
On Your Way to
OFFERING CLIENT CHOICE



A Handbook for Food Pantries in New York



*The Regional Food Bank of
Northeastern New York*



Acknowledgments

This handbook was developed by:

**Paula Brewer
Toni Clark
Christina Dyer
Matt Griffin
Nicolle Miller
Kathryn Mitchell
Maurva Artice Moss
Mary Lou Plante
Christina Riley
Michal Winter
Christine Rivera**

**Page 18 Revised February 2013
Revised October 2014**

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Handbook's Purpose:

As the persons who come to food pantries change, so have the ways to serve them. One of these changes is the client choice food pantries. New York State, through the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), is joining Indiana and Ohio in this national trend to improve service at approximately 1900 NYS food pantries.

HPNAP, the 8 NYS food banks and other organizations developed this manual to give you and your food pantry workers information on how to set-up and operate a client choice food pantry. The goal of HPNAP's Client Choice Initiative is to provide food pantries with resources and assistance to operate as client choice. Therefore, this handbook contains information on:

- What Client Choice is;
- Why you should operate your pantry as Client Choice;
- Finding the Client Choice model that will work for your pantry;
- What you will need to operate as Client Choice;
- Providing a 3-day food package in your Client Choice pantry;
- Frequently asked questions about Client Choice; and
- Client Choice resources.

We all care about the persons who come to our pantries because they need food. Client Choice is a way to show that we care enough to serve them in a dignified and personal manner.

Section 1:

Introduction to Client Choice

What is a Client Choice Pantry?

A client choice pantry allows clients to select their foods instead of receiving a pre-packed or standard bag of groceries. A client choice pantry allows clients to choose their own foods. They do not take items they have already, do not like, or cannot eat for health or personal reasons.

Why give clients a choice?

Imagine your family is in need of food. Your kitchen has some items but not enough to make meals for the next few days. You need to visit a food pantry. When you go to the food pantry, you are handed a pre-packed or standard bag with food you already have at home. There are also some foods your family does not like. You're not sure what to do with the food. If you had been able to choose the foods you need and like your family could have enjoyed a well-rounded nutritious meal.

Client choice pantries offer the best customer service. Pantry coordinators in New York State say that client choice:

- Upholds the dignity of clients
- Meets clients' health needs
- Makes clients feel like they are food shopping
- Limits food waste - customers take food they will use and leave the rest for others
- Helps pantry workers get to know clients
- Saves money for the pantry
- Makes ordering easier - pantries know what popular food to stock
- Is just the right thing to do!

Both pantry workers and clients have positive things to say about client choice. Here are some quotes:

“This is not our food to choose. It’s the clients’ food. What’s good for one person may not be good for another. Client choice works for everyone.”

- Pantry coordinator

“Wow, this felt like going to the supermarket. Everybody made me feel like it is OK to come to the pantry. I like picking my own food because I can plan meals while I am choosing.”

- Pantry client

“This is fun! This is much easier on my back!”

- Pantry worker

Section 2:

Which Client Choice Model Will Work for Your Pantry?

There are many ways to set up a client choice pantry. But how can you decide which set up is right for your pantry?

Many things may affect your decision about how to operate as client choice. They include:

- Equipment needs
- Physical space
- Workers

The Table of Client Choice Models on the following pages gives you an overview of the different client choice models. For more details on each model, please read the descriptions that follow the tables.

Setting up a client choice pantry is a bit like putting together a puzzle: all the pieces fit together, but you have to find the right way! Take some time to review the client choice models. Talk it over with your workers. Point out that they won't have to pre-pack food bags, an advantage for every client choice model. Decide together which model is the best for your pantry. Any space can be made to work as client choice!

Table of Client Choice Models

	Description	Equipment	Space	Advantages	Disadvantages
Walk Through	Food is set up by food groups inside the pantry. Clients walk through the pantry as they choose their food. Workers may help guide clients through the pantry.	<u>Necessary</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelving • Food Group Signs (See Section 5) showing clients how much food they can take <u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refrigerators and freezers with clear glass doors to view products 	A space large enough to display food and with room for clients to walk through safely.	Pantry workers have more one-on-one time with clients enriching their volunteer experience. This also allows clients to ask workers specific questions. Storeroom and place where clients choose food are the same. Many clients can be served at one time. Allows clients to handle food like in a grocery store.	Planning in advance is required to set up foods by food groups.
Supermarket	Food is set up on shelves by food group. Clients walk through the space and place their food choices in their cart based on pantry guidelines.	<u>Necessary</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelving • Grocery carts • Check-out table • Food Group Signs (See Section 5) showing clients how much food they can take <u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refrigerators and freezers with clear glass doors to view products 	A space large enough to display foods on shelves with room for clients to walk through with carts.	Same as for the Walk Through model. In addition, this is the most client friendly model as it models a grocery store.	Planning in advance is required to set up foods on shelves by food groups. May need additional shelving or equipment.

