



## ***An Examination of Food Assistance Availability to Rural Pennsylvanians***

***A report by:***

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Hunger is no stranger to rural Pennsylvanians. According to the 2004 Food Security Supplement of the federal Current Population Survey, about 4 percent of rural Pennsylvanians could be considered food insecure with hunger. That percentage exceeded the 3 percent found nationally, the 3 percent found in rural America, and the 2 percent found in non-rural areas of Pennsylvania.

The lack of adequate nutrition prevents children from functioning well in school, provides stress to parents and impairs the ability of adults to reach their potential. It may also increase public costs in subtle ways, from the lack of defense against disease to the lack of attention in elementary school.

To combat hunger, a wide array of federally and state-financed anti-hunger programs are provided throughout Pennsylvania. In addition, food pantries, which, as organizations, did not exist to any significant degree prior to 1980, have become a fixture in both urban and rural America, and have been supplying food to needy families. Locally operated, often by volunteers, pantries have become an important component of the “private

food assistance” system. However, the extent and impact of food pantries in rural Pennsylvania is unclear.

To examine the adequacy of the network of food pantries that serve the needy in Pennsylvania’s rural counties, this project sought to: analyze food insecurity and food assistance using the federal Current Population Survey; analyze the food assistance administrative system in Pennsylvania; conduct a survey of Pennsylvania food pantry operators; and develop policy considerations for the state and for rural food pantry operators.

In general, the research found that rural Pennsylvanians suffer more food insecurity and depend more on food pantry networks than is true nationally.

The survey of food pantry administrators found a great variation in the number of pantries per county, the number of households served, the amount of food provided to clients, and the amount of time pantries are open. In general, however, the pantry administrator survey found a stable but stressed network that many clients depend on for at least part of their basic sustenance.

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*The Center for*

***Rural Pennsylvania***

*A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly*



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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, the delivery of assistance to the poor has drastically changed. While the availability of cash assistance has narrowed, the availability of food assistance has widened. The emergence and growth of food pantries as a source of free food to prepare at home represents the most substantial change in the food assistance landscape. In 2005, approximately 24 million to 27 million Americans, or about 8 percent of the U.S. population, received food from a food pantry at least once in the year (America's Second Harvest, 2006).

This source of food assistance, which was not widely available to the needy until 1979, is estimated to have cost approximately \$1.4 billion in 1998 (Daponte and Bade 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Only 36 percent of households dependent on a food pantry receive food stamps and one-third of pantry households have never applied for food stamps (America's Second Harvest, 2006). This suggests that food pantries serve as a front line hunger relief service for many people, although, at 2.5 million households served in 2000, it is dwarfed by the federal Food Stamp Program, which served 7.3 million households per month in 2000 (Tiehen, 2002).

Some people, however, are ineligible to receive food stamps, including some able-bodied adults without dependents. These people may be particularly dependent on private food networks. Although the federal government funds 16 anti-hunger projects, none is universally based on income. Even the Food Stamp Program has work requirements and exclusions. In addition, the food stamp benefit has declined in purchasing power since the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, which reduced the amount per person from 103 percent of the Thrifty Food Plan to 100 percent.

The Food Stamp Program and food pantries differ in their approach to providing food resources. The Food Stamp Program provides benefits to participants in the form of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). In this program, participants shop for the foods they desire and pay for groceries using an EBT card. In contrast, food pantries generally provide groceries directly to clients, to be prepared in the client's home. Food pantries do not always allow their clients much choice in the foods they will receive since the choice is restricted to product that has been donated or purchased by the food bank or food pantry. While pantries are encouraged to provide clients with "client choice," such as some variation of a shopping experience in which clients choose at least some of their

own foods, not all pantries do so, and instead pre-pack bags or boxes of groceries for clients.

There exist concerns about the effectiveness of food pantries between locales. Daponte and Bade (2000) found when contrasting the private food assistance network in the Pittsburgh area and in southwestern Connecticut, that the food assistance resources available to those in Pennsylvania exceeded those in Connecticut. They attribute differences in the effectiveness of advocacy organizations and the commitment of the state to alleviate food insecurity to differences in the effectiveness and availability of private food assistance (Daponte and Bade, 2000). Notably, Connecticut, unlike Pennsylvania, does not allocate state funds<sup>2</sup> for the purchase of food to be distributed through local agencies. In fiscal year 2006, Pennsylvania allocated \$18 million to this program.

