

NUTRITION EDUCATION TOOLKIT

CONSORTIUM TO LOWER OBESITY IN CHICAGO CHILDREN (CLOCC)
AND WEST SIDE UNITED (WSU)



WEST SIDE UNITED

NUTRITION EDUCATION TOOLKIT

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1. INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE AUTHORIZING ORGANIZATIONS

West Side United

Healthcare institutions, residents, educators, non-profits, businesses, government agencies and faith-based institutions that work, live, and congregate on Chicago’s West Side have come together as West Side United (WSU) to make their neighborhoods stronger, healthier, and more vibrant places to live.

The coalition is led by six hospitals (Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, Rush University Medical Center, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, Cook County Health, Amita Health Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, and University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System) that are working with community partners to decrease the life expectancy gap between neighborhoods on Chicago’s West Side (West Town, East Garfield, West Garfield, Austin, Near West Side, North Lawndale, South Lawndale, Lower West Side, and Belmont Cragin) and the city’s downtown and Near North Side neighborhoods. West Side United focuses upon four impact areas – Economic Vitality, Education, Health & Healthcare, and Neighborhood & Physical Environment.

Lurie Children’s Hospital and CLOCC (Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children)

Lurie Children’s Hospital and CLOCC lead the Food Access Initiative and the Food Pantry Initiative subgroup, which support WSU’s health and healthcare, as well as neighborhood and physical environment impact areas.

Hospital

Lurie Children’s Hospital
AMITA Health
AMITA Health
Cook County Health
Mt. Sinai Medical Center
Rush Medical Center

Food Pantry Partner

Iglesia Evangelica Emmanuel
European American Association
La Casa Norte
Marillac House
Harmony Community Church
Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

Community

Belmont Cragin
West Town/Humboldt Park
Humboldt Park
East Garfield Park
North Lawndale
Austin

When patients have been screened as food insecure, the Food Access Initiative has the goal of better connecting them to healthy food resources in their neighborhoods. A key resource for free, healthy (emergency) food is food pantries. Each of the six hospitals have partnered with at least one pantry located on the West Side of Chicago. The hospitals will offer the pantries additional assistance and support based on the pantry’s needs, including financial assistance, volunteers, food donations, and mental health screenings.

A 2019 needs assessment of the pantries determined that resources for nutrition education were highly requested. This finding was supported by information from the Greater Chicago Food Depository. The toolkit is a product of that finding.

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This nutrition education toolkit was created to assist the six CLOCC-supported West Side United food pantries in providing enhanced nutrition education to their clients. Recognizing the link between nutrition and health, and the double burden of food insecurity and chronic disease that many pantry clients face, the provision of nutrition education at pantries is especially important.

The toolkit was developed by compiling best practices from organizations engaged in nutrition education at food pantries. A literature review was conducted to determine the most effective approaches to nutrition education and the key factors in their creation and implementation. The review identified organizations with accurate and trustworthy nutrition education tools and information. Clients' nutrition education needs were also assessed using a survey that was distributed and analyzed by CLOCC in June of 2021. Approximately 100 clients from the six pantries responded to the survey, providing insights about types of healthy foods they would like their pantry to provide, nutrition education topics of interest, and nutrition education modalities of interest. This feedback was incorporated into this toolkit.

This toolkit will serve as an evolving document as more resources are compiled and best practices in nutrition education at food pantries change over time. Updates will be shared with food pantry partners when they are made. Questions or comments can be directed to Megan Hinchy, CLOCC Community Programs Coordinator, at mhinchy@luriechildrens.org.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES AT THE PANTRY

A. CLIENT CHOICE MODEL¹

The client choice model is a method of setting up the food pantry where clients choose the food that they take home with them. The considerations and some models of client choice are listed below.

The benefits of client choice include:

- Limiting food waste
- Saving money for the pantry
- Making ordering easier - you can get a sense for clients' preferred foods
- Giving clients agency and dignity
- Meeting clients' health needs
- Improving the shopping experience
- Helping pantry staff and volunteers connect with and get to know their clients better

Some considerations of the client choice model include:

- Equipment needs
- Physical space
- Staff and volunteer capacity

Models of client choice

Supermarket, table, window, and inventory list are all client choice models that can be considered.

Supermarket model:

In the supermarket model, food is arranged on shelves by food group (fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, meats, grains etc.). Clients are informed how many items they can take based on their family size, and they walk through the pantry alone, with a staff member, or with a volunteer to "shop" for their food. Clients check out by packing up their food and receiving help from a staff member or volunteer if desired, similar to a grocery store.

