



Three Squares Program Guidelines

Purpose

Many children who are eligible to receive free or reduced school meals may be left without adequate nutritious food on the weekends or when school is not in session. **The goal of the Three Squares Program is to provide supplemental food to children most in need of additional nutrition in a manner that protects their dignity.** Northwest Harvest food is not to be used as a substitute for breakfast and lunch provided by the school meal program. Food may be provided for other children in the family, but parents who need additional food resources should be directed to local food banks.

Role of Site Coordinator

The Site Coordinator acts as a liaison between Northwest Harvest and:

1. Staff – Ensures school staff members, faculty, and support personnel understand the program and how to identify children for the program as needed. To inform staff members of the program, you may offer a presentation at a staff meeting, send an all-staff email, or put together a bulletin board in the teacher’s lounge.
2. Parents – Provide information to parents of children enrolled in Three Squares as needed. Northwest Harvest can provide sample letters informing parents about the program. Be sure to discuss any food allergies. Talk to parents about how they prefer to handle the issue as removing the item from the bag may be sufficient, and note which students have any recurring allergy needs and the preferred solution. All Northwest Harvest meals are nut-free.
3. Students – Inform students that they have been invited to join Three Squares as long as they need extra food and explain when to pick up food. Confidentially distribute food to hungry children.

Additional responsibilities include:

1. Maintaining documentation – You should record student enrollment and distribution of food.
2. Communicating order changes – Northwest Harvest will automatically place an order for you each month for a standard of 24 students unless other arrangement have been made. **If you need to change or cancel your order, please contact us 2 weeks prior to your delivery. This is outlined on your distribution calendar. If we are not notified, you are expected to accept the delivery.**
3. Implementing the program – In compliance with the Three Squares Letter of Agreement, you are expected to distribute food to students on a weekly basis (unless otherwise coordinated).

We recommend training one person as a back-up coordinator in case you are unavailable to distribute food for any reason. If you leave the school or become unavailable for an extended period of time, please contact the Three Squares Program Manager with new contact information. This will help ensure continuation of service in your absence.

Site Visits and Communication

Our Program Manager will contact you near the start of the year to review program details and may visit your school in person as needed. Northwest Harvest requires that all Coordinators **must** have a working email address that they check regularly. Email will be used for order reminders, and communicating important program updates, changes, or emergencies and sharing information about nutrition programs and food policy that may be of interest to you. As the Site Coordinator, **you** are Northwest Harvest's point of contact for the Three Squares Program. You are responsible for the program's operations at your school.

Identifying Participants: Addressing Chronic Hunger

It is at the Site Coordinator's discretion as to which children K-8th grade will be served by the program. The program is targeted at children who do not have access to adequate food resources at home and are at nutritional risk. Signs that a child might be chronically hungry may include: continually asking for food, low energy levels, falling asleep in class, frequent illnesses and absences, inability to pay attention, and hyperactive, aggressive, and/or irritable behavior. (Note: A child's weight is not a good indicator of chronic hunger; as increased weight can be caused by poor nutrition). We recommend asking teachers/staff which students might be ideal for the program. For example, cafeteria staff members often have great feedback on a child's relationship with food and their eating habits.

Chronically hungry children may be identified by asking questions:

- *Did you eat breakfast?*
 - If the child skipped breakfast, why? If he or she ate breakfast, ask what was eaten
 - and if it was enough to make him or her full.
- *Did you eat dinner last night?*
 - Ask what the child ate, and if it was enough to make him or her full.
- *What did you eat over the weekend? What do you normally eat over the weekend?*
 - Again, ask if weekend meals were enough to make the child full.

Other ways to identify chronic hunger issues:

- Assess the home environment of the child by observing the following:
 - Does the family move frequently?
 - Has one or more family members lost a job? Is there a loss of income?
 - Has the child mentioned a family crisis or disaster in the household?