Unlike the Food Stamp Program, which enjoys federal sponsorship and is staffed by people hired to operate the program, food pantries rely on a patchwork of monetary and personnel support. Monetary support comes from the federal government, such as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), state funds in a few states, (Pennsylvania funds the largest), some local towns and cities, and private donations. Some pantries, especially those located in social service agencies, may have paid staff, but volunteers play an extremely important role in acquiring and distributing the groceries. Since the basis and origins of the food pantry network are private, it is described as part of the private food assistance network, which also includes soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

Others sometimes refer to food pantries as part of emergency food assistance. However, because many people rely on the network on a chronic rather than acute basis, the term emergency seems to be a misnomer.

As the availability of food pantries (also known as a part of the private food assistance network) expanded, the U.S. Department of Agriculture stepped up its efforts to

### Food Pantry, Food Bank Defined

**Food Pantry** – A program that distributes groceries (non-prepared foods) and other basic supplies for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client's residence. An agency that picks up boxed food from a source to distribute to their clients

**Food Bank** – A food bank is a charitable organization that solicits, receives, inventories, stores and distributes donated food and grocery products to charitable organizations that directly serve needy clients. These agencies include churches and qualifying nonprofit (501c3) organizations.

*Source: America's Second Harvest, 2006*

<sup>1</sup> Based on estimates of 960.5 pounds distributed at \$1.48 per pound (Second Harvest, 1997). Calculation by Daponte and Bade, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> State Food Purchase Program, allocated by the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

measure “food security” in the nation. Starting in 1995, the federal Current Population Survey included a module that asked questions to determine a household’s food security. In 1995, the national rate of food insecurity was approximately 10.2 percent, a figure that increased to 11 percent in 2005 (Nord, 2006). Although the kind of malnutrition that resulted in the rejection of 40 percent of draftees in World War II due to ill health from diseases, such as rickets (Daponte and Bade, 2006), is rarely seen in the 21st century U.S., food insecurity remains an issue.

The research presented in this report is a review of the supply and demand for private food assistance in rural Pennsylvania. It also aims to improve the understanding of the extent of food insecurity in rural Pennsylvania and to explore the functioning and adequacy of the food pantry network by analyzing food insecurity and food assistance using the federal Current Population Survey; analyzing the food assistance policy and administrative system in Pennsylvania; surveying food pantry operators; and presenting policy considerations. Recommendations on best practices for rural pantries are included in the Appendix.

## RESULTS

### FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Of the various anti-hunger programs provided in Pennsylvania, most are federally funded. However, there are state contributions to three programs; the Food Stamp Program, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the School Lunch/School Breakfast Program. A fourth anti-hunger program, the State Food Purchase Program, is wholly funded by the state. Details, including eligibility criteria, on these and other food assistance programs are included in Table 1 on Page 4.

### FOOD DELIVERY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN PENNSYLVANIA

In their review of the state-based food delivery assistance programs in Pennsylvania, the researchers found that administrative responsibilities were divided among a diverse network of agencies, as follows:

- the Department of Public Welfare administers the Food Stamp Program, the largest of the programs;
- the Department of Health administers the Women, Infants and Children program;
- the Department of Education administers the National School Breakfast, Lunch and the Seamless Summer Program and the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program;
- the Department of Agriculture administers the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the State Food

Purchase Program (the only wholly state-funded program) and the Pennsylvania Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program; and

- the Department of Aging administers the congregate and home-delivered meal program.

The Interagency Council for Food and Nutrition, under the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, also provides a forum for coordination of services in Pennsylvania.

