



Food Donations

GUIDANCE FOR FOOD SHELVES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As a critical component of the food access system, food shelves continue to provide food to those in need. Volunteer health and safety is critical to keep these services available. These guidelines are important safety procedures to keep staff, volunteers and community safe.



FOOD DONATION GUIDELINES

Food shelves can and should still accept food donations, as there is no current evidence of COVID-19 transmission through food or food packaging according to the CDC, FDA and USDA.

Consider these ideas to safely accept and stock food donations:

- Establish donation guidelines for donors and communicate through social media, websites, and signage. Include a donation list to fulfill needed items, client needs, safe storage space and shelf life of perishable products.
- Request that donors with illness stay home and not donate items.
- Prepare signage with easy to follow instructions for donors.
- Practice social distancing (stay 6 feet away from others) with interactions between donors and volunteers.
- Establish designated drop-off zones to help maintain social distancing. Place an empty table to provide a barrier and distance at the drop off area between the donor and the volunteer.
- Consider a drive-up or curbside model. Take items from the trunk of clients' vehicles when possible.
- Wear a mask, to receive, inspect and stock food items. Gloves are optional.
- Wash hands after accepting food donations. Safely shelve and stock food items, then wash hands again.
- Items do **not** need a "waiting" period to go into the food shelf or be wiped down with a disinfectant after receiving and prior to storage.
- Always follow safe food handling practices including health and hygiene, preventing bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat unpackaged food, and regular cleaning and sanitizing of equipment and surfaces.
- Consider a staffing model that is working for one Minnesota food shelf: "We have a manager and lead volunteer on each shift. We assign tasks to make social distancing possible. A volunteer rotation system has worked for us. We have the same volunteers on a two-week shift and then replace them with all new volunteers for the second two-week shift."

- Stay up to date on guidance from your [local health officials](https://mn.gov/governor/covid-19/) (<https://mn.gov/governor/covid-19/>).

CLEANING, SANITIZING AND DISINFECTING GUIDELINES

- Read each label and follow manufacturer's instructions on cleaning products.
- Clean surfaces with warm soapy water to remove the dirt, food and some germs from surfaces before sanitizing or disinfecting.
- Sanitize food contact surfaces after cleaning. A typical sanitizing solution is 1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water or 1 teaspoon per quart. Do not mix or combine cleaning products together.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces with CDC recommendations of 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of EPA-registered bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons per quart of water or use approved disinfectants from the EPA, List N: [Disinfectants for Use against SARS-CoV-2](https://z.umn.edu/epa-disinfect) (<https://z.umn.edu/epa-disinfect>). Examples of high touch surfaces include counters, shared pens, volunteer check-in stations, handles on carts (if using grocery carts), door handles, light switches, bathroom door handles, and door knobs/handles hourly or multiple times per day depending upon use.
- Use separate cleaning tools for sanitizing food contact surfaces and for disinfecting high touch areas.



RESOURCES

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) from the CDC.
- [Food Safety and Food Donation](https://z.umn.edu/fooddonate) (<https://z.umn.edu/fooddonate>) from the State of Minnesota Department of Health. Onsite Feeding Locations, Food Shelves and Food Banks, March 2020.
- [Food Safety during the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/foodsafety/emergency/covid.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/foodsafety/emergency/covid.html>) from the State of Minnesota Department of Health.
- [How food shelves are responding to COVID-19](https://www.hungersolutions.org/category/food-shelf/) (<https://www.hungersolutions.org/category/food-shelf/>) from Hunger Solutions.
- [Stay Safe Minnesota](https://mn.gov/covid19/) (<https://mn.gov/covid19/>) from State of Minnesota.

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