

Client Choice 101



“Client Choice gives them (clients) dignity. People who don’t have a lot, don’t have a lot of choice, so here they can come in and choose.”-Ruth Hendricks, Special Delivery

Client Choice Definitions

Client Choice is a method of distributing food that retains client dignity by allowing them to select their food.

Client Choice for Agency Pantry: The clients are able to choose the type of food they would like to take with them, much like a grocery store. For example, the client can choose the can of tuna, an apple, and white bread or the client can choose the can of chicken, an orange, and wheat bread.

Client Choice for Mobile Pantry: The clients choose which of the predetermined food they would like to take with them as well as how much, to a limit. For example, the client can choose this apple over that apple, up to 6 apples.



True and False about Client Choice!

True or False: A lot of space or a large room is required to maintain Client Choice.

False! Client Choice can be held in a small or large area; it's about organization not space.



VS.



True or False: It's expensive to run a Client Choice program.

False! Client Choice can run on little or no budget, it just takes adjustments to the program already in place.

Local grocery stores and community organizations are willing to donate fresh produce because when it comes to helping those need, people will find ways to come together.

An example budget:

Special Delivery:

Regular and Diabetic Pantry, serve 400-450 clients monthly

- \$500 = Non-perishable pantry
- Produce donation from Whole Foods
- Albertsons donation through FASD

Holiday Budget:

- Sprouts pre-packed grocery bags= \$1,500
- Whole Foods, "Feed for More" campaign- clients can donate \$5, \$10, \$20, or \$25 worth of bagged food. Example: This 2013, \$10,000 of pre-bagged food was raised and another \$4,000 was given in check.

True or False: Running a Client Choice pantry requires more time from workers and volunteers than a pre-pack pantry.

False! A Client Choice distribution doesn't take more time, but it uses distribution time more efficiently, allowing for better interaction between clients, staff, and volunteers.

Example:

Agency A – With Client Choice	Agency B— Without Client Choice
480 clients a month	450 clients a month
Distribution is one day a month for 4 hours	Distribution is one day a month for 3 hours
Staff less than 10	Staff less than 10

**The agency with Client Choice has the same amount of staff and with one more hour can increase their client capacity.*

True or False: In switching to Client Choice, a pantry will need to increase the amount and variety of food to provide for clients.

False! Client Choice allows families to be specific in choosing food suited towards their needs.

“If you run a tight ship and keep good intake of your stock then there’s no need to spend or increase your food.” –Ruth, Special Delivery

The Top Five Benefits of Client Choice

1. Client retain their dignity.
2. There is an increase in positive interaction between clients, staff, and volunteers.
3. Clients take an active part in their nutrition.
4. Clients with allergies, diabetes, or other medical needs are able to choose their food.
5. Less food is wasted.



Traditional Pre-Bagged Distribution Model

What are the strengths of the Pre-Bagged model?	What are the weaknesses of the Pre-Bagged model?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appearance of being fair- every clients receives the same bag and the same amount of items.• Pantry controls the nutritional value and amount of food distributed.• Actual distributions takes a limited amount of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is demeaning for clients to be told what to eat.• Does not take into account the needs and preferences of the families receiving the food.• Recipients may have allergy, religious, and/or dietary restrictions that prevent food from being used.• Clients may lack the means and ways to prepare the food they receive.• Not all food give to clients is used, resulting in waste.• Valuable volunteer and staff time is spent packing bags instead of time spent interacting with clients.

Steps to Implementing Client Choice

Swap Table- This is a good transitional step to becoming more Client Choice friendly. Your pantry provides a fixed bag but you provide a table for clients to leave items they don't need or want so that other people may pick extra of these discarded items. This helps reduce waste.

Example:

- Special Delivery did this in the first years of implementing Client Choice. Volunteers would open the bag of packed food and the clients would then tell them what items were not needed.

Standard Bag plus Grab Bag Option- Your pantry distributes its traditional fixed, standardized food bag or box. But then also displays varieties of additional items from the pantry, permitting clients to take specified amounts- for example, one item per household member.

Example:

- This option works well for USO.

Table Top System- Your pantry acquires cases of food and boxes of salvage, but you don't have room to set your pantry up like a store. Put your cases on tables, open them up, and allow clients to make selections.

Example:

- Here a man is choosing what produce he wants. Clients are limited to how many items they can have.



The Item List System- Your pantry acquires a variety of food and itemizes what is available on a list. This list is given to clients as they arrive to pick up food. Lists say how many items from each category a client may take based on family size. Clients indicate on the list the items they want, and the pantry staff assembles their bag.

- **Example:** A volunteer helps an elderly women fill out the list of items she needs.



Ways to Organize your Client Choice Pantry

Open Distribution- Clients can choose from all available foods, any amount they want, with no restrictions.

The Pound System- The pound system assigns point values to foods based on weight. Each clients is allotted a certain number of pounds based on family size. Another way to implement the pound system would be to have a total number of pounds assigned to each clients based on family size and then have them select up to that many pounds of food from your available inventory.

The Point System- Each item in the pantry is assigned a point value based on the price of the item in a grocery store. Pantry clients are given a point allowance based on family size and need. Clients may spend their points on whatever items they choose. One way to illustrate the point value of a product is by color coding.

Example:

- *“Clients at our food pantry have 25 points to spend during their monthly shopping opportunity and select from a variety of perishables and non-perishable items.”-Bill Pattern, Mama’s Kitchen*

The Number of Items System- All of the items in the pantry are made accessible to clients. Each clients is assigned a maximum number of items that they can get per visit based on their family size. A

variation of this system is giving each client a number of grocery bags based on family size, and allowing them to fill the bags with what items they choose.

- **Example: Special Delivery**



Grocery Store- Food pantries set themselves up like a grocery store, stocking food shelves with a variety of food and non-food items. Clients can browse among the goods and select items they want. It's okay for the pantry to put limits on how many items a client can take.

- **Example: Lemon Grove Foursquare**



A 5 Step Tier System to Help Your Agency

Client Choice: The client's ability to choose the food he/she is receiving at the agency	Level 5	My program is 100% client choice and the amount of food a household receives is based on family size. Items are reserved for clients with special needs.
	Level 4	My agency supplies clients with a pre-made bag, based on their household size, but clients are able to choose the majority of their products. My agency will accommodate clients with special needs.
	Level 3	My agency has pre-made bags for clients. Clients can also select from produce and other perishable items. My program makes bags especially for homeless individuals or special need clients.
	Level 2	My program gives clients a pre-made bag. We supply a swap table for clients to leave what they don't want. At times, my program has made bags for clients with special needs.
	Level 1	My agency currently offers no form of client choice and all clients receive the same sized bag.

