



ARE YOU NEW TO VISITING A FOOD PANTRY?

We'll help you figure out what to expect!



Table of Contents

- 3 What is a food pantry?
- 4 What can I expect at a food pantry?
- 5 Where can I find my local food pantry?
- 5 What should I bring to a food pantry on my first visit?
- 7 What else can I get at a food pantry besides food?



What is a food pantry?

Food pantries provide food at no cost and are available to anyone in need. If you find yourself, family member, or friend struggling to put food on the table, then visiting a food pantry may help. All kinds of people visit food pantries: those that currently have jobs, those that don't have jobs, those that are on disability, and those that are new to the United States. Because of COVID-19, more and more people are finding themselves in need of visiting a food pantry.

Many food pantries have specific areas, or territories, that they serve. Most food pantries try to serve people that live closest to that specific food pantry to help potential guests conserve gas, time, and resources. So be sure to look for the pantry closest to where you live.

At Northwest Harvest, we believe that when help is needed, it should be freely given, no questions asked. No one should go hungry, putting the health of themselves and their families at risk, because of fear. We will work to ensure that anyone in need knows that our nutritious food is available and that they are welcomed.



What can I expect at a food pantry?

Some pantries are set up like grocery stores allowing for you to choose which items you want. Some provide premade boxes or bags of food that you pick up and do not necessarily get to choose what you take home.



Currently, because of COVID-19 and the health precautions that food pantries must take, most are offering premade boxes of food at this time.



Expect for there to be a line and that you may have to wait up to 30 minutes before getting served. Many food pantries are working to reduce wait times and some may have shorter wait times.

Some food pantries require an appointment to receive food. We are unable to list each individual food pantry that is appointment only. It is best to call beforehand if unsure.

If you do not speak English, be prepared to enter a food pantry where they may not speak your language. Interpretation services may not be offered at the food pantry to help with this. If you have a friend or community member that speaks English and can accompany you the first time, this may make the experience easier.

Where can I find my local food pantry?

If you have internet, you can find a list of food pantry locations and hours at our website: northwestharvest.org/statewide-network.

If you need help in locating a food pantry, contact a local community organization in your area that you may already interact with.

What should I bring to a food pantry on my first visit?

Once you've located your nearest food pantry, it's best to call in advance to confirm what you may need to bring with you. Each food pantry is different, but there are usually some similarities that you can expect too.

All food pantries have a registration process for your first visit. They may ask for proof of your identity, your children's identity, and your current address. Programs may ask to see identification **but identification is not required to receive food**. While name and address may be requested on the first visit to the food pantry, that information will not be collected on return visits until the food pantry has to update records on an annual basis. Information collected at intake is requested for reports that the food pantry writes to receive food and funding for services.

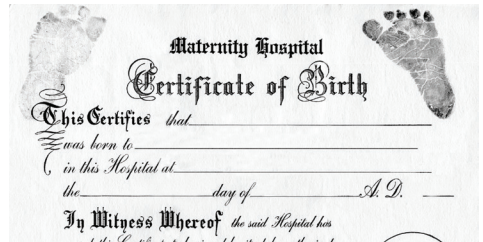
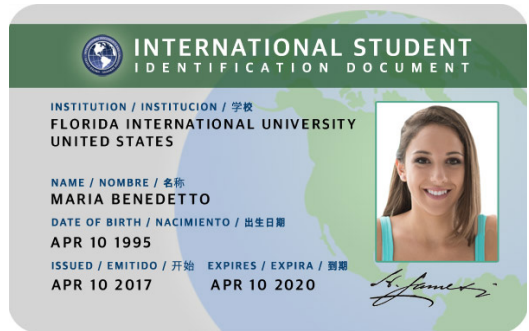
Most food pantries will accept any form of photo ID you have. This could be a US driver's license or an ID from your home country. Student IDs and even a Costco membership card may work as well.

Some food pantries also ask for proof of identity for children, such as a birth certificate, school record or school ID card. This is important to bring if you would like to receive formula or diapers.

Most food pantries provide food to anyone regardless of citizenship or immigration status and accept IDs from your home country. You may be asked to report your citizenship or immigration status, race/ethnicity, or languages spoken since those may be requested for local government funding sources. If, for any reason you are concerned about answering these questions, including public charge, you can ask that those questions be skipped. **They are not required.** Most food pantries protect and do not share your personal information.

To verify your address, most food pantries accept a copy of your lease/ rental agreement or a piece of mail with your address on it, such as a phone bill or utility bill. You do not need to have a current address to receive food. If you do not have an address or are experiencing homelessness, the food pantry can put down the address of the pantry for your address.

If you arrive at the food pantry but do not have the proper documents, many food pantries will still offer you food that day, and let you know what documents to bring on your next visit. **Food pantries that are Northwest Harvest partners are required to make food available for anyone — whether or not they have the proper ID and address.**



What else can I get at a food pantry besides food?

Many food pantries offer other services besides food. Some common things offered are:

- Housing assistance (help with payments, help finding housing)
- Utility assistance
- Second-hand clothing
- Hygiene items (paper goods, soaps, toothbrushes)
- Baby formula
- Diapers
- Dog food/cat food

If you are in need of something specific, the best thing to do is ask! Even if the food pantry does not have what you need, they may know someone else who does.



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