Table model:

In the table model, food is set up on tables by food group. Clients are informed of how many food items they can take based on their family size, and they browse tables to choose and pack their food. Staff and volunteers can stand by each table to assist clients.

Window model:

In the window model, food is organized on shelves by food group in an area where clients can view the food, but not enter. When clients sign in, they are informed how many of each food type they can take based on their family size. Through a door or window, clients choose which food items they would like

and a staff member or volunteer packs those items for them. Clients can select items verbally or check items off on a sheet of paper and hand that paper to staff or volunteers.

Inventory list model:

In this model, clients select their foods from an inventory list that is posted or passed out individually to each client. Staff or volunteers pack the selections into a bag or box.

Summary of models:

MODEL	EQUIPMENT	SPACE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Supermarket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelving - Optional: refrigerators and freezers with clear glass - Optional: carts to move food - Optional: food cards showing how much food clients can take 	A large enough space to display food on shelves and have clients walk through the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More one on one time with clients - Clients can ask more specific questions to volunteers and staff - Storage room and place where clients are served is the same - Can serve many clients at a time - Simulates a grocery store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must plan and set up in advance - May need a larger space
Table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tables - Optional: carts to move food - Optional: food cards showing how much food clients can take 	A large enough space to set up tables with enough room to walk between them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't need a dedicated pantry space - Many clients can be served at one time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and volunteers need to set up and break down tables - Lifting food onto tables may be challenging for some staff and volunteers
Window	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelves visible to clients - Optional: food cards showing how much food clients can take 	Will work in any space where clients can see where food is set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small space needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can only serve a limited number of clients at one time - Clients are further away and cannot hold the product – this can make it challenging for individuals with low literacy
Inventory list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper or dry erase board to list food in stock - Optional: clipboards to hold paper lists - Optional: food cards showing how much food clients can take 	Will work in any space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very small space needed - Clients can choose food without leaving the intake or waiting area - Good for clients with limited mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clients are further away and cannot hold the product – this can make it challenging for individuals with low literacy - Need to update food list as inventory changes

B. NUDGES

Feeding America defines nudges as a subtle environment change in a food distribution setting, designed to make a healthy choice the easy choice.² A study on nudges found that they increase the likelihood that a healthy food item will be chosen by guests in a pantry setting by 46 percent.³ Nudges are a low-cost but effective nutrition education strategy.

Example: a sign near the produce that says, "Choosing fresh produce helps your body get fiber!"

Foods to Nudge⁴

Feeding America recommends nudging foods on their "Foods to Encourage" list. Those food categories are listed below. You may need to check nutrition labels or ingredient lists to see if a food qualifies.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Fresh with nothing added
- 100% fruit or vegetable Juice
- Canned, dried, frozen, with no partially hydrogenated oil, meeting the criteria below:
 - a. Sodium: $\leq 230\text{mg}$ | Total Sugar: Fruit in lite syrup or 100% Juice or $\leq 12\text{g}$ or Saturated Fat: $\leq 2\text{g}$ | Trans Fat: 0g

Grains

- 100% whole grain (e.g. Rolled Oats, Barley, Wild Rice)
- Bread and pasta with "WHOLE GRAIN" listed as the first ingredient
 - Bread and pasta with $>10\%$ DV or ≥ 2.5 grams dietary fiber
- Cereal with "WHOLE GRAIN" listed as the first ingredient & $>3\text{g}$ of fiber
- Bread, pasta, and cereal meeting criteria below:
 - Sodium: $\leq 230\text{mg}$ | Total Sugar: Bread/Pasta $\leq 10\text{g}$ Cereal $\leq 12\text{g}$ or Saturated Fat: $\leq 2\text{g}$ | Trans Fat: 0g

Protein

- Eggs
- Nuts, seeds, beans, and lentils with nothing added
- Beans, meat, poultry, and seafood meeting the criteria below:
 - Sodium: $\leq 480\text{mg}$ | Saturated Fat: 2g | Trans Fat: 0g
- Nuts/seeds and corresponding spreads that meet the criteria below:
 - Sodium: $\leq 230\text{mg}$ | Total Sugar: $<4\text{g}$ per 2T or 1oz. or Trans Fat: 0g

Dairy

- Flavored skim/nonfat milk or yogurt
- Unsweetened milk substitutes (i.e. almond milk, soy milk, almond milk yogurt)
- Unflavored/unsweetened low-fat (1%), or skim/nonfat milk or yogurt
- Cheese that meets criteria the below:

- Sodium: ≤480mg | Saturated Fat: ≤ 2g | Trans Fat: 0g
- Flavored milk, milk substitutes and yogurt meeting the criteria below:
 - Sodium: ≤480mg | Total Sugar: ≤22g (milk) ≤30g (yogurt) or Saturated Fat: 3g | Trans Fat: 0g

Types of Nudges

Placement²

In a client choice model, place healthier foods or foods that you would like to encourage at the beginning of the food selection experience; clients are less likely to choose items as their basket, box, or bag becomes full.