Model	Description	Equipment	Space	Advantages	Disadvantages
Table	Food is set up on tables by food groups. Clients walk by each table to choose and pack their food.	<u>Necessary</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables • Food Group Signs (See Section 5) showing clients how much food they can take <u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carts to move food 	A space large enough to set up tables with room to walk in between the tables.	<p>Many clients can be served at one time.</p> <p>Clients can handle food like they would in a grocery store.</p>	<p>Workers need to set up and break down tables.</p> <p>Lifting food onto tables may be difficult for some workers.</p>
Window	Clients stand outside the pantry area but can see the foods in the pantry. Clients choose by pointing to the foods they want.	<u>Necessary</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelving visible to clients • Food Group Signs (See Section 5) showing clients how much food they can take <u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half door with counter at entry to pantry 	Will work in any space where clients can see the foods.	Very small space needed to offer client choice.	Can only serve a small number of clients at one time.
Inventory List	A list of foods in stock is posted or given to clients. Clients choose their foods from the list. Workers then assemble the clients' food bags.	<u>Necessary</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper or board to list foods in stock • Food Group Signs (See Section 5) showing clients how much food they can take <u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clipboards to hold paper lists • Copy machine or computer printer 	Will work in any space. Needs only enough space to store food and have intake area.	<p>Very small space needed to offer client choice.</p> <p>Clients can choose food for themselves without leaving their seat in the intake area.</p>	<p>Hard for clients with low reading level or English as a 2nd language.</p> <p>Need to update food list as inventory changes.</p>

Walk Through Model



Description

Food is set up on shelves by food groups. Clients walk through the space and take foods off shelves according to pantry guidelines. The food storeroom and the place where clients choose their food is the same location. Workers do not need to move the food items on days when clients come in. The whole pantry's stock is open for clients. A space large enough to display foods and allow clients to walk through is needed. This model allows clients to handle food and look at the labels just as if they were shopping in a store. Pantry space will determine how many clients can shop at a time.

Four easy steps to making it work

1. Organize food on pantry shelves by food groups.
2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them Food Group Signs listing how many items they may take based on family size. See the Section 5: Client Choice Resources for Food Group Signs.
3. Clients walk through the pantry alone or a worker can walk them through the process.
4. If your pantry does not have a worker to accompany a client while making choices, a check out table is helpful to pack the foods into a bag or box.

Equipment needs

Your pantry needs enough shelving to display the foods available in the pantry. A refrigerator or freezer with clear glass to view products is helpful for this model. If this type of equipment is not available, a list of available refrigerated and frozen foods can be posted for clients to choose from.

Worker tips:

- It is important to have workers available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and food is stocked on shelves.
- Workers may need to re-stock and straighten shelves during pantry hours.
- If a worker guides clients through the pantry, this offers a chance to talk about the types of foods clients choose. This may lead to the worker and the client discussing client needs, how to choose nutritious foods or how to prepare unfamiliar foods.



- This food pantry puts a selection of cold and frozen foods in coolers, so clients can make their selection. Then the coolers are restocked as needed.

Supermarket Model

Description

Food is set up on shelves by food group. Clients walk through the space with a shopping cart and choose foods according to pantry guidelines. Like the Walk Through model, the food may be stored in same room where the clients shop. Depending on pantry space and amount of food, these areas can also be separate. If this is the case, restocking may be needed during pantry hours. This model allows clients to handle food and look at the labels just as if they were shopping in a store. Pantry space determines how many clients can shop at a time. This model is the most client-friendly as it is like a grocery store.



