



Partner Agency Home Delivery Toolkit

A member of:



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This Toolkit is most useful when viewed online with a computer, tablet or smartphone since there are links to additional documents. If you have a paper copy, you can access the online version at tinyurl.com/HomeDeliveryToolkit.

Why do delivery?

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier conducted a large client survey in February 2024 that provided new insights into the need for home delivery. Of the nearly 1500 clients who took the survey, 22% reported that they needed delivery. **People who report needing delivery were more likely to:**

- be food insecure
- have transportation challenges
- have a disability
- have challenges finding information about where to get free groceries
- feel uncomfortable going to food sites like pantries and mobile food pantries
- have children
- be BIPOC (black, indigenous, and other people of color)



40% who get delivery **can't get enough** food each month.

61% of people who need it, **can't get delivery.**

71% who get delivery are **not able to choose** the food they need.

The following Toolkit provides guidance for partners looking to start or expand a home delivery program and borrows from the Feeding America Home Delivery Playbook for Food Banks as well as feedback from pantries currently providing delivery.

If you are new to home delivery, the amount of information may feel overwhelming. Keep in mind that you can start small! The key is communication between your onsite staff / volunteers, delivery drivers and participants. Talking with someone from an agency that has experience delivering can also be helpful. Your [Programs & Partnerships Coordinator](#) can help connect you with someone to learn about their delivery program and processes.

