

## Food Pantry Advisory Committee

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FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry,  
a feeding program of FOCUS  
Churches of Albany, Inc.



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FOCUS CHURCHES OF ALBANY

## Interfaith Food Pantry Volunteer Handbook

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# Welcome!

Whether you are a new volunteer or a seasoned veteran of the FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry we invite you to get acquainted (or re-acquainted) with the pantry operation ... It is always a good idea.



I hope this will help all of us work more unified and as a team, and answered some questions some of you had. If you have any other questions at all, please feel free to call me (Lorraine Houk) anytime.

## Volunteer Scheduling

**There are 2 options for signing up to volunteer**



- When at the pantry, you can place your name on the monthly calendar.



- Call 443-0460 or email ([belindaq@focuschurches.net](mailto:belindaq@focuschurches.net)) and schedule times with our volunteer coordinator Belinda Quaye.

**Please give us heads-up when you are not able to come in when you are scheduled.** You can call ahead and let the volunteer coordinator or pantry manager know. If you are not well the morning you are scheduled to volunteer please call Lorraine @ the pantry 443-0460 to let her know. If you are not feeling well, coughing or contagious – please stay home and get better – don't share your germs.

## Building Use

- Volunteers and Guests are to remain within pantry spaces.
- All space issues are to be directed to Pantry Manager.
- Heating the pantry space is a challenging issue in the cold weather. Please be conscious of keeping inside and outside pantry doors closed as much as possible.



## Guest Relations

- Expectations of Guests, Volunteer and Staff behavior are posted in the pantry. Pantry Guests are not to have access to the bathroom (except under extenuating circumstance). Public bathrooms are located down the block at the Alfred E. Smith building.
- Volunteers are not to give pantry guests transportation (due to liability), money, or other items (clothing, household) without discussion with pantry manager.
- Please share **Resource Guide** with guests if they are in need of resources other than pantry food.

# Who are we?

**The FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry has been in existence for over 40 years.** Starting out very small and simple, the pantry was run by volunteers from the FOCUS organizing congregations and served “emergency” situations in the local neighborhood. In the early days all food items (nonperishable foods) were collected and donated by congregational members.

For most of its history the pantry was located at Trinity United Methodist Church, 235 Lark Street, Albany. In 2004 the FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry moved its location to Emmanuel Baptist Church, 275 State Street, Albany. Currently, the pantry has dedicated secured space in the southwest corner of the sanctuary, with its own outside access. The pantry is open Monday through Friday and the last Saturday of the month 10am – 1pm.

As the pantry evolved and food insecurity needs became greater, operations expanded to include paid staff and a greater number of volunteers. In July of 2005, the pantry secured a 5 year contract with the NYS Department of health, enabling a fulltime operation.

The pantry has grown into a versatile entity that provides: A 6 day supply of groceries to households; personal care items; fresh produce; dairy products; perishable food items and infant care items. 3-5 volunteers are utilized each day the pantry is open. A staff person is available to connect pantry guests to resources and referrals to specific agencies. We invite other service agencies on-site to provide guests direct access to their services (WIC, Child Health Plus, Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables, HEAP, etc.) Pantry guests are permitted to utilize the food pantry twice per month.



## Who are the people who utilize the Food Pantry?

Focus Interfaith Food Pantry targets low income, food insecure individuals and households, many of whom subsist on SSI, SSD, other benefits, or public assistance. We utilize the federal guidelines for USDA distribution of government food. All of our guests are below the poverty level (as set by the federal standards) and many are 185% below that standard poverty level.

The food pantry obtains this information from guests upon intake. Guests are required to share information regarding income sources, employment and government benefits. Our primary service area for the pantry includes the Park South, Capitol Hill and Center Square neighborhoods of Albany.

## Who are the people who run the pantry?



**One of our greatest assets is a core of dedicated volunteers from our member congregations and the greater community.** We have a pool of over 50 people who give their time and service to FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry.

**Member Congregations.** In-Kind donations are part of our member congregation's and the greater community's commitment to the organization. Our estimate for in-kind contributions for 2017 totaled over \$3,500.

Committed funding is sustained by pledges from member churches and financial donations from affiliate congregations connected to the food pantry. Anticipated funding sources include: State Employee's Federated Appeal, Stewart's Holiday Match, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger,

driveway in front of the pantry door (deliveries arrive at all times of the day and we need the space clear for them to get in and out).

FOCUS pantry tags are to be used for parking only when you are volunteering at a FOCUS program.

## Taking Food Home

Unless you are utilizing the pantry once a month as a pantry guest, no one is allowed to take anything out of the pantry without staff permission. You may not pack your own bags; someone else in the pantry needs to do that for you.

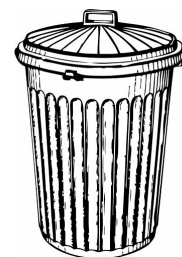
## Dress Code

Dress casually. You represent "FOCUS" Churches and when working in the pantry, we are in a church. No torn pants, shirts, miniskirts, mini dresses, cleavage, see through tops (You get it, right?) Don't wear anything really good either, we are working with food & vegetables and sometimes you can get a little dirty. Make sure you wear comfortable shoes!



