FSD Best Practices:
Advice for Partner Agencies on Distribution Process & Client Choice
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DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

Reach out to other agencies or even corporations and invite them to observe your operations and offer suggestions to streamline your distribution process. Prioritize utilizing a multi-cultural staff to connect with clients of different backgrounds and train staff in conflict management and interpersonal skills in case situations arise. Be consistent and calm with every client, every time, to set expectations.

Additional Advice

- Consider partnering with a school to conduct your distribution in order to reach new clients and working families who may be unable or uncomfortable accessing traditional food pantry locations
- Offer evening and weekend service hours to improve access for working poor and underemployed food bank clients
    - This will also create opportunities to engage new types of volunteers (e.g., younger, employed adults)
- Eliminate lines by extending hours of operation, or bring lines indoors to a cheerful waiting area with chairs. If lines are necessary, try to think of ways to "humanize" them: talk to people on line, give out useful information, play music that people enjoy, have a DVD showing nutrition education and CalFresh outreach information, etc.
- Dealing with confrontations
    - Everyone wants the frozen turkey, ham, and cheese. What happens if you run out? Most food pantries will eventually have to deal with the problems of growth and service to clients.
    - Your food pantry faces the limitations of finances, storage space, utility fees, volunteers, allocations, and other problems. You and your Board of Directors will have to decide on limiting the number of households served, or frequency of service.
    - Some pantries only allow for clients to come once a month. You may have to limit service to 150 households per month, or 150 households one week and a different 150 the next, or whatever is the best way for you to reach the families you have planned on reaching. Keep in mind that you are not the free source of food for your entire city.

CLIENT CHOICE IMPLEMENTATION

What is Client Choice?
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.

Five Benefits of Client Choice:
1. Clients 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 choose their food
5. Less food is wasted

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.

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.

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.

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 have a distribution, implement a client-choice system slowly into your distribution by creating a "trading table" where clients can put back items they do not want, or trade with others. If you have a pantry, set up a system based on points and use the points to encourage healthy eating and program involvement. Schedule appointments for clients during open hours to avoid lines.

Additional Advice

- Implement client-choice slowly into your distribution by creating a "trading table" where clients can put back items they do not want, or trade others.
- Grocery Store- set up like a grocery store where food is stocked on shelves and clients have the opportunity to browse with limits on what they can choose.
  - A few FSD partner agencies that employ this method: Special Delivery San Diego, Mama's Kitchen, and Lemon Grove Four Square. Please contact your Programs Coordinator to set up a time to visit an agency for a learning tour, or to speak with an agency representative if you are interested in exploring how these distributions are run and any challenges/successes we've found.

- Number of Items System- Clients are given a maximum number of items they can get, the bigger the family size the more they can receive
- The Point System- Clients are allotted a set amount of points based on family and need. Items are marked on a point system equivalent to their price. A tip to keep things organized is color coding the food to a certain amount of points.
- The Pound System- Clients are allotted a set amount of points based on family and need. Items are marked on a point system equivalent to their price. A tip to keep things organized is color coding the food to a certain amount of points. Example in calculating how many pounds is given to a family: 4lbs x 5 members x 3 days= 600 lbs of food
- Re-organize pantry set up
- Be present when clients shop, schedule appointments
- Get feedback from clients about how your pantry is working for them and ideas to improve
- Invite FSD to your site to do an analysis and aid in planning your transition

Cost Considerations:

- How much money did your food program spend in the last year?
- How much of your budget goes toward purchasing foods?
- Provide a reduced, shared maintenance fee
- Private funding through corporations or other non-profits
- Grant applications
- Some grants are specifically for agencies that use client choice