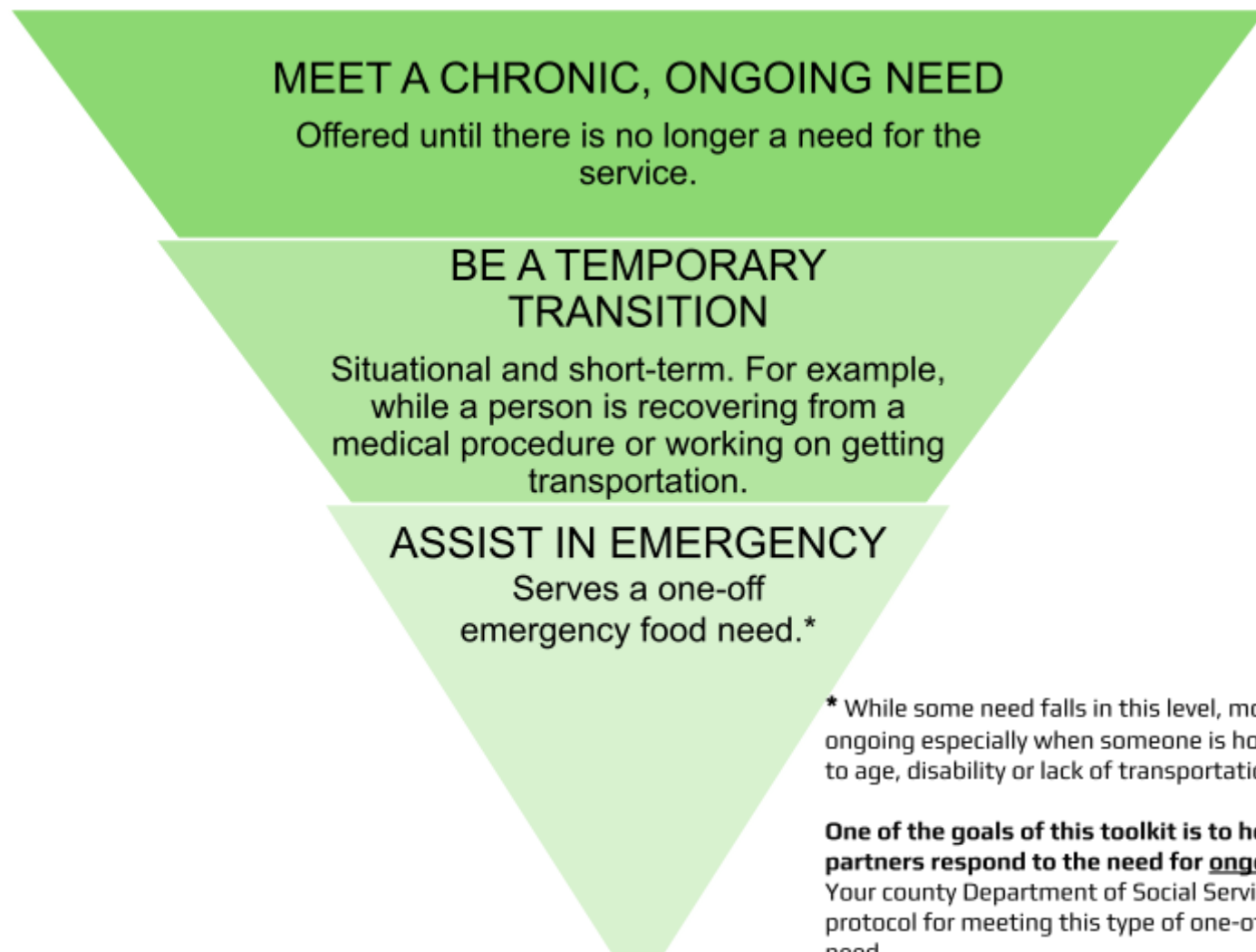
Planning Your Delivery Program Matrix

	Eligibility / Outreach	Intake / Order	Prepare Order	Deliver Order	Confirm Delivery	Close Loop
PEOPLE	Who qualifies to receive delivery? Who will get the word out about delivery? Will you work with referral partners?	Who will screen clients / confirm eligibility and explain processes and expectations? Who will manage the delivery log / roster? Who will ensure Fresh Trak / SIMC or any other recordkeeping system is updated?	Who will plan delivery routes? Who is responsible for giving routes to delivery drivers? Who will pick and pack items for delivery? Who will stage orders of pickup? If providing, who will remind clients about delivery or share status updates?	Who will make deliveries? Are any other community partners already doing delivery? Can you partner rather than starting from scratch? Who will ensure the delivery driver training and paperwork are completed? Who will be the point person for delivery drivers if there are questions the day of delivery?	Who manages confirming & closing out delivered orders? Who manages receiving & processing undelivered orders?	Who will follow-up with clients / delivery drivers to check on their experience?
PROCESSES	How many neighbors can you serve? How far are you willing to deliver? How often can people receive delivery each month? How long can they receive delivery for? How will you get the word out that delivery is available and under what conditions?	How will you confirm eligibility? How will you ensure client choice? - Will you offer perishable food? - Will you offer TEFAP foods? Will you adjust your minimum food package if only delivering once a month and the client has need? How will you track important information for the delivery driver?	How will you determine routes? How will you ensure food safety for perishables during the packing and staging process?	Will deliveries be made with personal or agency vehicles? What safety waivers need to be signed? What training will delivery drivers need? How will you ensure food safety for perishables? If offering TEFAP, how will you ensure attestation is completed? Are you trying to connect neighbors to other services?	How will you handle driver concerns? What is the process for confirming delivery was made? What is the process for undelivered orders?	How will you follow-up with clients / delivery drivers to get feedback on their experience?

TOOLS	• Types of home delivery • Participant eligibility	• Participant Intake • Trauma informed delivery • Sample Delivery Log • Fresh Trak / SIMC	Safely packing and transporting food	• Delivery Drivers • Safely packing and transporting food • What to do if you see something concerning • Offering additional resources • Trauma informed delivery	• Sample Delivery Log	
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Types of home delivery

Not all home deliveries are conducted for the same purpose or duration. We think of home deliveries in three different levels or categories:



* While some need falls in this level, most will be ongoing especially when someone is homebound due to age, disability or lack of transportation.

One of the goals of this toolkit is to help more partners respond to the need for ongoing delivery. Your county Department of Social Services may have a protocol for meeting this type of one-off emergency need.