### ANALYSIS OF CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

The federal Current Population Survey, administered jointly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau, is administered monthly. In 1995, a Food Security Supplement was added, and has since been usually administered in December. The 2004 Food Security Supplement was analyzed for rural Pennsylvania to better understand the percentage that uses both food pantries and other anti-hunger programs, especially food stamps. The Food Security Supplement contains questions on a household’s participation in food assistance programs, usual and actual food expenditures within the past month and the value of Food Stamp and WIC

### Food Security, Insecurity and Hunger Defined

**Food Security** – “Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).”

**Food insecurity** – “Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”

**Hunger** – “The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food. Hunger may produce malnutrition over time.... Hunger... is a potential, although not necessary, consequence of food insecurity.”

*Definitions are from Measuring Food Security in the United States: Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000, by G. Bickel, M. Nord, C. Price, W. Hamilton, and J. Cook. March 2000. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, Washington, D.C.*

**Table 1: Food Assistance Programs in Pennsylvania**

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Program Administration in Pennsylvania</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>Source of Funding</b>
Food Stamp Program	Payments restricted to food. Benefit amount depends on income and expenses. Benefit provided through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) similar to a debit card.	Department of Public Welfare through county-based offices	Gross income under 130 percent of poverty. Work requirements, unless waived for a variety of reasons.	Federal government. Pennsylvania pays 50 percent of administrative costs.
Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	Provides vouchers for redemption at grocery stores for nutritious foods including tuna, fortified cereals, etc. Value of benefit approximately \$53 per month.	24 agencies that provide benefits through 356 clinics.	Pregnant women, infants, children up to their 5 <sup>th</sup> birthday, breastfeeding women (until their child is 1) and at-risk postpartum women, foster children and those on medical assistance.	Federal government.
Pennsylvania Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)	Coupons good for purchases at Farmers' Markets.	Department of Agriculture. Coupons distributed to WIC participants and eligible seniors.	WIC participants and senior citizens with incomes at or below 185 percent of poverty.	\$2 million from state \$1.6 million in WIC program funds and U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	Food distributed through food pantries/soup kitchens.	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Funds allocated on a county basis through a lead agency that then distributes food to pantries and soup kitchens.	Income at or below 150 percent of poverty.	Federal government.
State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)	Food distributed through food pantries.	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.	Income at or below 150 percent of poverty.	State funded.
School Lunch/School Breakfast Programs	Free or reduced price breakfasts and lunches to income eligible school children.	Department of Education.	Reduced price lunch with income at or below 185 percent of poverty, free at 130 percent of poverty.	Federally funded plus \$.10 from state funds per breakfast and lunch served, plus an enhancement to support increasing the serving of school breakfasts.
The Child and Adult Care Food Program	Provides lunch, evening meals and snacks for after-school programs.	Department of Education.	Various criteria for facilities and eligible individuals.	Federal government.
Summer Food Service Program	Provides either breakfast and lunch or lunch and snack or supper and snack to participating children.	Department of Education.	Children at sites that serve an area where 50 percent of families have incomes under 185 percent of poverty, or children at enrolled sites (using school lunch criteria).	Federal government.
Meals for the Elderly (Congregate/Home Delivered)	Provides congregate and home-delivered meals to those 60 and older.	Department of Aging through 265 senior centers.	Anyone 60 or older.	Federal government and participant donation.
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	40 lbs. of supplemental food to women who qualify for WIC but are not receiving WIC. 5 and 6 year olds are eligible. Seniors (over 60) with eligible income in 16 Pennsylvania counties.	Local food banks through an agreement with the Pennsylvania Regional Association of Food Banks and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Some counties administer through food pantries.	Women who qualify for WIC but are not receiving WIC. 5 and 6 year olds are eligible. Senior (over 60) participants with income at or below 130 percent of poverty.	U.S. Department of Agriculture purchases food and makes it available to Pennsylvania, along with funding to reimburse administrative expenses.

(Women's, Infant and Children's program) benefits.

The Food Security Supplement uses three designations: food secure, food insecure and food insecure with hunger<sup>3</sup>.

According to the analysis of the 2004 supplement, the proportion of the population that, in the past 30 days, could be considered food insecure with hunger in rural Pennsylvania (4 percent) exceeded the proportion found in the other geographic areas (3 percent nationally, 3 percent in rural America, and 2 percent in non-rural Pennsylvania).

