance to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits. Pantry staff and volunteers should inform potential SNAP recipients that SNAP offers nutritional assistance to millions of people.

The SNAP check box should be marked on the Eligibility Sheet or on the Proxy Statement if the recipient is currently enrolled in SNAP. If the food pantry staff referred a recipient to the SNAP online application process or to a SNAP team for assistance, the SNAP check box on the Eligibility Sheet or Proxy Statement should be circled. The total number of SNAP recipients enrolled, and the total number of recipients who were referred to a SNAP team or on-line SNAP application must be included in the Monthly Distribution Activity Report.

Monthly Distribution Activity Report – Food Pantries

A Monthly Distribution Activity Report form (supplied by the respective food bank) must be completed and submitted every month. Food pantry staff must total the following columns on the Eligibility Sheet and on the Proxy Statements to be included on the Monthly Distribution Activity Report:

1. “Household Size” column for the total number of individuals;
2. “Recipient Names” column for the total number of households served;
3. TANF column for the total number of children 18 years of age or younger;
4. SNAP column (total number of “Yes” boxes checked) for the total number of households receiving SNAP benefits;

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5. SNAP column (total number of “Yes” boxes circled) for total number of recipients referred to a SNAP team or to the on-line SNAP application.

Every month, the Monthly Distribution Activity Report must be submitted to the food bank by the food bank’s requested due date. Monthly Distribution Activity Reports are used to determine the fair share of USDA Foods; it is important to include totals from both Eligibility Sheets and Proxy Statements. ***Eligibility Sheets and Proxy Statements can be retained at the distribution site and do not need to be submitted to the food bank.***

Monthly Distribution Activity Report – Soup Kitchens and Shelters

A Monthly Distribution Activity Report must be submitted by each soup kitchen and shelter for the total meals served. Reports are used to determine the fair share of USDA Foods for the sites the next month. It is important to count every meal served. Second and third helpings should be counted as individual meals and added to the total number of meals reported. Not reporting all meals served could reduce the fair share of USDA Foods a soup kitchen or shelter otherwise would receive. Soup kitchens and shelters must show how they computed the total meals reported each month. Some soup kitchens or shelters ask recipients to sign in at each meal; others count the number of plates used at each meal. Soup kitchens and shelters should use the method most likely to give a true picture of the actual number of meals served.

TRANSFER OF USDA FOODS

The transfer of USDA Foods between distribution sites is permitted, provided the following conditions are met:

- The transfer of TEFAP foods is to ensure that such foods may be utilized in a timely manner and in optimal condition,
- A TEFAP USDA Foods Transfer Sheet must be fully completed and submitted.

The transfer must receive prior approval from FNS: The site must first notify its supervising food bank of the request to transfer.

The food bank will then notify Illinois TEFAP at DHS.IEFP@illinois.gov

Illinois TEFAP will request approval from FNS and notify the food bank if/when the request has been approved.

The distributing agency is responsible for meeting any transportation or inspection costs incurred, unless it is determined by FNS that the transfer is not the result of negligence or improper action on the part of the distributing agency. All transfers (and inspections if applicable) must be properly documented to ensure accurate inventory control and program compliance.

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REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTRIBUTION SITES

General Requirements - All contracted food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters must:

1. be nonprofit or public, but not penal,
2. distribute food, either as meals or for household consumption,
3. have a two hour per week minimum distribution time frame unless an exemption approval has been obtained from the respective food bank and IL TEFAP,
4. have a contract agreement with its regional food bank.

The distribution site agrees to serve all persons without regard to where the recipient lives in Illinois. The distribution site may refer clients not residing within the site's designated service area to their partner food bank for direction to a more proximal site location or provide information on the site serving the participant's area of residency. However, the site must continue to serve the participant at future visits regardless of referral or location of residence within Illinois.

Posters (USDA & IDHS)

Posters required to be displayed is the "And Justice for All" poster. The poster must be displayed in a public facing area. IDHS requires food pantries to display the following posters in clear view of recipients:

1. "And Justice for All" - Mandates that all recipients be treated equally and instructs recipients on how to report discrimination complaints.
2. Hours and Days of Operation
3. Written Notice of Beneficiary Rights (***not required if using Eligibility Sheet***)
 - a. All participants of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) must receive a Written Notice of Beneficiary rights prior to the distribution of USDA foods. This notice is incorporated into the Eligibility Sheet and Proxy Statement which satisfies federal requirements for posting. Optionally, distribution sites also can either print and provide this notice directly to recipients or display it prominently in a high-traffic area that is easily visible to TEFAP recipients.

Hours/Days of Operation

Signs displaying the hours/days of operation, must be posted inside and outside of the site's facility in clear view of recipients.

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1. Distribution site must register days & hours of site operation with food bank;
2. Must be open to the general public during established times;
3. Must *not require* recipients to make appointments;
4. Must operate for at least two hours per week which do not include “on-call” times or food preparation, cleanup and/or restocking time (unless an exemption has been approved by the regional food bank and IDHS – see the following part for details on obtaining an exemption).