Trauma informed delivery

Approaching every step of the process – from intake to delivery - with an open mind, nonjudgmental attitude, and compassion is especially important. While clients need and appreciate the delivery service, it can also feel very personal and even intimidating to have someone who they do not know visit their home. It is helpful to keep in mind that the client may have a history that affects them in a multitude of different ways. Since it's impossible to know who has experienced trauma, consider operating under the assumption that all clients could have a history of trauma. Approaching home delivery with this extra care for all clients ensures that those who most need this care get it, without having to disclose their histories. Here are some examples to consider:

Safety	Judgement	Uncertainty
A client who has experienced violence may feel very apprehensive about someone coming to their home. Consider giving some extra context to all your clients so that they know who to expect at their home. These details can help everyone feel safe. For example, “Thank you for signing up for home delivery! Our volunteer driver, Jim, will be coming with your delivery in a red pickup truck around 4:00pm on Tuesday”.	People who experience food insecurity often face a lot of judgment – both actual and perceived. Being mindful to demonstrate respect for clients helps to alleviate fears of judgment. For example, approach this exchange like a customer service experience at a grocery store. Thank them for participating and ask if they have any feedback.	People who experience food insecurity endure a lot of uncertainty. Some may have had times when they didn't know when their next meal would be. The lack of control over when and if their food will arrive can be very stressful. Clear communication can help ease this feeling of powerlessness. For example, if you're going to be late, a heads-up call can go a long way. If you need to take a break from delivery around a holiday, give enough prior notice so the client can plan accordingly.

Trauma-Informed Tips

Offer choice. Choice of food, choice of delivery day, choice of delivery time, etc.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Keep clients in the loop about what to expect, as well as any changes, as best as you can.

Build rapport through curiosity and kindness. Get to know your clients! Consider asking their favorite way to cook a particular food item in their delivery. Questions like this are a small, easy way to show that you respect them and value their knowledge, and that you want to learn more about who they are and what's important to them.

Make clients feel comfortable during the delivery. After knocking, step back from the door to allow them some space. Introduce yourself and remind them of the agency you're associated with if they appear confused when answering the door.

Participant eligibility

Based on the Food Bank's 2024 Client Survey, people who need delivery and are most at risk of food insecurity include:

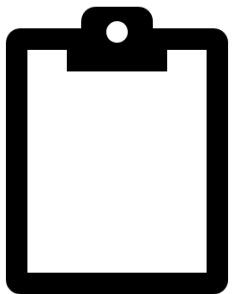
- People living with a **disability**
- People with **children in the household**
- **Seniors who are living alone**
- Those who **lack transportation**

Other criteria could include:

- People who recently gave birth or underwent surgeries / medical emergencies
- Immunocompromised people / people who are sick
- People who are unable to attend the pantry during its open hours
- People screened as in need of home delivery by referral partners

Be prepared that the need might exceed your capacity for providing deliveries. You may want to start with fewer eligibility options or by prioritizing households with a combination of factors. For new delivery programs, keeping a waitlist of households that need delivery, but don't meet your priority criteria, can help you understand the demand and plan for sustainable expansion. There may also be alternative solutions – some of these are outlined below in the "Participant intake" section.

Participant intake



Before scheduling the first delivery, you may want to make sure that other options have been considered. Find out first if the person in need of delivery has a friend, family member, support worker or neighbor who can pick up on their behalf. The Food Bank has conducted interviews with people who need delivery and have found that they may not know that a **proxy** can pick up for them.

We've also learned that some households who can't get to a pantry due to a lack of transportation, may have access to a vehicle after another household member is done with work. Offering **evening (after 6pm) or weekend access** can eliminate the need for delivery in these cases. These hours can also benefit people who work or attend school during the weekday. If advertising standing evening or weekend hours is not feasible, consider opening on a case-by-case basis.

Once you've determined that a delivery is needed make sure to discuss the following with the client:

Duration	Schedule & Changes	Address	Contact Information	Confidentiality	Safety
How long they need and can expect the service to continue. Example: one time, weekly for 3 months, etc.	Clarify options for delivery day and time as well as how to cancel / change a delivery. Communicate what to expect if there are cancellations due to weather or driver illness.	Delivery address and any information to help the driver find the home. House color, identifying landmarks, which door to go to, etc.	What is the best way to contact them? If someone else will be home to accept the delivery, what is that person's phone number?	Protect and respect home delivery clients by keeping their contact information, address, and anything else you may learn by visiting their homes private.	Make sure that dogs and other animals are kept inside or fenced in when the delivery driver arrives. Discuss winter weather and making sure walkways and stairs will be clear / salted if physically able.