Approximately 8 percent of households in rural Pennsylvania used a food pantry during the past year and 4 percent used it during the past month. These figures are well above those in other parts of rural America and the rest of Pennsylvania, where 5 percent and 3 percent, respectively, used a pantry in the past year.

In fact, the proportion of rural Pennsylvania households that used a pantry in the past year compares with the proportion that used food stamps in the past year, which was also approximately 8 percent. However, only about 52 percent of the clients of food pantries in rural Pennsylvania also used food stamps. That is, for 48 percent of the food pantry population in rural Pennsylvania, the food pantry may be the only source of untargeted food assistance that the household receives.

### **SURVEY OF FOOD PANTRY ADMINISTRATORS**

To survey food pantry administrators in the 48 rural counties of Pennsylvania, the researchers obtained a list from the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center and augmented it with calls to the American's Second Harvest member food banks in Pennsylvania. The total list consisted of 523 agencies that in some way provide a food pantry, either alone as their main service or as one of a number of services. A total of 182 usable surveys were returned, for a response rate of 35 percent. The pantry administrators were surveyed in the spring of 2006.

The survey of food pantry administrators found a great variation in the number of pantries per county, the number of households served, the amount of food provided to clients, and the amount of time pantries are open. The survey results follow.

#### **Demographics of Food Pantries**

- 94 percent operate only one pantry.
- 15 percent opened prior to 1980 and 50 percent opened between 1981 and 1989.
- 73 percent belong to a food bank.
- Pantries define their service areas in a variety of ways, but 74 percent use county and municipal boundaries.
- 63 percent are faith-based.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2006 the most serious category was renamed very low food security. (Nord, 2006)

### **Households Served and Food Provided**

- Pantries report serving 92,758 households in 2005.
- In a typical month, an average pantry served 131 households 339 bags of groceries.
- Regional differences exist in the number of households served, with, on average, pantries in Northeast Pennsylvania serving 240 households per month and pantries in Northwest Pennsylvania serving 71. However, Northeast Pennsylvania also has the lowest number of pantries.
- 70 percent of pantries offer other services, but only 20 percent offer food stamp screening. The primary service is information and referral.

### **Sources of Food**

- 70 percent of pantries get food for distribution from churches or religious organizations, 70 percent get food from a food bank, including State Food Purchase, 64 percent get direct donations, 37 percent get USDA commodities not through the food bank, and 33 percent get State Food Purchase food not through a food bank.

### **Increasing Need/Ability to meet Need**

- 58 percent report more need among pantry clients than four years ago, and 32 percent report more clients since 2002.
- 34 percent of pantries report turning clients away: the majority of which were turned away because they lived outside of the pantries' service area. Other reasons included ineligibility due to income, and failure to prove eligibility.
- On average, clients received food from the reporting food pantry for 40 months and from any food pantry for 37 months.
- 87 percent of the reporting pantries received new referrals last month. Among these pantries, 50 percent reported five or more new referrals.

### **Pantry Days/Hours and Manpower**

- Half of all pantries are open eight hours or less per month.
- 85 percent of pantries will provide food in an emergency.
- 24 percent of pantries have a paid staff person.
- Half of all pantries have 10 or fewer volunteers per month and half have more than 10.
- On average, pantry volunteers are between 50 and 72 years old.

### **Demographics of Food Pantry Clients**

- Pantry operators indicated that 52 percent of client households receive food stamps.
- Operators indicated that 51 percent of client households

have a least one child and 35 percent of client households have at least one person over the age of 65.

- Pantry operators reported that 37 percent of client households have at least one worker who works more than 20 hours per week.

### **Transportation**

- 30 percent of pantry operators thought that transportation problems kept potential clients away from the pantry.
- On average, pantries are 25 miles from their regional food bank.
- The further the pantry is from the regional food bank, the less likely it is to be a member.
- 45 percent of food pantry operators pick up food they are obtaining from the regional food bank.
- 30 percent of pantry operators in total and 41 percent of those that pick up their own food at the food bank stated that the size of the available vehicle restricted the amount of food they could order from their regional food bank.