Exemption from Distribution Site Hours of Operation Requirement

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) supports innovative service model to address the emergency food needs of individuals in rural or under-resourced areas, where meeting the standard minimum of two operating hours per week may not be feasible due to limited staffing or volunteer availability.

In such cases, sites may request approval for special operating procedures or reduced hours to ensure continued and effective food distribution. To request an exemption, the site's designated food bank must submit a completed Distribution Site Hours of Operation Exemption Request Form via email to: dhs.iefp@illinois.gov.

Service Area and Geographic Restrictions

A **service area** refers to the natural or intended boundaries within which a distribution site primarily operates and provides services. These boundaries are typically based on geographic factors such as zip codes, neighborhoods, counties, or proximity to the site, and are used to guide outreach, resource planning, and service delivery. (The site's county is a primary factor, as well as additional data, in its allocation and receipt of TEFAP foods.) While a service area helps define the community a site aims to serve, it does not limit eligibility. Distribution sites must provide USDA Foods to any eligible Illinois resident, including those from outside of their designated service area. Once a person is determined eligible, they must continue to be served, regardless of the location of their residence within Illinois.

In contrast, a **geographic restriction** is a policy or practice that limits service only to individuals who reside within a certain area, such as a specific zip code or county. Geographic restrictions are not permitted under TEFAP guidelines. Any such limitation is considered a barrier to access and is a violation of Federal and State program rules.

In summary, while distribution sites recognize service areas to guide outreach, anticipate demand, and provide data for allocation, these boundaries are intended for planning

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purposes only. Distribution sites may not refuse service to any eligible recipient who resides outside of their designated service area but within the State of Illinois. As such, the implementation or enforcement of geographic restrictions is strictly prohibited.

Additional Activities including Explicitly Religious Activities

Food pantries, soup kitchens, or shelters that receive USDA direct assistance under any USDA program may not engage in additional activity, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services supported with USDA direct assistance. If there are such activities taking place at the distribution site:

- a. they must be separate in time and location,
- b. it must be clear that those activities are not endorsed by USDA

Per 7 CFR Part 16.4 (b), Organizations that receive USDA direct assistance under any USDA program may not engage in explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services funded by USDA direct assistance. If an organization conducts such activities, the activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs or services supported with USDA direct assistance, and participation must be voluntary for beneficiaries of the programs or services supported with such USDA direct assistance. The use of indirect Federal financial assistance is not subject to this restriction.

Referrals

Referral to an alternate site may be requested if the requested site provides easier access due to factors such as hours of operation or location.

Food Storage

Food pantries must follow accepted storage standards:

1. Food must be at least 4 inches away from walls, 6 inches off floor and high enough to allow for pest control and proper ventilation; provide two-foot ceiling clearance;
2. Keep floor, pallets, storage, and shelving clean;
3. Keep non-food items and cleaning products separate from food;
4. Dry and refrigerated USDA Foods must be rotated to ensure the quality and freshness of food;
5. A pest control system must be in place: a log, and professional exterminator or qualified staff;

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6. Store food away from direct sunlight;
7. Refrigerated foods must be kept between 35-40 degrees and frozen foods below 0 degrees;
8. Refrigerators and freezers must have working thermometers to verify temperatures.

Monitoring

IDHS is required by federal law to periodically monitor distribution sites (food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters). Monitoring results are given to the distribution site's respective food bank, which will review the results and resolve any issues with the distribution site.

Monitoring results may also be discussed with distribution site staff prior to the conclusion of the monitoring visit. It is recommended that the distribution site staff and volunteers review the TEFAP Site Observation Form in preparation for an IDHS monitoring visit.

IDHS monitoring staff will visit distribution sites during distribution hours. Distribution site staff and volunteers must be informed that the food bank, IDHS and federal government monitoring staff have the authority to inspect food storage and distribution facilities. If monitoring staff (food bank, USDA, HHS, or IDHS) are not provided pertinent information, denied access to food storage, or denied access to distribution areas, the contract between the distribution site and the food bank will be cancelled.

As a courtesy, the IL TEFAP team will endeavor to inform food banks of site visits within sixty days prior to a monitoring visit. However, visits may be unannounced in some circumstances at the discretion of IDHS.

Repackaging and Repacking

1. *Repackaging* is the transfer of processed or raw foods from its original container into other containers with similar labeling information. An example of prohibited repackaging would be the transfer of frozen bulk meat or poultry into another container for distribution.
2. *Repacking* is the transfer of bulk fresh foods with a low risk of contamination into other containers. An example of allowable repacking is the transfer of grapefruit from an original bag/container into smaller mesh bags to facilitate distribution to families or individuals. Foods able to be repacked are generally exempt from FDA Nutrition Labeling Requirements.

FEDERALLY FUNDED EQUIPMENT (FFE)

Refrigerator/Freezer/Operational Items (Federally Purchased)

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Food banks may offer federally purchased refrigerators or freezers to distribution sites who are participating in the distribution of TEFAP and TANF foods. The distribution site must comply with USDA / IDHS Equipment Inventory Regulations. Federally purchased equipment must be returned to the food bank if the food pantry:

1. voluntarily chooses to no longer participate in TEFAP;
2. is no longer eligible to participate in TEFAP;
3. no longer needs the equipment or the equipment is broken;
4. temporarily or permanently closes.