Once students have been selected, classroom teachers and principals should be provided with a list of participants. Site Coordinators should remind staff of program confidentiality and any applicable instructions to ensure food is received by eligible students. The Site Coordinator may remove a student from the program at their discretion if a student's situation changes or they are not using it, but children should never be denied food as a disciplinary measure.

Food Deliveries/Damaged Food

Deliveries arrive to the school ready for distribution. Be sure to carefully inspect all packages when they are received. If you find any damaged food, please dispose of it and contact the Program Manager. You should also throw away food that was contaminated by damaged containers. Northwest Harvest tries to ensure that all food is safe to consume, but please contact us if you have question or concerns.

Food Storage

Three Squares food is shelf-stable and does not require refrigeration. **Food should always be stored in a clean, secure location that is at least 6" off of the floor. As able, food should also be stored 6" away from an outside wall for pest control purposes.** It should be stored in a way that makes it easy to use the oldest food first to ensure no food sits in your inventory longer than necessary. Storage areas should be cool, dry, well ventilated (between 50°F - 70°F). Keep food out of direct sunlight. Cleaning products or chemicals must be stored away from food.

Food Distribution

Three Squares is limited to designated participating schools. Additional schools may be added in the future, however the food is to be used at the designated schools only. There are four different Three Squares menus, which contain breakfast, lunch, dinner and a snack. **Each student receives two bags each weekend.** One bag equals one day of food, two bags ensure that each student receives enough food for the entire weekend. Menus should alternate every weekend so children are not receiving the same food two weekends in a row. Please make sure you are providing two bags to each student every weekend.

There are four primary distribution methods:

1. The Site Coordinator has the food in one location and anonymously calls all students to pick up their food.
2. The food is distributed to children in their classrooms during the last hour of the day.
3. Parents may pick up the food.
4. Site coordinators drop off the food to the family.

There are of course other ways to distribute food, so please use the method that works best for you. To reduce embarrassment and pride issues, please avoid lines of students waiting for food. **We believe anonymous distribution is the best way to preserve the dignity of participating students.** We recommend talking with the Program Manager if you have any questions.

Cardboard Boxes and Pallets

Each month before your delivery, please gather all of your empty cardboard boxes and pallets. **Please place the collapsed boxes and pallets in an obvious location near the place where your boxes are delivered so our driver can pick them up.** By reusing the boxes and pallets, we are able to keep our costs down.

Surveys

To help Northwest Harvest assess the Three Squares program, we ask Site Coordinators and to fill out two surveys per year that cover successes and feedback on various aspects of the program. Your opinions also assist us in meeting program objectives and help us craft a better program for future years. **These results, particularly the stories and data you share, help us continue this program free of charge to schools.**

Additional Resources

We know that many families could use additional food resources at home, but the amount of food we have available cannot supplement every child's household. Three Squares food is intended for the K-8 school-aged children in the household. We ask that you help connect families to additional resources in your area such as food banks which can be found on our website or by **calling 2-1-1 or the Family Food Hotline at 1-888-436-6392**. Encourage families to use local resources or apply for Food Stamps/Basic Food by going to www.foodhelp.wa.gov or www.parenthelp123.org for more resource options. You may also find a map of our own partner food pantries on our website at: www.northwestharvest.org/statewide-network.

Contact Information

If you want to adjust or cancel your order, please make sure to contact us at least 14 days prior to your expected delivery date. Adjustments made after this window may not be accommodated.

Order Updates

Seattle, Kent, Highline, Clover Park, Moses Lake, Soap Lake, Warden, and Hoquiam

Mary Huff, Distribution Specialist (Western WA)
206-923-7445 | maryh@northwestharvest.org

Yakima and Toppenish

Mike Doonan, Operations Assistant - Yakima
509-317-7064 | michaeld@northwestharvest.org

Spokane

Dennis Vorhies, Spokane Warehouse Supervisor
509-598-7013 | dennisv@northwestharvest.org

Other Questions

Andrew Schlosser, Access Programs Manager
206-923-7445 | andrews@northwestharvest.org

