



FEDERATION OF
VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS

The Healthy Pantry Initiative

**A health-focused, neighbor-centered transformation of
Virginia's pantry network**

Background

Virginia's food banks and their network of over 1,000 pantry partners are committed to not just providing food, but also promoting health for the 900,000 neighbors they reach each year.

To accomplish this, a group of neighbors facing hunger, food pantry partners, food bank staff, and health and community partners developed The Healthy Pantry Initiative.

Healthy Pantry Initiative

The Healthy Pantry Initiative is a movement guiding all interested pantries to implement more health-focused and neighbor-centered practices.

Purpose: All pantries in Virginia, regardless of their size or capacity, can implement healthy pantry practices to better support the health and nutrition of neighbors facing hunger.

Vision: Neighbors facing hunger can achieve their desired level of health

Healthy Pantry Practices

Pantries that opt in to the Healthy Pantry Initiative are committed to implementing select practices related to the following four categories:

Food Availability	Foods offered through the pantry network meet the unique dietary needs of neighbors facing hunger.
Community Connection	Community partners work in collaboration to connect neighbors with additional resources and supports to help them thrive.
Health Education	Neighbors are empowered with the tools and self-efficacy to make healthy choices.
Neighbor Centered	Barriers are removed so that neighbors facing hunger can access the foods they need to thrive.

Support the Healthy Pantry Initiative

Virginia's pantry network wants to do more to support the health of our neighbors, facing hunger, but needs resources, tools, and trainings in order to do so. To make an investment in Virginia's pantry network, or to offer your partnership or expertise with any of the following Healthy Pantry Practices, contact our Health Equity Director, Meaghan Butler, at mbutler@vafoodbanks.org.

Healthy Pantry Practices

Food Availability

1. Offer items from each of the five food groups .
2. Offer fresh fruits and vegetables.
3. Offer food choices that address specific chronic disease or dietary needs.
4. Offer foods to meet cultural/religious needs of neighbors.

Community Connection

1. Provide information or additional resources on benefits, health, and other social needs.
2. Provide and/or receive neighbor referrals to community health or social benefit services.
3. Offer health services or social supports on site.

Health Education

1. Offer healthy, product specific, recipe cards.
2. Use a visual system to highlight the location of healthy items within the pantry.
3. Offer nutrition and health education materials/resources.
4. Someone who regularly works with the food pantry is trained on MyPlate or a formal nutrition education curriculum.
5. Food demonstrations and tastings, cooking classes, or nutrition education sessions are offered on site.

Neighbor Centered

1. Enable neighbors to choose which types of food they would like from the pantry.
2. Collect neighbor feedback on pantry services and utilize when making organizational decisions.
3. Serve neighbors on evenings and/or weekends.
4. Address transportation barriers in at least one way.
5. Have materials, resources or processes for serving non-English speakers.
6. Serve anyone in need of food assistance, regardless of location, etc.,
7. Make accommodations for people with all physical and mental abilities.
8. Support a culturally inclusive and welcoming environment.