Food Options

- Find out what foods the person needs as well as letting them know the amount of food to expect. Some things to keep in mind and possibly discuss:
 - Are there any allergies or other special diet needs?
 - Are there mobility factors that affect cooking ability?
 - What kitchen tools and appliances are available? Not having a can opener, working fridge / stove / range will limit what foods are useful.
 - More information about offering client choice can be found under [Client Choice Logistics](#).
- If perishable food is delivered, let them know to put it into cold storage as soon as possible. If frozen items have begun to thaw, do not refreeze.

Day of Delivery Expectations

- Communicate if reminder calls are made or if you will be in touch only if there is a change.
- It is important, especially if there are perishable foods, that food is not just dropped without confirming receipt.
 - Will the delivery driver call, text or knock on the door to notify of arrival?
 - Keep in mind that some people may be more comfortable with a no-contact option. The delivery driver can text upon arrival and the client can text back confirmation that they will bring the delivery in after the driver leaves. The driver could then leave the delivery at the door.
- Unless the client is physically unable to bring the delivery in on their own, a driver should not enter clients' homes. Discuss the expectation for the exchange outside or at the door.
- Specify what happens if no one is home or does not respond to the text, call or knock.

Client Choice Logistics

Even when a client is not present, it is still important to offer choice. Pantries that provide delivery have found that there may be cooking and dietary considerations, which makes client choice especially important. While these may be a factor for all clients, people needing delivery may have even less ability to get the foods they need from multiple sources. Pantries successfully offering client choice and delivery shared the following processes:

- Use a printed order form with current food items and limits. Read this to the client over the phone and note what they do or do not want for each food category. This form can then be used to process the order when the delivery time comes.
- A google form can be set up as an order form and clients who have a device with an internet or data plan can place an order by a deadline.
- A staff member / volunteer gets a delivery client on the phone during the normal distribution. They walk through the pantry with the client on the phone explaining what's available and pulling their order at the same time.

Clients need to be **offered** at least a 3-day food package for it to be HPNAP eligible whether they are in person or receiving delivery. However, keep in mind that people often shop at multiple pantries to meet their monthly needs and this may not be an option for someone needing delivery. Consider discussing if the amount of food will meet their need and determine if a larger food package or more frequent deliveries could be an option if you have the capacity.

Record Keeping

Document the same basic information for each delivery that you would if a client was coming to your pantry.

- Have a process for notifying them of any food recalls.
- Ensure the annual attestation is completed if delivering TEFAP foods.
- Keep track of at least some of the information learned during the intake process as far as delivery details. A spreadsheet like this [Sample Delivery Log](#) can be used to track this information and share with delivery drivers.

FreshTrak Users

You can and should track deliveries as a separate event. Contact the Service Insights team if you need to add a deliveries event. Tracking the number of deliveries including unique / unduplicated households and people served is important – to the entire network and your pantry individually – for helping to make a case for need and possible funding opportunities. Some pantries have successfully used an ipad or tablet with cell service to check people into FreshTrak in real time, but also make sure to have a paper intake form in case there isn't service.

Delivery drivers

Whenever possible, try to keep the delivery drivers the same for each route / delivery participant. This will build relationships and help with communication.

Basic Requirements

A successful delivery program relies on having enough drivers who meet basic requirements. These requirements should include:

- Completion of a Safety Liability Waiver.



- o [Sample Volunteer Driver Application & Waiver](#) is available for your reference. This is not a legal document and does not guarantee protection for your agency or program. Consult with your Board of Directors / legal counsel to ensure it meets the needs of your program.
- Documentation of a valid Driver's License
- Sufficient mobility to load and unload orders, including any weight expectations for lifting.
- A reliable vehicle that meets food safety requirements, if an agency vehicle will not be used (see "Safely Packaging and Transporting Food" for more information about basic food safety requirements for the vehicle)
- You should consult with your Board of Directors / legal counsel to determine if and when a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) record check should be considered. [Sample Requirements for Using Agency Vehicle](#) is available for your reference.
- Ability to navigate the following with some basic training:
 - o Food safety
 - o Trauma-informed communication
 - o Driver safety (dogs, home entry, rough terrain, weather)
 - o Procedures and protocols for:
 - ensuring each delivery is correctly matched to the address provided
 - handling a missed delivery after no answer from a call or text
 - handling a transportation breakdown
 - driving an agency vehicle, if applicable
 - determining if situations at a delivery are concerning or unsafe and how to proceed
 - o Most of these areas are touched on in this handbook and can be used to help with training

