

BEST PRACTICES FOR HOME FOOD DELIVERY DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many families to lose their main source of income. The area's food assistance organizations are coping with a tremendous surge in the number of families with food insecurity. Home food delivery is an important option for food providers with the ability to have safe, no-touch, socially distanced transfer with boxes left at the door.

The guidance provided here was formed through outreach to many local food assistance entities who shared their best practices for volunteer engagement and safe food handling. This document is intended as guidance only. Ultimately, each organization must decide how to manage operations, including risk and liability.

Contents:

- Partnerships
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- Best Practices for Volunteer Coordination & Volunteer Screening
- Document Templates & Additional Resources

PARTNERSHIPS

Montgomery County's strong network of partnerships among many nonprofits, government and businesses has been an important part of the response to the food insecurity surge resulting from the pandemic. The county has built on existing partnerships and established the COVID-19 Food Security Task Force, a multi-agency collaboration between the county Department Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Food Council, and the food assistance providers across the county. Take advantage of these partnerships:

- Connect with the Montgomery County Food Council, mocofoodcouncil.org. Be sure your information is included in their lists of food resources and maps of providers. Participate in regular meetings and calls to share information and find out about resources.
- Working with the Food Council will also connect you with the Food Security Task Force. See the county's [information page on food resources](#) during COVID-19.
- Add Food Distribution events to the calendar with this [form](#).
- Post requests for volunteers and donations of food and other supplies on the Volunteer Center [website](#).

OPERATIONS - FOOD SAFETY & CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

Best practices in Training for Home Food Delivery

With a basic understanding of food safety and good judgment, food donors, transporters and recipients can ensure that donated food is kept safe for consumption.

- If sick or suspected as contagious, do not work around food, not even food that is boxed.
- Protect food from chemicals, staples, insects, water drippage, dirty equipment, etc.
- Keep transport vehicles free of excessive dirt, insects, animals, and any other potential contaminants while transporting food. It is a good idea to have a sheet, tarp or carry-all container that you lay in trunk or back seat before transporting any donated food.
- Containers that are damaged or expose food must be returned to the responsible food hub.
- During transport, use thermal bags or coolers (with ice packs for cold foods) to maintain hot or cold temperature of food; do not mix hot and cold food in the same carrier.
- Before initiating a delivery, inquire whether any foods are Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods like frozen foods, hot or cold prepared foods, fresh meat, seafood, or dairy. These foods must be discarded if transported or stored more than four hours in the Food Temperature Danger Zone (between 41°F and 135°F), to prevent the growth of microorganisms and, thus, keep it safe for consumption.
- If ever in doubt whether contents are compromised, do not deliver the food, and contact the food assistance provider or responsible food donation hub for instructions.

Engaging with the Public in Home Food Delivery:

- Be respectful of the sensitivities of those receiving services. Many of the growing number of recipients during COVID have not even been to a food pantry before.
- Always be professional and polite. Do not judge recipients for their nice house, dress, or vehicles. A person's means can change, especially during times of high unemployment.
- Keep all customer information confidential; names, addresses, any health or other conditions are private information and depending on how they were referred may be subject to HIPPA laws.
- In addition to websites with information helpful to the public accessing services, consider adding an info card to food boxes to contain a note identifying the food vendor(s), food assistance provider(s), and first name of deliverer for a personal touch.
- Delivery staff/volunteers should not share any personal information with recipients. Don't accept gifts as thank you or share your contact information for future questions and resources. Refer questions back to 311 or let them know you'll take their questions back to the food provider.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION & VOLUNTEER SCREENING

Best Practices in Volunteer Coordination

- Create clear volunteer position descriptions that include all info that a new volunteer will need to know in order to participate. See a [sample volunteer position](#) and be sure your descriptions now include language about how the work ensures safety during the pandemic.
- Designate a primary volunteer manager to help oversee and direct the process.
- Define supervision, each volunteer should know who they report to, and the supervisor should know they are responsible for overseeing the work of the volunteer(s).
- Communicate regularly with volunteers and those that reach out saying they want to volunteer. Provide direction and confirmation, and request confirmation back from volunteers to ensure all follow-up.
- Recruit using the Montgomery County Volunteer Center website, www.montgomeryserves.org, as well as your own contacts.