## Trash

If you are helping unpack food or stocking shelves, any box that is opened needs to be broken down, we cannot put un-broken down boxes in the trash on the other side of the church. If you are having trouble breaking down a box just yell, one of us will help! We also can't put any food items in the trash; the waste baskets are for dry items ONLY. There is a separate container for compost. This container is for rotten produce ONLY. No paper or bread, produce only. Stale or unusable bread belongs in a box in the hallway marked "DISCARDED BREAD."

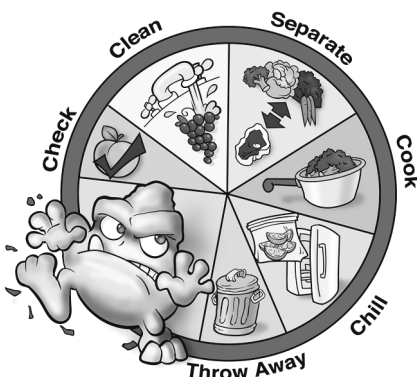


## Give - Aways

On occasion there may be some perishable items (bread and produce) that will spoil if not used immediately. Please check with Pantry Manager when it is appropriate to give out excess items.

## Food Handling

- Check all food items (cans, dry goods, dairy products, baby food and formula) for expiration dates. Do not give out expired products.
- Check with Lorraine for dented or unlabeled can protocol.
- Produce that has blemishes can still be used.
- Rotten fruit and vegetables are to be placed (without wrappers, twists, etc.) into compost bin.
- Moldy or expired bread needs to be bagged separately for disposal. Check with Lorraine where to throw it out.
- No wet garbage or food items are to go in any of the pantry trash cans (including fruit peels).



## Parking

Parking is permitted in the center of Westminster parking lot on Chestnut St (do not park in reserved spots). If you need a "FOCUS" volunteer tag for your windshield please let Lorraine know and she will give one to you. There is NO parking in the



legislative member items, Presbyterian Hunger Program Domestic Grant, and internal fundraising events. The Pantry is in its 7th year contracting with the Department of Health to provide food assistance to hungry New Yorkers.

## What can our guests expect from FOCUS?

- Every individual will be treated with respect and dignity.
- Our service to you will be provided without regard for race, religion, ethnic background, marital status, disability, sex, national origin, political belief, gender orientation or age.
- If you are eligible for assistance, you will be given a 4 day minimum supply of food per person in your household.
- You're welcome to utilize the pantry a second time every month for a two day supply of food.
- The personal information you share with us will be kept confidential.



## What is expected of pantry guests?

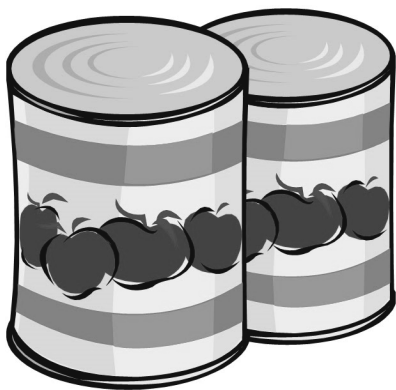
- You will only go to the food pantry that serves your neighborhood.
- You must meet all eligibility requirements of the pantry you are visiting.
- You will treat all staff, volunteers and other guests with dignity and respect while visiting the food pantry.
- Service may be refused if abusive or inappropriate behavior occurs.



# Job Descriptions & Food Handling Descriptions

## Checking In

Every volunteer interested in computer intake will be thoroughly trained. After each guest takes a number, they must show proof of address and ID for every adult household member every visit and a form of ID for all children every visit. Enter all names and dates of birth for all household members in the computer database. Adults & Children that have no valid ID and /or proof of address cannot be entered into the computer. Only individuals with correct documents may be entered into the database. Type any other pertinent information in the notes. If this is the guests first visit, they may have a milk card. Families of 1-2 receive a ½ gallon, families of 3 or more may receive 1 gallon.



Start the client choice sheet by filling in the top with their name, date, pantry number and household number. You may send the guest into the middle of pantry where their client choice food selection will take place. No milk cards are given on the second visit.

## Food Choice

Read the items available and mark them clearly in each box if each guest wants each item, and to make a choice when one is available. They are permitted 2 personal care items each month. Read the list to each guest and write the choice in the space provided. The next step is the “extra” item they may also have, which is listed on the specials list. If there are small children ask each guest if they need diapers, baby food or formula. Have them move on to the produce that is in the glass door cooler; hand the client choice sheet to whomever is packing produce that day. Families that are in need of a

second visit per month do not get the personal items or extra items but they may have produce.

## Produce & Bread

Each guest may pick out their own bread. Some days there will be limits, some days there won't be. Hand out produce according to family size. We are offering our guests produce choices of whatever is available that day. Please refer to chart on cooler door for amounts per family. For eggs – 1-2 people receive ½ dozen. 3-more may have a whole dozen.

## Packing

Carefully follow pantry guidelines for amounts of each item. Amounts are in accordance to the USDA and the NYS Department of Health. It may look like the pantry is stocked with ample amounts but please remember we are serving over 350 families each month and ordering is done with that in mind. Do not exceed posted guidelines.

Please refrain from engaging guests in item choices. The selection sheet has item choices; guests should not be asking the packer for specific items. Guests are not allowed in packing area.