Driver Safety

In addition to making clients comfortable, it's very important that the volunteers who are giving their time to the program feel safe when they are delivering. Here are some safety considerations for volunteers and / or staff members doing home delivery:

Delivery in pairs

- Volunteers may feel best delivering with another person. This can be a good option for safety, and can make the time pass faster. Pantries currently doing delivery strongly recommend this as a best practice as delivery clients may need assistance.

Home entry

- Unless the client is physically unable to bring the delivery in on their own, do not enter clients' homes - especially if you are delivering alone. Try to do the exchange outside or at the door.
- If they request that you bring the delivery inside, use your best judgment, and don't feel the need to enter if you are not comfortable.
- Drivers should have personal identification, an agency name tag, a letter identifying them as an agency volunteer and / or window placards.

Dogs

- Communicate with clients that dogs and other animals must be kept inside or fenced in when the delivery driver arrives.
- Don't exit your vehicle if there are dogs loose when you arrive. Try calling the client and asking them to bring them inside.

Driving Directions

- Download or print driving directions ahead of time. Service can be spotty in rural areas of the Southern Tier. Make sure there is a process in place in case a driver can't find a home.

Weather

- Don't hesitate to cancel deliveries when the roads are unsafe. Establish a standard plan for when this happens, and clearly communicate it with clients.
- Ask that clients keep clear or salt their sidewalks and stairs so that delivery volunteers can deliver safely. If this isn't possible for a specific client, make sure the volunteer knows this, and make sure the volunteer is physically able to navigate slippery surfaces.

Ergonomics

- Separate deliveries into multiple boxes as needed so they aren't too heavy for volunteers (and clients) to lift.
- Lift boxes from waist-level when possible, instead of floor level. If you must lift from the floor, squat down and lift with your legs, rather than your back
- Investing in a handcart can also be helpful for certain deliveries

Ergonomics

- Separate deliveries into multiple boxes as needed so they aren't too heavy for volunteers (and clients) to lift.

Driver Recruitment

A delivery program may be an opportunity to recruit new volunteers. Deliveries may appeal to people who like to drive, prefer individual work rather than working in a team and / or prefer one-on-one interactions with participants. Consider reaching out to new groups who may be able to help with recruitment. For example:

- College or University volunteer groups
- United Way
- Office for the Aging
- AmeriCorps Senior – RSVP
- County Mobility Managers may also have access to volunteer drivers
- If funding is available, some pantries have contracted with taxi services to provide delivery

Additional **volunteer recruitment and retention resources** can be found on the [partner area of the FBST website](#) under Quarterly Webinar Materials section.

Driver Compensation

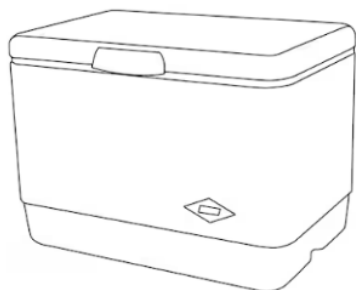
If drivers will be using their own vehicle, mileage reimbursement or gas cards can help with recruitment and retention. However, this also requires a budget to cover the cost. If not reimbursed, volunteers may be able to deduct expenses related to using their own vehicle on their taxes. General information from H&R Block can be found [HERE](#), but volunteers should consult a tax professional about their specific situation. Free online resources like RouteXL and Google maps can be used to efficiently plan routes and document total mileage.

Safely packaging and transporting food

You will need a system to ensure food safety standards are met whether you are providing shelf-stable foods or perishable foods that require cold storage.