Best Practices in Volunteer Screening

Many volunteers are stepping up to help and it is important to have a good plan for screening and on-boarding volunteers that makes them feel welcome and willing to come back, but also screens volunteers for your organization and your customer's safety. Make a plan for volunteer screening and on-boarding that is appropriate with the level of risk.

Volunteer Agreement & Waiver Forms

- Consider requiring all volunteers to sign agreement and waiver forms. See sample at the end of this document and edit to be appropriate for your organization.

Background Checks

For volunteers that will be driving to private homes or doing other work that requires more screening, organizations often require background checks. Two companies cited below are used by local organizations that have successfully relied on these companies' services over time. These are just two companies, there are other services available as well.

- Coeus Global Services, an online resource that does not require fingerprinting: <https://www.coeusglobal.com/>. Manna Food Center uses Coeus and on the Manna website they provide an option for volunteers to pay for their own background check if they are willing.
- Sterling Volunteers (formerly Verified Volunteers) offers a detailed menu of different background checks and many local organizations use this service. <https://www.sterlingvolunteers.com/packages-and-pricing/>

More information on risk management

See this article on volunteer drivers on the Nonprofit Risk Management Center website:

<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/risk-on-the-road-managing-volunteer-driver-exposures/>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GUIDANCE FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

On its website, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers detailed information about how to protect oneself when going about the daily business of shopping, accepting delivery orders and takeout orders, getting gasoline, going to the doctor or opting for telemedicine, and other situations in life during while protecting oneself from exposure to Covid-19. Learn more on the CDC website, at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html#deliveries>.

COMMUNITY FOOD RESCUE

Community Food Rescue (CFR), a program of Manna Food Center, uses innovative technology to match perfectly good food from local businesses that would have been thrown away and deliver it to groups helping people who are experiencing hunger. CFR's website, <https://www.communityfoodrescue.org/> outlines the history of food rescue within Montgomery County and provides information that explains every facet of food recovery, including safe handling, tax liability, how to donate, how to join, etc. The following document that outlines food safety guidelines is taken directly from the CFR website. The website also offers a food safety webinar and other videos.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

The task force adapted the volunteer agreement below, based on the one used by Manna Food Center for its volunteers, with an additional page based on lessons from DHS SNAP outreach, plus additional content specific to COVID-19.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT for
FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE of Montgomery County, Maryland

If you are NOT 18 years of age or older, your parent or legal guardian MUST read and sign the agreement.

LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____

ZIP CODE: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ Circle One: Home Work Cell

EMAIL: _____

AGE: (check one) Under 18 _____ (parent or legal guardian **must** sign the form) **OR** 18+ _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____ PHONE: _____ H W C

I _____, certify that I agree to comply with all written policies and procedures provided by the COVID-19 Food Security Task Force of Montgomery County, Maryland (herein, just “Task Force,”) including the policies and procedures of food banks, pantries, food assistance provider, and other partners when at their work sites, (herein, just “partners”).

I affirm that I have no financial interest or affiliation with any organization which may have interests that conflict with, or appear to conflict with, the best interests of the Task Force or its partners. I understand that I am not an employee of the Task Force or its partners, and will not be compensated for any time spent volunteering, nor am I entitled to rights, privileges, or benefits of an employee of the Task Force or its partners. I also understand that the Task Force expects each volunteer to honor the confidentiality of information learned during the normal course of working with clients or partner organizations, including the names, addresses, and other information about clients.

I agree to maintain all identifying information in strict confidence, sharing it only with approved Task Force staff members.

I understand that the activities which are typically performed by Task Force volunteers, and which may be performed by me as a Task Force volunteer, may involve physical activity, contact with unidentified and unfamiliar persons, travel to and from various unspecified locations, and

other potential risks of injury and property damage, and will require the exercise of reasonable care to avoid injury and/or damage.