### **Financial Issues**

- Few pantries have annual budgets, but of those that do, the budget averages \$4,000 per year or less.
- Pantries receive financial donations from multiple sources: 83 percent of pantries get financial donations from churches, 84 percent from individuals and 55 percent from civic organizations.

### **Challenges**

- Respondents reported major challenges with resources, such as getting enough food and enough money (together 42 percent). They also report administrative concerns (22 percent) and having enough able-bodied volunteers (15 percent).
- Despite challenges, 58 percent reported that the continued operation of the pantry is not threatened at this time.

### **Resources Available to Clients**

- When pantry operators were asked how close the nearest pantry is in the event that their pantry closed, 23 percent could not think of any other pantry that clients might access. However, the 77 percent that could name another pantry indicated that more than 33 percent of the pantries were more than 10 miles away.
- When asked what clients would do if the food pantry closed, 36 percent stated that clients could go to another pantry although some would have transportation difficulties, and other pantries could be overwhelmed. However, 33 percent stated that clients would “go without”, “go hungry”, or “starve.”

- 45 percent of pantry operators noted problems with transportation as a difference between operating in a rural rather than urban environment.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, the various components of this project reflect the need among the population of pantry clients and the major challenges faced by the food pantry operators.

The research found that rural Pennsylvanians suffer more food insecurity but depend more on the food pantry networks than is true nationally.

The pantry administrator survey found a stable but stressed network that many clients depend on for at least part of their basic sustenance. As need increases, pantry operators report significant challenges with resources, transportation and the volunteer network. Pantry administrators also reported that many clients depend, and have depended for a period of years, on food pantries, and only half of participants receive food stamps. When asked what would happen to clients if the food pantry closed, one-third of the respondents said that clients would go hungry. Due to a lack of comparable studies, the researchers could not determine the health of the pantry network versus other states, but the existence of the State Food Purchase Program ensures that every county provides at least some food assistance.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **STATE LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS**

*The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Food Distribution should consider compiling a comprehensive list of operating pantries so that it may know what resources actually exist in the commonwealth.*

*The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Food Distribution should consider undertaking an assessment of the State Food Purchase Program to develop effective “models” that lead agencies can use to maximize the accessibility of food pantries and the amount of food available for distribution.*

As the food pantry survey found, some counties have extensive county networks while others are very sparse. Also, the resources available to a needy family in one county differ from the resources available in another county. In the interest of fairness and consistency, the Bureau of Food Distribution should aid lead agencies in developing avenues to maximize the amount of food they can obtain for distribution to needy clients with the available resources.

*The General Assembly should consider enhancing the State Food Purchase Program so that a three to seven day supply of food may be distributed each month.*

The State Food Purchase Program not only supplies food pantries with a critical source of food, but also provides administrative funding that stabilizes the pantry networks and ensures that there are some food assistance resources for needy residents in every county. The availability of the program strengthens the pantry network. As the pantry survey found, there are pantries that do not have food to provide to clients on a monthly basis. The food amount specified above can help offset a shortfall.

### **FOOD BANK CONSIDERATIONS**

*Food banks should consider undertaking a process of developing pantries in underserved areas.*

Regional food banks, in cooperation with local county governments or alone, should undertake pantry development in underserved communities to provide access to needy clients.

*Food banks should consider transporting product to areas more than 40 miles from the food bank, since transportation is such a serious issue for needy clients.*

Areas farther than 40 miles (80 miles roundtrip) provide challenges to food pantry administrators with or without access to trucks. For example, during pre-testing for the pantry administrator survey, a World War II veteran at one site discussed planning a 150-mile round trip to the food bank to obtain food for distribution. Delivery would encourage membership in the food bank and result in more food being provided to the needy.

### **PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL FOOD BANKS CONSIDERATIONS**

*The Pennsylvania Association of Regional Food Banks should consider undertaking a process of developing a "best practices" manual, with consultation by human service educators or professionals, and distribute it to all Pennsylvania food pantries. It could also be distributed to all State Food Purchase Program lead agencies for their respective pantry networks.*

Best practices are best developed by those in the relevant service area and will improve services in pantries and aid new food pantry administrators in the start-up phase. Recommendations in the Appendix might serve as a starting point for this discussion.