Four easy steps to making it work

1. Organize food on pantry shelves by food groups.
2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them Food Group Signs listing how many items they may take based on family size. See the Section 5: Client Choice Resources for Food Group Signs.
3. A shopping cart is provided and clients walk through the pantry alone or with a pantry worker.
4. Like in a supermarket, clients "check-out" and pack their food in a bag or box with the help of a pantry worker. Pantry worker also checks to see if client has taken the amount and type of food that they are allowed based on their family size.

Equipment needs

Your pantry needs enough shelving space to display all of the foods available in the pantry. A refrigerator or freezer with clear glass to view products is helpful for this model. If this type of equipment is not available, a list of available refrigerated or frozen foods can be posted for clients to choose from. Grocery carts and a table for "check-out" are also needed.

Worker tips:

- It is important to have workers available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and food is stocked on shelves.
- Workers may need to re-stock and straighten shelves during pantry hours.
- If a worker guides clients through the pantry, this offers a chance to talk about the types of foods clients choose. This may lead to the worker and the client discussing client needs, how to choose nutritious foods or how to prepare unfamiliar foods.

Table Model



Description

Food is set up on tables by food groups. Clients walk by each table to choose and pack their foods. The pantry needs enough room for clients to walk by each table. Pantry workers can stand by the food tables to guide clients and answer questions about the food. This model can service many clients at one time. This model allows clients to physically handle food as they would do if they were shopping for food.

Three easy steps to making it work

1. Organize food on tables by food groups.
2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them Food Group Signs listing how many items they may take based on family size. See the Section 5: Client Choice Resources for Food Group Signs.
3. Clients walk by the tables choosing and packing their foods.

Equipment needs

Your pantry needs enough tables to display the available foods. Arranging tables in a U-shape can save space.

Worker tips

- Workers are needed before, during and after open pantry hours to set up, supervise and take down tables.
- It is helpful if the store room and the room displaying the food on tables are close together. If not, dollies or carts are helpful (but not necessary) to transport the food items.
- Work in pairs to lift heavy cases or containers of food onto tables.
- Workers can accompany clients or be by each display table to help if needed.

Window Model

Description

Clients choose the type of foods they want by pointing to the food on the shelf. Pantry workers then pack food bags according to the clients' choices and family size. This model helps offer client choice when the pantry has limited space. One special consideration is that the window model can only service a small number of clients at one time.



Four easy steps to making it work

1. Organize food on shelves by food group.
2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them Food Group Signs listing how many items they may take based on family size. See the Section 5: Client Choice Resources for Food Group Signs.
3. Clients choose food by pointing to the foods they want.
4. The worker picks the food items off the shelf and packs the food into a bag or box.

Equipment needs

Your pantry needs shelving set up so clients can see the food items through a window or a half-door.

Worker tips

- It is important to have workers available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and food is stocked on shelves.
- If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.



Inventory List Model

Description

A list of foods available is posted or given to clients. Clients choose their foods from the list. Pantry workers then assemble the client's food bags. This model is helpful for clients who have trouble moving around - they choose foods without having to leave their seats.

Four easy steps to making it work

1. When clients sign in, the worker gives them Food Group Signs listing how many items they may take based on family size. See the Section 5: Client Choice Resources for Food Group Signs. The worker also shows them the list of foods available, which can be displayed on a white or chalk board.
2. Clients write on a piece of paper or tell a worker their food choices.
3. The worker fills a bag(s)/box with the client's food.
4. The volunteer takes the packages back to the waiting room and gives them to the client.



Equipment needs

You need materials to make a list of foods in stock. You can use paper, pens/pencils, and clip boards for creating a paper food list. A copy machine or computer printer is helpful to make copies of the paper list for clients. Or you can post the food list on a white dry erase board or a chalk board. Either dry erase markers or chalk is needed if posting the food list on one of these types of boards.

Worker tips

- Update food list as inventory changes.
- Use waiting time to share nutrition handouts, recipes, and other menu ideas with the client.
- If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.

Section 3:

Providing Food for 3 Days

This section shows you how to:

- Follow a guide to provide enough food for your clients, and
- Manage your food inventory based on your clients' choices.

Background

Like other pantries in New York State, the Good Samaritan food pantry gives clients enough food to feed their families for three days. For many years, the pantry packed a standard bag so families received food from all the food groups. The amount of food was based on the family size. In 2006 the pantry switched to client choice. They are giving out the same amount of food as before, using a guide they received from their Food Bank.