I further understand that if I am volunteering for the Task Force, I will be using my personal vehicle to transport food between locations, which involves potential risk of personal injury and damage to my vehicle. With knowledge of the hazards and potential dangers involved, I still wish to volunteer and hereby agree to assume any and all risks of personal injury or property damage, including damage to my personal vehicle. I also agree that I will not hold the Task Force liable for such risks stemming from any accident or injury to person or property that I may sustain in connection with my participation as a volunteer or in any Task Force related activity. I understand that if I am injured in the course of my participation as a Task Force volunteer, I am not eligible for workers' compensation coverage by the Task Force or its partners. I hereby release and discharge the Task Force and any of its directors, officers, employees, contractors, partners, and agents from any and all liability of responsibility for such accident or injury, and I agree that I, and my assignees, heirs, guardians, and legal representatives will not make a claim or demand against or sue the Task Force or any of its directors, officers, employees, contractors, partners, and agents for injury or damage resulting from my participation as a Task Force volunteer or in any Task Force related activity.

I hereby declare and affirm under the penalties of perjury, that I have not received a citation for a moving violation or driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated in the past 3 years. I hereby declare and affirm under the penalties of perjury, that I have never been convicted of a violent crime, child abuse, child pornography, child abduction, kidnapping, rape or any sexual offense. Further, I will not engage in any inappropriate, violent, or offensive behavior while volunteering with the Task Force.

I understand that I may be photographed while volunteering and my signature (electronic or print) authorizes the Task Force and its partners to use my picture in publications, on the websites of Montgomery County, Maryland and Task Force partners, and through Task Force social media outlets, in perpetuity.

I understand I am not permitted to take food or other items from any food distribution locations and that if I am observed taking anything, I will be asked to return it and may be asked to cease volunteer service.

I hereby certify that I have been provided with and have reviewed Task Force's policies and procedures regarding the safe handling of food, including the food safety webinar found at <https://www.communityfoodrescue.org/> and I agree to comply with all safe handling policies and procedures as directed by Task Force and partner staff. If I am volunteering for the Task Force to transport food, I hereby certify that I have also been provided with Task Force policies and procedures regarding the safe transport of food, and I agree to comply with all policies and procedures regarding both the safe handling of and transport of food. I understand that no smoking is permitted anywhere on the premises of the Task Force and its partners.

I understand that the Task Force and its partners have the right to dismiss me as a volunteer, at any time, in its sole discretion.

DATE SIGNED: _____

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT (Continued)
for FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE of Montgomery County, Maryland

I understand that as a Task Force volunteer, I will be helping the county with the supply chain of food from food vendors to food assistance providers to residences in need, working with produce, bakery foods, fresh meats, dairy, frozen foods, dry goods, prepared foods, and pre-packaged meals. I may be helping Montgomery County residents who are unable to leave their homes by delivering food and other items to them on behalf of the Task Force and its partners. I understand that when handling food that is not packaged, I am expected to put long hair up in a hat or hairnet, remove jewelry, and wear closed-toed non-slip shoes.

I understand that I may come in contact with people and/or surfaces that might be infected with COVID-19 while in the performance of my duties. The Task Force is not liable should I contract COVID-19, and to minimize my risk, the Task Force may require me to wear a cloth, surgical, or N95 mask and/or nitrile glove or similar barrier, for specified work. The Task Force will provide such supplies as required and reasonable for the duration of the shift.

I agree to abide by the following terms in conducting my volunteer work. I will:

- Conduct a NO-CONTACT delivery of food and other items, following all the COVID-19 Centers for Disease Control guidelines for no-contact delivery and food handling.
- Treat all persons in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner.
- Not accept payment or solicit donations in return for assistance.
- Not solicit business from persons I assist or use the knowledge gained about them for any direct or indirect personal benefit.

In regard to food assistance needs, payment methods, or other personal information, I assure that confidential information will remain confidential and only be used to accomplish the purpose of providing Task Force services. I agree to comply with the terms and conditions listed below:

- I will not disclose the client's EBT or other form of payment password to any unauthorized users or allow anyone to access the card.
- I will not use the client's card or password for any other purpose than what my volunteer duties indicate.
- I will comply with all the policies and rules of the organization I am volunteering for.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand this entire agreement and agree to abide by it. I understand that if I violate this agreement by disclosing confidential information or using this information for purposes other than what it was intended, I will be dismissed as a volunteer of the

Food Security Task Force for Montgomery County, Maryland, and criminal charges may be brought against me.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ Telephone: _____