IDHS and the food bank will maintain an inventory record which will include the food pantry name, address location, serial number, model, and make. If a food pantry relocates, prior approval must be obtained from the food bank for the physical movement of federally purchased equipment. The food bank will conduct periodic physical inventories to ensure the food pantry is compliant with IDHS Equipment Inventory regulations. IDHS also reserves the right to conduct physical inventories when deemed necessary. At no time can a food pantry ever sell, trade, or dispose of federally purchased equipment. Theft of federally purchased equipment must be reported immediately to both the police and to the food bank. The food bank will be responsible for the completion of an Incident Report and for submitting the results of the investigation to IDHS.

Disposal of Federally Purchased Equipment

When original or replacement equipment acquired under a federal award is no longer needed for the original project or program or for other activities currently or previously supported by a federal awarding agency, except as otherwise provided in Federal statutes, regulations, or Federal awarding agency disposition instructions, the non-Federal entity must request disposition instructions from the Federal awarding agency if required by the terms and conditions of the Federal award. Disposition of the equipment will be made as follows, in accordance with Federal awarding agency disposition instructions:

Items of equipment with a current per-unit fair market value of less than \$10,000 may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further obligation to the awarding agency. (Subject to prior IDHS approval.)

Items of equipment with a current per-unit fair market value more than \$10,000 may be retained by the non-Federal entity or sold. The Federal awarding agency is entitled to an amount calculated by multiplying the current market value or proceeds from sale by the Federal awarding agency's percentage of participation in the cost of the original purchase. If

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the equipment is sold, the Federal agency or pass-through entity may permit the recipient or subrecipient to retain, from the Federal share, \$1,000 of the proceeds to cover expenses associated with the selling and handling of the equipment. (Subject to prior IDHS approval.)


The IDHS Emergency Food Program must be notified in writing prior to the disposal of federally funded equipment. Disposal includes transactions that change the status of equipment from active to non-active, e.g., transfer of ownership, trade-in or sale, disposal, or cannibalization. The food bank must physically retain possession of equipment until prior approval from the IDHS Emergency Food Program is obtained and proper documentation is completed.

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Addendum 2

Proxy Statement

	State of Illinois - Department of Human Services																																	
THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP) - PROXY STATEMENT FY2026 INCOME ELIGIBILITY BASED ON 300% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINE																																		
This form must be presented at the distribution site by the proxy picking up TEFAP food for the participant. Proxies may be assigned in cases where there is undue hardship for the TEFAP participant to pick up food.																																		
TEFAP Participant <input type="text"/>	Household Size: <input type="text"/>																																	
Residence: Do you reside within the pantry service area? <input type="checkbox"/>	Number of children in household 18 years or younger? <input type="text"/>																																	
If "No", then enter your zip code or county of residence: <input type="text"/>	SNAP Recipient <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																																	
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="11">DHS MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME FOR RECEIPT OF USDA FOODS</th></tr><tr><th>Household Size</th><th>1</th><th>2</th><th>3</th><th>4</th><th>5</th><th>6</th><th>7</th><th>8</th><th>9</th><th>10</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Monthly Income</td><td>\$3,913</td><td>\$5,288</td><td>\$6,663</td><td>\$8,038</td><td>\$9,413</td><td>\$10,788</td><td>\$12,163</td><td>\$13,538</td><td>\$14,913</td><td>\$16,288</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>For households with more than 10 persons, add \$1,375 for each additional person up to 300% FPL.</p>		DHS MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME FOR RECEIPT OF USDA FOODS											Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Monthly Income	\$3,913	\$5,288	\$6,663	\$8,038	\$9,413	\$10,788	\$12,163	\$13,538	\$14,913	\$16,288
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Name of Proxy: <input type="text"/>																																		
Name of Pantry: <input type="text"/>																																		
Address of Pantry: <input type="text"/> State: <input type="text"/> Zip Code: <input type="text"/>																																		
CERTIFY WITH MY SIGNATURE THAT: My household monthly gross income does not exceed DHS established limits; the information I have provided above is accurate and true; I will use food received for household consumption only; and I release USDA, the State of Illinois and any agency or person distributing food from all liabilities resulting from receipt of food.																																		
Signature of TEFAP Participant <input type="text"/>	Date <input type="text"/>																																	
Signature of Proxy <input type="text"/>	Date <input type="text"/>																																	
Signature of Pantry Personnel <input type="text"/>	Date <input type="text"/>																																	
<p>USDA Nondiscrimination Statement Food and Nutrition Service: In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or email: Program.Intake@usda.gov</p> <p>Written Notice of Beneficiary Rights: This organization may not discriminate against beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice. This organization may not require beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries to attend or participate in any explicitly religious activities that are offered by the organization, and any participation by beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries in such activities must be purely voluntary. This organization must separate in time or location any privately funded explicitly religious activities from activities supported by direct federal assistance. Beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries may report violations of these protections (including denials of services or benefits) by an organization by contacting or filing a written complaint with USDA's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.</p> <p><u>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</u></p>																																		
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