



Healthy Pantry Initiative

Strategies for Encouraging Healthy Choices at the Pantry

1. Healthy Pick Cards
 - Quick visual cues that signal which foods are going to be most nutritious and why.
 - Versatile; use to highlight foods that are fresh, in season, low sodium, low fat, and/or nutrient-dense.
2. Hints, Tips, and Instructions
 - Place recipe cards near foods to encourage (such as fresh or frozen vegetables, whole grains, beans).
 - Recipes that feature no more than 9 ingredients, are easy to read, simple to follow, and involve common household equipment are best!
 - Include cooking directions for preparing staple foods from scratch, like dried beans, rice, or oatmeal.
 - Cooking hints can be easy!
 - Example: “Cook me like a potato” next to other root vegetables or “add me to your smoothies” next to leafy greens.
3. “Meal Kits”
 - Inspire scratch cooking by creating kits containing some or all ingredients and instructions for a simple recipe.
4. Taste Tests
 - Encourage participants to try healthy foods by offering samples.
 - Especially useful for unfamiliar – but delicious!–seasonal produce.
5. Cooking Demonstrations
 - Prepare a recipe while people are at the pantry – with samples!
6. Merchandising
 - Place foods that go together (e.g., rice and beans) on the same shelf to inspire scratch cooking.
 - Encourage participants to choose healthy foods *first* by putting foods to encourage at eye level and at the entrance to the pantry. Keep unhealthy foods like pastries and highly processed items on the lowest shelves.

7. Other Signage

- Make MyPlate materials highly visible to anyone visiting the pantry, such as inside the intake office and above shelves.

8. Encourage Taking More of the Good Stuff

- Offer unlimited fresh produce.
- Post signs that offer suggestions for how much to take based on familiar size, to encourage taking *enough*. For example, “A family of 4 usually takes at least 8 tomatoes.”
- Encourage volunteers to promote healthy foods while shopping with people.

Other Ideas?

Check out these online resources for more info:

Healthy Food Bank Hub: healthyfoodbankhub.feedingamerica.org

OSU Extension Food Hero: foodhero.org

Want to talk about your ideas or get some support? We're here to help!

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Healthy Pantry Initiative Best Practices for Success

Lessons learned from the Metro area Model Healthy Pantries:

1. It is important that *everyone* at the pantry understands and support the Healthy Pantry Initiative. Be sure to schedule time to inform and train all pantry volunteers on the Healthy Pantry Initiative's objectives and why changes to the pantry are important. Emphasize to volunteers that this is an exciting opportunity to have a real impact on the health of their community!
2. Relationships are key. Healthy Pantry strategies are most effective when delivered through a positive, supportive relationship. Before digging in to implementing strategies, consider how the pantry facilitates relationship-building, especially with the people it serves.
3. Remember that the people served by the pantry are the experts when it comes to what they and their families need, and are deeply aware of the challenges to cooking and eating healthily on a budget. Consider including ways to gather their feedback, ideas, and insights on how strategies to encourage healthy choices might be implemented. The most effective approaches to behavior change are often the ones created by people doing the changing!
4. One size does not fit all. It's essential to think about how these strategies and others can be adapted to fit the specific needs of the community; e.g., if the pantry mostly serves single adults, like residents of an Single Room Occupancy (SRO) high-rise, consider crockpot or hot plate cooking demos or meal kits. Cultural competency is also relevant in figuring out how to adapt these strategies. Look to other cultures for ideas for recipes or ways to communicate nutrition messages.
5. Similarly, when it comes to health promotion and behavior, it is important to meet people where they are at. For example, if the community served by the pantry is one that is experiencing a great deal of stress and trauma, it may be important to develop strategies and interventions that address these conditions *before* bringing in explicit nutrition messaging, or consider ways to integrate nutrition messaging into stress-mitigating activities.
6. As much as the Healthy Pantry Initiative is focused on changing client behavior, it is also about ensuring that healthy food is in abundance at the pantry. Possible strategies for increasing this could be collaborative grants for bulk food purchases and increased coordination with OFB's food resource developers/inventory/operations teams.
7. Remember – the Healthy Pantry Initiative is not about just adding new signage or recipe cards. Think holistically about the pantry environment. Is it supportive of learning? Conversation? Does the space feel welcoming? These things matter when it comes to having a real impact in our communities.



Healthy Pantry Snapshot *An Assessment Tool*

Date: _____ Pantry Representative: _____

Pantry: _____

County: _____ Reviewer: _____

FIRST VISIT:

FOLLOW UP VISIT:

BEFORE PHOTOS:

AFTER PHOTOS:

Healthy Pantry Initiative Goal: Increase the accessibility, distribution, and consumption of healthy foods through the progressive adoption of strategies that support up to 5 objectives in emergency and supplemental food distribution settings.

Objective 1: Increase Client Choice

Possible Strategies:

- Uses OFB 2011 food box guidelines***
- Hosts a shopping style/client choice pantry***
- Incentivizes healthy food options
- Increases distribution of whole grains and dry beans
- Increases distribution of produce
- Other:

Rating: **1** (0-2 strategies)
2 (3-5 strategies)
3 (6+ strategies)
 Notes:

Objective 2: Market Healthful Products

Possible Strategies:

- My Plate materials visible***
- Uses CHOP (Choosing Healthy Options Plan) scores when ordering
- Offers healthy food samples/recipes
- Offers health/diet related support materials
- Promotes other supplemental food programs in the area
- Other:

Rating: **1** (0-2 strategies)
2 (3-5 strategies)
3 (6+ strategies)
 Notes:

Objective 3: Emphasize Fruits, Vegetables, Whole Grains, Staples

Possible Strategies:

- Emphasizes clients having access to a variety of fruits and vegetables***
- Has an onsite garden or accesses other gardening opportunities
- Listed on AmpleHarvest.org website; seeks donations from local gardeners
- Emphasizes scratch cooking through distribution of meal components
- Sets goals to increase average CHOP score for products ordered
- Other:

Rating: **1** (0-2 strategies)
2 (3-5 strategies)
3 (6+ strategies)
 Notes:

Objective 4: Promote Additional Resources

Possible Strategies:

- Provides information on SNAP, WIC, Senior Farmers Market coupons or other low-income resources***
- Promotes nutrition education programs
- Distributes product-specific recipes to clients at least once a quarter
- Provides gardening materials (e.g. community garden opportunities, plant starts, etc.)
- Distributes affordable health care information
- Other:

Rating: **1** (0-2 strategies)
2 (3-5 strategies)
3 (6+ strategies)
 Notes:

Objective 5: Plan for Alternate Eating Patterns

Possible Strategies**:

- Has special section for specific foods (i.e. gluten free, no/low sodium, vegetarian or homeless-appropriate)
- Provides resources for selecting food for people with certain health conditions
- Actively seeks to distribute foods high in fiber, and/or low in sodium, fat, sugar & trans fats
- Provides volunteer education about healthy options for clients with special dietary needs
- Provides diverse options for protein, such as tofu, beans and fish
- Other:

Rating: **1** (0-2 strategies)
2 (3-5 strategies)
3 (6+ strategies)
 Notes:

*Strategies in **bold font** are strongly recommended as baseline strategies for all pantries.

**None of these strategies are intended to include clinical information or medical nutrition therapy.

**Total of ratings:
(0-15)**

Summary of Strengths:

Summary of Opportunities:

What strategies are you interested in?