Training on best practices and positive client relationships should also be considered, following the development of a manual.

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## Appendix

### **Considerations for Establishing/Operating a Rural Food Pantry**

By reviewing the available resources, including comments from the survey respondents developed as part of the research survey, the researchers developed the following considerations on establishing and maintaining a rural food pantry.

#### *Governance*

A food pantry should have or form a board of directors or organizing/advisory committee. A board or committee promotes shared responsibility and decision-making and serves as a good foundation of a well-run pantry. Non-profit [501© (3)] status should be considered if needed for membership in the regional food bank, but a partnership with a local church or non-profit may suffice. If there is a partnership with another non-profit or under an umbrella of another non-profit, then there should be a separate committee that deals with governing and overseeing the food pantry. This committee should be involved with both the personnel and financial management of the food pantry.

#### *Food pantry administration*

Someone should act as the “Executive Director” or administrator of the food pantry. This person should always have someone who can cover for him/her in the case of emergencies and/or during respites.

#### *Community Outreach*

Pantries should conduct as many community awareness activities as practical. The pantry should have a relationship with locally based media outlets and local groups that have the potential of contributing resources and volunteers, and also referring people in need to the pantry. In rural areas this might be the local weekly newspaper.

#### *Client Confidentiality*

The pantry should make every effort to honor the confidentiality of clients. This includes refraining from using the pictures or stories of clients for promotional purposes. Even if clients give informed consent to the use of their pictures, the client may feel pressured, even if not explicitly coerced by the pantry.

In keeping records on clients, confidentiality considerations are paramount. No one other than the director or the person/people designated to manage the records should have access to client records. Volunteers, who themselves may be clients, should not have access to client records. However, if a volunteer, who also qualifies as a client, handles records, he/she should be informed of the need to protect the confidentiality of other clients. Whoever handles records, an effort should be made to ensure that only those who need to see the records for accountability purposes should have access. Others

should not. This implies that only designated people will sign in a client when they arrive at the food pantry, not anyone who happens to be around.

#### *Client Recordkeeping*

Participation records should be kept on each household that the pantry serves. Included in the household record should be a current listing of all household members, demographic information on the members (age, gender, labor force status, category of household income, address), and special needs of the household and household members. The pantry should note the date of each time a household member receives services from the pantry. These records can take a variety of forms, from index cards kept in a secure place to a computerized database. In either case, the records must be kept in a locked location where clients’ confidentiality cannot be violated. As long as the pantry manager or director can complete the required statistical paperwork for the state and federal government, no elaborate system of recordkeeping is needed. While pantries can share aggregate statistics on the households that they serve and the members of the households, no information that would allow anyone to identify the household or client should be shared, unless required by a program funder and the client has agreed to have the information shared.

#### *Attracting Resources*

Simple efforts, such as food drives at local schools (and universities) and regular church collections, may be the most efficient way for all-volunteer pantries to collect food and funds. In pantries with a good volunteer base, other efforts keyed to the local community can be effective in raising extra funds and food. Although some of the handbooks advocate grant applications, this may be too elaborate an effort for some pantries though well within the capabilities of others. The United Way may be a local resource that could be pursued.

Development should be regarded as an essential activity. One way to increase the visibility of the pantry is to have a newsletter and/or an annual report.

A pantry should keep a list of all names and addresses of everyone who has donated either time or money. These people should be communicated with two to three times a year with stories about donations, volunteers, etc. This is a good way to ask for specific donations or provide a wish list of things the pantry needs.

### *Recordkeeping of Pantry Processes*

The kinds of records that a food pantry keeps will relate to its size and budget. If it is convenient and useful, computerizing records may be considered. Some food banks recommend using commonly obtainable spreadsheet programs for statistical tallies and general recordkeeping.

If a pantry is incorporated and has a board of directors, board-meeting minutes should be kept. Boards of directors should have bylaws and terms so that new talent can be rotated on to the board.