Equipment	Loading	Delivery Drivers	Delivery Route
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Delivery vehicles should be clean and free from odors, pests, animals, and any other materials that could adversely impact food safety. If delivering perishable items: With non-refrigerated vehicles, use passive temperature devices like thermal bags, blankets, coolers, and ice packs to minimize temperature change. Ensure these items are kept clean and sanitary. If you need funding for these items, reach out to the Grant Opportunities Contact With refrigerated vehicles, pre-cool vehicle to below 41°F prior to loading to maintain required temperatures during route.	Keep personal food, cleaning supplies, and any other potential contaminants in a separate area from the client's food in the delivery vehicle. If delivering perishable items: Keep perishable items in cold storage as long as possible prior to loading them in delivery vehicle.	Drivers must be in good health and not be experiencing any illness symptoms. It is recommended that drivers have knowledge of basic food safety principles through the completion of a food safety education or training program. The Food Bank offers a Food Safety Training Video. A quiz is available by reaching out to the Food Safety Contact. Other training options can be found in the Feeding America Food Safety Home Delivery Guidance.	If delivering perishable grocery items (NOT prepared meals), total delivery route time should be limited to 60 minutes or less if you are using a non-refrigerated vehicle and passive temperature devices like coolers. *For longer routes or if you are looking to deliver prepared meals, reach out to the Food Safety Contact.*
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As mentioned in [“Participant intake” section](#), someone should be home when delivery is expected. Leaving food at the door when no one is home poses food safety concerns since we don’t know how long the food will sit out before it’s brought inside. Perishable foods need to be refrigerated, and shelf-stable items could be compromised in other ways - for example, if animals get into it. The [“Participant intake” section](#) provides guidance if someone prefers contactless delivery.

Instruct clients to place chilled items in the refrigerator. They should also inspect frozen items upon delivery. If any thawing has occurred, they should be put in the refrigerator and not re-freeze. This [sample flyer](#) can be printed and put in any boxes or bags with perishable items.

What to do if you see something concerning

If you see something that concerns you while at a client’s home, it can be difficult to know what approach to take.

- Determine if it is Concerning vs. Unsafe (see chart below with examples).
- If someone is in danger, report it accordingly.



- What qualifies as unsafe can be a bit of a gray area - trust your instincts and act with the person in question's best interests in mind.

	Concerning	Unsafe
Explanation	Things that make you feel a bit uncomfortable. Perhaps you disagree with something you see, or you have the thought "I would not do it this way in my own life". The key here is that no one is actively in danger	Someone has been harmed, or is in imminent danger of being harmed. You see or hear evidence of physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse. OR a child or adult that requires caretaking is being clearly neglected
Example 1	<i>The client's home is messy or dirty, and you would not raise your own child in these conditions.</i>	<i>You see evidence that a child has been harmed or could be harmed by something in the environment (weapons, substances, or other dangers)</i>
Example 2	<i>The client and their spouse use language with each other that you would not use with your own spouse.</i>	<i>You see physical signs of domestic physical abuse, such as bruises and cuts, or you notice a dynamic in the relationship that you would classify as psychological abuse.</i>
What you should do	While these scenarios can be distressing, it may not be in the client's best interest to report them. Perhaps you could offer support in another way as appropriate. Involving legal agencies when it is not necessary or if there is no evidence of actual danger can add to the stress that a family may already be experiencing. See next section for offering additional resources	In these scenarios, it is important to file a report with the appropriate agency, such as Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or the police department – depending on the urgency/severity of the situation.

Offering additional resources

Providing information about other community resources can be a good way to support clients. This is best done in a general way (for example, distributing a flyer of resources to all clients), or once a relationship is built.

Some helpful resources to share for your specific county are:

- 2-1-1 Helpline
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Office for the Aging
- Mobility Management Services
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Some pantries have also recruited community resource partners who attend in-person distribution to come along on deliveries so delivery recipients have access as well.

Be mindful of the dynamic when offering these resources. If a client shares that they are having a specific issue, such as not having electricity, then sharing a resource like 2-1-1 or LIHEAP would likely be appreciated and well-received. On the other hand, if you notice a relationship dynamic that falls into the “concerning but not unsafe” category, and the client did not ask for input, it would be important to tread lightly here and consider whether bringing up the additional support would be appropriate.

A workaround here is to periodically distribute to all clients a flyer with community resources such as 2-1-1. That way, you’re not singling any one client out, but you are making the information consistently available.