



# Client Choice:

## Why it works, and how you can implement it into your organization.

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*Most of us shop at the grocery store picking and choosing according to our needs, personal preferences and available funds. Likewise, food pantry clients should be able to control what goes in their grocery basket. Pantries nationwide are discovering the benefits of investing in Client Choice.*

### Why Client Choice?

‘Client Choice’ is a model of food distribution that enables clients at food pantries to select their own food based on what they know they will use. As an alternative to just picking up a pre-determined box of food, clients select items based on their own tastes, access to cooking facilities, and cultural and dietary needs. Most standardized food boxes offer fairly static menus; food bank inventories are constantly changing which can affect what goes in a client box. Client choice is a very effective method of food delivery, it has been proven to:

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- Alleviate the negative stigma involved when clients visit a food pantry
- Reduce waste and lowering costs to your pantry
- Increase supportive volunteer-client interaction
- Raise client satisfaction

### Client Choice Models *(From Capital Area Food Bank of Texas)*

#### 1. Fixed Menu Plus “Grab Bag” Option

Pantry distributes its traditional, standardized food box, along with a variety of different items. The client is allowed to take limited (one bag, six items, etc) or unlimited amounts of those goods that ‘find’ their way into your pantry.

#### 2. Fixed Menu Bags for Emergency Clients

Pantry maintains a supply of fixed bags for those few clients who have no food in the house and must be supplied with everything to survive until the crisis passes, or those who need food to augment what they get from WIC or food stamps, etc. without the pretext of these goods meeting all their needs.

#### 3. Goal Pounds Assortment

The pantry attempts to fully cover the food pyramid and displays those goods, permitting clients to take however many pounds total of those goods. Color coded shelving helps display items as they appear on the food guide pyramid.

#### 4. Client “shops” from list of available goods

Pantry itemizes what is available on a list. The list is provided to clients as they arrive to pick up food. Clients indicate on the list what items they want and the pantry assembles their bag from that list.

# Strengthening Alaska's Anti-Hunger Network

## 5. **Choice with Limits — for a family of 4 for 3 days**

Each person makes their choice by checking off on a list of available items. If the pantry has in the vegetable section, corn, green beans, peas, and squash, they are allowed to choose three items. The sections of the list are divided up by the types of foods available: high protein foods, sweets and desserts, fruits, etc. Clients check off items they want from each section and a pantry worker fills the order.

## 6. **Open Distribution**

This the most untraditional way to run a food pantry. The pantry permits clients to choose the types and amount of food they want. No limits, no restrictions, just trust.

### **Client Choice In Your Agency**

Client Choice delivery requires more space for shelves and storage, and more planning. You may need to expand the client waiting area. Other services might include Food Stamp Outreach or a thrift shop. Client Choice can also be applied to TFAP and CSFP. When the client takes their food box, encourage them to look through it before leaving and take out what they do not want or cannot use. Set up an 'exchange table' or shelf where clients can share unwanted food.

### **Examples of Client Choice**

Ohio:

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ5H5S269q4>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sZZ85ZOqgk&feature=related>

New York:

<http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/socialservices/20080411/15/2487>

Michigan:

[http://www.gcfb.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pg\\_clientchoice](http://www.gcfb.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pg_clientchoice)

### **Need More Help?**

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Want to learn more about changing to client choice or adding Food Stamp Outreach to your program? We are here to help. We are also happy to connect you with outstanding client choice pantries in Alaska, such as New Hope on the Last Frontier in Anchorage.

To access this resource, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager

*Next Month:*

*Leadership  
Assessment*