HPNAP Minimum Food Guide for a 3 Day Pantry Package

Just like traditional pantries, client choice pantries use a guide to show clients how much food they can take. On the following page is a table with guidelines from the Food Bank. The table has 3 food groups that are taken from MyPlate ([www. Choosemyplate.gov](http://www.Choosemyplate.gov)). These groups are Fruits/Vegetables, Meat/Non-Meat/Dairy and Grains. The guide does NOT list foods that are not considered one of these food groupings.

Let's take a closer look at the guide. To the right of each food group, are examples of foods from each food group and the size of a food item that equals one choice. For instance, in the grains group, 16 oz or one pound of rice is one choice. This guide counts "choices" which is a unit of measurement that considers package size, number of servings, MyPlate recommendations and variety. A "choice" may or may not be that same as one package. The table shows that each household can choose a set number of choices from each food group based on household size. For example, a 3-person household can choose at least 7 items from the vegetable/fruit group.

Use the guidelines in this chart to provide a food package with food from every food group – Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, Dairy, and Proteins – to meet MyPlate recommendations for healthy eating. If you can't meet this goal right away, work towards it with the help of your Food Bank.

If some of your clients don't need food from each food group, remember, the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) requires that a client must be offered the minimum amounts of food, but they do not have to take it.

Putting the guide into practice

Share your guidelines with clients. In Section 5 of this handbook are **Food Group Signs** listing the number of choices clients can take from each food group. Clients are given **Food Group Signs** based on their household size. They use the signs as they shop to help them choose the number of food items allowed for their family size.

Section 4:

Making it Work

Nine Frequently Asked Questions about Client Choice Pantries

Food pantries unfamiliar with client choice have many questions. Here are 9 common questions. Each question has a response based on the experiences of client choice pantries in New York State.

1. How will we know what foods to stock?

With client choice, popular foods move faster. After a few months, you will see how to stock your food, how often to order, and how much to order. Before making the switch to client choice, you can plan ahead by doing the following:

Stock more of the popular foods.

- What foods do your clients often ask for?
- Do you run out of some foods before others?

Stock less of the unpopular foods.

- What foods do you receive back in food drives?
- What foods do you find in trash containers outside the pantry?
- What foods do you have problems giving out?

TIPS:

Make food drives count! If you take part in food drives, encourage people to donate *specific* foods that are popular with your clients.

Change the foods you offer clients from time to time. In the meat and non-meat protein group, offer salmon, ground beef, and venison at one time; and tuna, ground turkey, and peanut butter at another time. Change is good!

2. Won't our pantry run out of food if we have client choice?

Client choice does not mean clients can take any amount of food they want. Pantries have guidelines for how much food clients can take according to household size. See the guide in the previous section for more information.

Remember: If your pantry is already providing a 3-day package of food, you won't see any difference in the total amount of food you give out. You may see one big difference: quick turnover of the popular food and more leftovers of unpopular food. Client choice may keep more food on your shelves! Since you will be giving your clients the food they want, they may need to visit your pantry less often.

3. What if we don't have enough food to meet the HPNAP Minimum Food guidelines?

Ideally, try to offer a choice in each of the 5 food groups: Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, Dairy, and Proteins. This may change the food you order, as you may want to increase the variety of foods in some food groups. For example, dairy foods are often limited in variety, and some clients may not choose non-fat dry milk. Contact your regional food bank for information on other dairy foods available including shelf-stable fluid milk. It is acceptable to have only fluid 1% fat or skim milk available as the dairy choice.

TIP: If you receive Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program assistance (HPNAP food grant and/or operations support grant), you must offer at least the minimum amounts of food.

4. How can we move unpopular food items or items that may spoil quickly, such as ripe fresh fruit and vegetables?

Try offering these foods “free” to your clients (Be generous with these foods so they can move quickly). Contact your local cooperative extension or Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables representative for help in marketing some of these foods to your clients through cooking demonstrations, food tastings and recipe handouts. A food pantry in Ohio moved all of their USDA figs with the help of their cooperative extension!

Please read Section 5 Client Choice Resources for some additional tips for operating a successful Client Choice Food Pantry.

5. Does client choice mean we have to increase our variety of food?

Not at all; you can keep the same types of foods. If you usually pack a can of corn, peas and carrots, now clients can choose three of any of the vegetables: corn, peas or carrots.

