

What is Client Choice?

Client Choice Implementation Support



What is a Client-Choice Pantry?

A client-choice pantry offers a dignified, market-like experience where clients hand-select their own foods rather than receiving pre-packed boxes or bags. This approach not only empowers clients to choose items that fit their dietary, cultural, and personal preferences but also promotes a more respectful and interactive experience, similar to shopping at a grocery store or farmer's market.

The Benefits of Offering Choice

- ✓ **Service with Dignity and Respect:** Clients feel honored and in control when they can choose foods that align with their individual needs.
- ✓ **Elimination of Pre-Boxing:** Volunteers shift their focus to restocking and assisting clients during distribution, rather than packing boxes or bags in advance.
- ✓ **Reduced Food Waste:** Clients take only what they will use, minimizing waste and ensuring there is more food available for others.
- ✓ **Stronger Client Relationships:** The client-choice model encourages more meaningful interactions between volunteers and clients, fostering trust and strengthening relationships within the community.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Will our pantry run out of food if we offer client choice?** No. Client choice does not mean clients have unlimited access. Pantries set guidelines on how much food clients can take. While a common fear is that clients will take more than they need, the reality is that consistent access to food helps shift this scarcity mindset. As clients return, they build trust in the pantry's availability and take only what is necessary.
2. **I don't have enough volunteers. Will client choice be possible for me?** Switching to a client choice model does not require more volunteer hours, just different use of volunteer time. Instead of packing boxes before distribution volunteers will spend more time interacting with and helping clients during distribution hours.

"Our clients love to have a choice of items; it makes them feel more valued and like a regular 'shopper'. Their personal preferences are honored and especially those with dietary concerns or allergies."

Kelly J.
St. Michael's San Clemente
3. **Our pantry is very small. Doesn't client choice require that we set up our pantry like a grocery store?** Not at all. While a grocery store-style layout is ideal, client choice can be adapted for smaller spaces. With creative planning, you can implement a model that fits your pantry's size and capacity.
4. **What if we have a drive-thru distribution?** Offering client choice with a drive-thru distribution is absolutely possible! While it may look different from a pantry, you can adapt the process so clients can make selections from their car, with volunteers guiding them through their choices. This allows for the dignity of choice while maintaining the efficiency and safety of a drive-thru system.