

What to expect when you volunteer at the BCRS Food Pantry

Thursdays:

We pack bags of food for our clients. This is done outside under a large carport structure. There is one station that bags desserts and then deli (sliced meats, cheeses, sandwiches, yogurt, and other pre-packaged items - think Ukrops prepared foods, etc.) with a bread item. The other station sorts all of the produce, removing items that are no longer good. Then baggers prepare a bag of mixed produce - try to get everyone something green, some fruit and then other veggies. We also bag frozen meat (done inside and typically has consistent coverage from a long-time volunteer). We bag dry goods (cans, boxes, etc.), which also is done inside the trailer by two long-time volunteers. Finally, volunteers may help sort and organize donations in our clothing closet to prepare for Fridays when the closet is open to clients.

Fridays:

We distribute the food that was packed on Thursday. Clients check in (staying in their car the whole time, unless they rode the bus, walked, or biked) at a tent station where they give their FeedMore number or fill about a short application to be input into the FeedMore system. They are given a different Bible verse each week, as well as a facemask if they need one. Currently, we ask that all clients wear a mask, in accordance with CDC guidelines. while in line and while receiving food. We have signage to remind our clients. They then proceed around to the food loading area, where a volunteer loads their food and offers any extras we may have (milk, bananas, flowers, juices, etc.).

Volunteers work under the large carport in several capacities - using shopping carts to load up bags for each client - produce, dessert, deli/bread, frozen meat, and dry goods. Those carts are delivered to the loading area where 2-3 volunteers load food in the cars (either back seat or trunk). Volunteers also work on bagging food that is delivered that morning (desserts, deli/bread, and produce). We also have a walk-up station where a volunteer gives out the bags of food to our walk-ups. In addition, we have volunteers assist clients, hang clothing, and help maintain overall order when our clothing closet is open on Fridays.

An index card number system is used to indicate the number of clients represented in each car after they check-in for the food pantry. No number on the windshield indicates that only ONE client checked in. An index card with a number on it indicates the number of clients that checked in (2, 3, 4, etc.). Volunteers should remove this card after loading food into the client's car and place in the receptacle on the table. A runner needs to take those numbers back to the check-in table periodically.

On both days, we have the need for stronger help moving boxes of food from the walk-in coolers and freezers and then returning filled boxes (on Thursdays). Volunteers also break down boxes for recycling.

We receive food every day of the week. We have two staff people that make runs to several Food Lions, Kroger in Woodlake, and Fresh Market on Hull. There are two other volunteers that also pick up food on Thursdays and Fridays. In the summer, we have been receiving "straight from the farm food" from Shalom Farms on Fridays as well. Bagging produce is more labor intensive as we have to sort the boxes and weed out foods that are not fresh enough for use.

We provide gloves for the volunteers. We currently ask that volunteers wear a facemask in areas with client contact (check-in, food distribution areas and the clothing closet). We will continue to update these procedures as necessary based on CDC guidance.

Volunteers are asked to sign a volunteer agreement the first time they volunteer. Please sign-in and out on the volunteer sheet each day. We track the number of volunteers and volunteer hours each month. We are happy to provide a letter documenting volunteer hours for a volunteer.

We have a restroom on site for volunteers to use and we do not open it up to the clients on Friday.

To help us manage the need for volunteers, please sign up to volunteer using our online schedule at: <https://bcsrcva.org/volunteer/> If you have difficulty with the online sign-up sheet or want or change/delete your sign-up, please contact our volunteer coordinator at bcrc-volunteers@bcsrcva.org.