If the pantry does any fundraising, the board should have a treasurer and a finance committee. A bank account should be set up and all money (especially cash) should be handled by two people. The checkbook should require two signatures and be balanced monthly. If a pantry has a formal budget then the finance committee should review expenditures and budget projections every month, including the difference between what has been spent and what is left for the rest of the year. This protects the reputation of the food pantry and the individuals who handle money. In any case, a system should be devised that shares the responsibility for collecting, depositing, maintaining a checkbook and writing checks. This protects everyone by reducing the possibility for money to go astray. Referred to as internal controls, this is standard procedure for any well-run business and non-profit (Strachan, 1998). If the dollar amount of the budget approaches a significant figure, the pantry should conduct a yearly audit.

### *Fundraising Records*

Records of all donations, however small, should be maintained, both for food and dollars. Thank you letters should be sent promptly and copies filed as a tracking system.

### *Volunteers*

Pantries should make use of their volunteers' skills. The pantry manager should strive to create a positive atmosphere. If a pantry manager is losing volunteers, s/he needs to reconsider the environment and activities of volunteers.

Pantry managers should strive to obtain a good mix of volunteers, young and old, professional and nonprofessional, who have different attributes to contribute to the pantry's operations.

### *Training of Staff and Volunteers*

All paid staff and volunteers should be trained to be respectful and nonjudgmental. They should be monitored in this respect. There should be clear lines of command in the pantry, and volunteers should know who should be consulted about issues that may arise.

### *Interaction with Clients*

A client who comes to a food pantry needs to be treated with respect. Intake procedures should be as non-intrusive as possible and only necessary information should be gathered to protect confidentiality and possible embarrassment of clients. Generally, if the client is made welcome, the pantry personnel will learn more about them over time and they can provide help as information is disclosed.

Clients who come to the food pantry have experienced significant economic difficulties and generally are under stress. Having a respectful attitude provides a comfortable atmosphere that minimizes problems.

Clients may need services in addition to those provided at the food pantry. Food pantries can proactively make appropriate referrals to appropriate agencies. Doing so requires them to be up-to-date on program changes and eligibility guidelines. A handout describing local services or simply a variety of brochures from local social service agencies can serve as self-referral mechanisms. Alternatively, pantry personnel can proactively contact other agencies on a client's behalf, with the client's permission.

Another way to meet client needs is to provide other forms of assistance at the pantry, or partner with other agencies so that they can provide other forms of assistance such as Food Stamp counseling.

### *Handling Difficult Client Situations*

Giving clients' space and talking with them in a rational but not patronizing manner should minimize the number of difficult situations. In addition, if a client makes verbal threats, it is important to set limits. For example, state that the comment is inappropriate and will not be tolerated. If a client appears to be inebriated or otherwise under the influence they should be asked to leave. If a mentally ill client loses rational thought and is threatening, it is important to separate the client from others and contact local authorities. If a pantry has a positive atmosphere and clear rules that are posted and followed, incidents will be minimized. Clients should also not be crowded together, since that may put stress on the vulnerable.

In addition, the pantry manager should alert the local police to the hours of the food pantry's operation and work out a safety plan in case of problems.

### *Pantry Location*

The location of a pantry is a significant determinant in the pantry's ability to assist, especially in rural areas where transportation barriers can be severe. An effort should be made to locate the pantry near a concentration of clients, for example, in a small town rather than on a country road, miles from any concentration of people, even if space is available there. A location should also

have enough room for adequate storage and adequate room for clients to move around while waiting to maintain a pleasant atmosphere. Most pantries in this study deliver to clients who cannot travel. In addition, they allow clients to pick up for neighbors. All rural pantries should offer delivery to those without transportation.

#### *Client Choice*

Client choice uses a system similar to a store – goods are placed on shelving and clients, with the help of a volunteer, choose from what is available. Although client choice requires more space and a number of volunteers for distribution, the positive aspects outweigh the problems. It may, indeed, require less able-bodied volunteers since the food, once on the shelves, does not need to be repacked for distribution.

#### *Membership in a Food Bank*

Pantries should consider joining their local food bank, since the food banks can help the pantries acquire food resources, skills, and training.

#### *Food Safety*

If a pantry does not belong to a food bank, it should obtain such information from a local health department.

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