6. Will client choice cost more for the pantry?

Hundreds of food pantries in New York State have successfully made the change from pre-packed or standard food bag to client choice without additional funds. Your Food Bank is here to help you make a plan and a budget for your program. Compared to pre-packed or standard bags, client choice can cost less to run!

There are two main reasons why client choice can save your pantry money:

1. Most clients take only the food they need. As a result, less food is wasted.
2. Pantries are more open to ordering less expensive, donated foods from the Food Bank. Pantries don't have to worry about giving the same food to everyone. It is OK to order donated salmon and wholesale tuna rather than feeling pressured to order just tuna.

7. Our volunteers don't like change. What happens if they don't like doing client choice?

Some people don't like change. If this is the case for your program, the Food Bank recommends making small changes at the beginning of your switch. You can start by having clients choose only some of their items, such as fresh produce. Each month you can increase the number of foods that clients select, while pre-packing the rest. Eventually, you will make the switch to full client choice. Small steps will help both volunteers and clients accept changes. Many volunteers are happier that they are no longer packing bags because this can be hard work!

8. Will client choice mean more work for my volunteers?

Moving to client choice will not require more time from workers. It will mean using their time differently. Volunteers will spend more time serving and talking with customers instead of packing bags. Most of the volunteer time will be spent during program service hours rather than before clients arrive.

9. We have a line around the block. How can we offer client choice in our program?

If your program uses two hours to pack bags and two hours to give out bags, this totals four hours of volunteer time. Since you no longer need volunteers to pack bags before service, you can use all four hours of volunteer time to give out bags. You can let your clients know that your program hours will now be longer, so they will not arrive at the same time.

Section 5:

Client Choice Resources

Contact someone in the Food Bank's Agency and Program Services Department for further assistance with becoming a Client Choice Pantry or for Client Choice Pantries in your area:

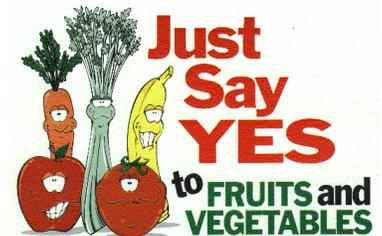
Susan Lintner	518- 786--3691 Ext. 224
Colleen Bryar	518- 786--3691 Ext. 237
Mary Rainey	518- 786--3691 Ext. 236
Cheyenne Bratton	518- 786- 3691 Ext. 259
Kerry Leary	518- 786--3691 Ext. 260
Elizabeth Harris	845- 534- 5344 Ext. 107

The following programs can offer your clients recipes and food samples to encourage them to try unfamiliar foods:

Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables

Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables (JSY) is a Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program. JSY offers FREE, creative nutrition education programs to food pantry clients. JSY Nutritionists provide classes, about 45-60 minutes long, on a nutrition topic. Each class includes a food demonstration and taste-testing of a fruit or vegetable recipe, as well as handouts, low-cost recipe ideas and free giveaways. Participants learn about:

- preparing fruits and vegetables
- food budgeting
- food safety
- cooking with dried beans
- the benefits of fiber
- how to use MyPlate to make healthy food choices and more



If you are interested in offering free nutrition classes or would like to learn more about JSY, please contact your regional JSY Nutrition Educator:

Kristyn Bopp (518) 786-3691 Ext. 225 or email kristynb@regionalfoodbank.net

Counties Served: Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren and Washington Counties.

Amy Robillard (845) 534-5344 Ext. 109 or email arobillard@foodbankofhudsonvalley.org

Counties Served: Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)

Cornell Cooperative Extension nutrition staff can provide nutrition resources and educational activities for food pantry workers and clients.

Local extension staff are available to present on-site food demonstrations and taste-testing. Useful topics they can present include “Using Food You Have on Hand”, “Stretching Food Dollars”, and “Food Safety.” They can also enroll families in a series of 6 - 10 food and nutrition lessons presented in a group session or in a one-on-one format.

There are also excellent client choice resources from Food Banks in Ohio and Indiana.

- ❖ Making the Switch: A Guide for Converting to a Client Choice Food Pantry
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks
51 North High Street, Suite 761
Columbus, OH 43215
Erin Wright
Phone: 614-221-4336
www.oashf.org

- ❖ Client Choice Food Pantries: Models for Now and the Future
Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana
P.O. Box 1224
Anderson, IN 46015
Erin Rockhill
765-287-8698
www.curehunger.org

Food Group Signs

Print the signs on the following 3 pages and post them to identify the different MyPlate food groups. Add other foods to each group that you may have in your food pantry inventory. Laminate these signs so they will last longer and use a dry-erase marker to add foods.

