

Pantry & Warehouse Distribution Protocols

updated 1/29/2025

It is extremely important that we do not give out any food outside of our distribution hours and/or from non-distribution locations. Only the program team should distribute food and it should be specific to a program (Sheridan / El Mercadito / Online Market / Home Delivery / Health & Hope). This is the only way to be equitable in terms of how we provide services.

- When a volunteer is also a client we have specific rules for that because we must be fair and equitable.
- The Hub and HQ are NOT distribution sites, aside from Online Market orders. Someone must have an Online Market order and pick up during the pick-up window to receive food directly from these sites.
- Staff and registered volunteers may eat any of the food as long as they eat it during their shift and do not take it home or set it aside.
- Staff and volunteers are not allowed to take items home unless they have been placed in an "ok to take" area. These are only items that we can't give to a client, such as bruised produce, deli items too far past their dates, food without a date on it, and miscellaneous non-food items that we don't distribute. If it can go to a client, it needs to go to a client.
- If we have a major surplus of items, we may occasionally in the needs of warehouse and pantry space, designate items that could go to clients to staff instead. These items are only ok to take if they are in an "ok to take" area marked by a sign.

"Ok to take" areas are as follows (all marked with signage):

- HQ: Northern Warehouse, anything in staff or volunteer break rooms
- Hub: Shelf in warehouse near volunteer break room, labeled space in the cooler, labeled space by the back door
- Sheridan: Cart in cafe upstairs labeled "to take"
- El Mercadito: N/A

Items that **can and should** be given to clients:

- Food that meets our safety and quality standards
- Personal hygiene toiletries - including soap, shampoo, menstrual products, toothbrushes, toilet paper, etc.
- Personal care items - Lotion, makeup, etc.
- Basic home care items - Light bulbs, laundry products, spatulas, etc.
- Diapers - Adult and baby diaper

- Pet food
- Covid tests

Items that **cannot** be given to clients, but **can** be given to volunteers or staff if placed in an “ok to take” area:

- Products missing ingredient information labels or expiration dates
- Energy drinks of any kind
- Dietary supplements
- Random items that come in with our store pickups (holiday decorations, dog Halloween costumes, greeting cards, hair dye, etc.)
- Food that has failed our quality standards such as bruised produce and deli items too far past their dates
- Items that we have an extreme excess of that have been placed in an “ok to take” area

Items that **cannot be given to anyone** (staff, clients or volunteers):

- Food that may be unsafe to eat, including homemade foods and potentially contaminated items
- Potentially dangerous items (e.g., sharp blades)
- Alcohol - Must be kept in locked storage room at HQ
- Medications of any kind (including aspirin, Tylenol, etc.), unless specifically approved for staff/volunteers. Medication is never approved for clients.

These are items we do accept. If found at a grocery store, we should leave behind. If we do receive at a location, we will donate to another agency or destroy:

- Clothing
- Furniture
- Bedding, towels, dishes, and luggage