Grains Group

One **choice** is equal to:

Bread, 1 loaf

6 Rolls or Bagels

Macaroni and Cheese, 3 boxes

Rice or Pasta, 16 ounces

Oatmeal, 18 ounces

Cold Cereal, 12-16 ounces

Note: crackers DO NOT count

Number of Choices to Offer:

Household size:	1	2	3	4	5	6**
At Least:	2	3	4	5	5	6
Aim For:			5	6	8	9

****If family size is larger than 6, add the household sizes together to get the correct amount.**

Proteins: Meat, Non-Meat and Dairy

One **choice** is equal to:

Dried Beans, 8 ounces (1/2 pound—but you cannot repackage)

Canned Beans, 15 ounces

Peanut Butter, 6 ounces

Canned Stew, Chili or Corned Beef

Canned Pasta, **WITH MEAT**, 15 ounces

6 eggs

Frozen Meat, Fish, Poultry 4 ounces

Canned Chicken, Salmon or Tuna, 5 ounce can, **2 cans**

Fluid Milk, 32 ounces (1 quart)

4 Fluid Milks, 8 ounces each

Dry Milk, 1 envelope

Cottage Cheese, 8 ounces

4 Yogurt, 6 ounces each

2 Greek Yogurt, 6 ounces each

American Cheese (**not Cheese Food**), 8 ounces

Mozzarella/Cheddar/Swiss Cheese, 4 ounces

Note: Soup does NOT COUNT

Number of Choices to Offer:

Household size:	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6**</u>
At Least:	3	5	7	10	12	14
Aim For:		6	9	12	15	18

****If family size is larger than 6, add the household sizes together to get the correct amount.**

Vegetable and Fruit Group

One **choice** is equal to:
 Spaghetti Sauce, 15 ounces
 Canned Vegetables or Fruit, 15 ounces
 Canned Beans, 15 ounces
 Instant Potatoes, 14 ounces
 Frozen Vegetables, 16 ounces
 Frozen Fruit, 12-16 ounces
 Dried Fruit, 15 ounces
 Fresh Produce: 4 pieces, 1 head, 1 bunch or 1 pound
 100% Fruit or Vegetable Juice, 46-48 ounces
 (Limit juice to 1 juice per household)

Note: soup, jelly, cranberry sauce, fruit snacks do NOT count

Number of Choices to Offer:

Household size:	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6**</u>
At Least:	3	5	7	10	12	15
Aim For:	5	9	14	18	23	27

****If family size is larger than 6, add the household sizes together to get the correct amount.**

Food Pantry Checklist

Do you want to put a client choice pantry in your agency? Check the list below to make sure you are prepared.

- I believe clients benefit from selecting their own food in a pantry.
- I am willing to discuss making changes with my staff.
- My staff will work with me to put client choice into action at my pantry.
- I have an idea which client choice model would best fit my pantry's space.
- I can get, or I already have, the supplies I will need to put client choice into action.
- I am willing to contact my local Food Bank to discuss ways to put client choice into action.
- I am willing to contact programs like Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables or Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide education to my clients on healthy eating.

Tips for your client choice food pantry:

- Client choice is about choosing from available foods even if the variety of foods is small.
- Allow pantry customers to choose foods from your inventory.
- Aim for a variety and balance of foods from each of the food groups.
- Arrange pantry shelves or tables according to the food groups. This can help pantry customers make better and more balanced food choices.
- Rotate your stock of food timely. *Non-perishable food*: 2-month turnover. *Refrigerated food*: 2-week turnover. *Frozen food*: 1-month turnover.
- Be generous with fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Offer whole grains (whole-wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal) as much as possible.
- Provide lean protein options such as tuna, beans, and venison.
- Keep low-fat dairy products handy (non-fat dry milk, 1% fresh or shelf stable fluid milk, non-fat or reduced fat cheese, yogurt).
- Hand out recipes from the Food Bank and other sources.
- Invite Cooperative Extension or Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables to bring samples of food with pantry ingredients for recipients to taste.
- Make a place for crackers, cookies, pastries, and other goodies. Your customers will enjoy the special treats.