Price Tags²

If you receive donated items or purchase items that have visible price tags, consider leaving price tags on the items. Price tags indicate that something is valuable, and when a price tag is visible pantry clients are more likely to take an item. This is true even when the person choosing the food is not paying monetarily.

Signs²

In a client choice model, place posters or signs with attractive images of foods that your pantry is hoping to encourage in the waiting area, and in the area where participants select food.

Abundance²

When there is more abundance of foods, there is greater selection. Visibly highlight healthier foods by placing them where they are easily seen and by displaying a large amount of the food. For example, when displaying fresh produce, place it in containers like crates, baskets, or boxes that appear fully stocked.

Visibility²

Shoppers like to see the products they are choosing, and ideally up close. Display healthy foods as visibly as possible. One option is to display them in clear containers, or baskets or crates where the top of the container does not obstruct the client's view.

Recipes⁴

Placing recipes by healthy foods increases selection of those foods, as clients will have an idea of how the foods can be prepared.

Suggesting an amount to take⁴

Posting signs that share how many servings are recommended of a certain type of food can help normalize selecting and consuming that food.

Meal kits⁴

Grouping healthy foods with packaged foods can increase the number of clients who select healthy foods. For example, consider placing a canned, frozen, or fresh vegetable like peas next to boxed mac and cheese. Create a sign or a quarter sheet of paper with information about how clients can combine the two foods in case they would like guidance. See "[meal kit](#)" section for recipes and meal kit ideas.

Shelf tags⁵

Shelf tags can provide information to clients about an item's food group and benefits, helping clients to select more of that healthy food. View printable shelf tags from Feeding America in the "Online Nudge Resources" section below.

Considerations When Implementing Nudges²

- Nudges should be used with a client choice model.
- Foods that are nudged should have a reliable supply.
- Consider which types of food you have the capacity to nudge. Nudging perishable items will require creative displays to showcase the item while also storing it safely.
- Ensure the foods that you are nudging are culturally appropriate for your clients.
- What is your nutrition education budget? If funds are low, nudges could be a great option!
- How will you align staff and volunteers on nudges?
- Consider updating your pantry's policies to ensure nudges are incorporated and supported long-term.

Online Nudge Resources

- Research on the effectiveness of nudges: [THE POWER OF NUDGES: Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice in Food Pantries](#)
- [A How-To Guide: Nudges](#)
- [Common Food Shelf Tags](#)
- [Food Group Signage](#)

3. NUTRITION EDUCATION AT HOME

Some clients may prefer to engage in nutrition education at home instead of at the pantry. For these clients, a compilation of flyers, videos, healthy recipes, and virtual nutrition education classes are provided below.

A. FLYERS, HANDOUTS, AND POSTERS

Flyers for use at home can contain nutrition or health education content from a reputable source. Consider picking a theme or topic for your distributions and handing out related resources. See below for a list of handouts by theme, as well as suggested themes for each month based on holidays or health promotion dates/weeks/months. You can follow the themes below or create your own themes and distribution schedule. UIC's Chicago Partnership for Healthy Promotion has posters available [here](#).

Flyers by themed weeks/months

In this section, handouts are grouped by monthly themes such as "Heart Health Month" for February. If you are seeking handouts about a specific nutrition topic, go to the [Additional Topics](#) section below.

January: Healthy Weight Week, January 17 - 23

Tips for Shopping

- [Eating on a Budget](#) | [Eating on a Budget \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Reading Food Labels](#) | [Reading Food Labels \(Spanish\)](#)

February: Heart Health Month

Heart Health

- [Sodium Guidelines](#) | [Sodium Guidelines \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eat Right-Less Salt](#) | [Eat Right-Less Salt \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eating for Heart Health](#)

March: National Nutrition Month, and National School Breakfast Week, March 2-6

Breakfast

- [Power Up with Breakfast by Eat Right](#) | [Power Up with Breakfast \(Spanish\)](#)

April: Public Health Week, April 5 - 11

Healthy Consumption & Healthy Food

- [MyPlate-English](#) | [Mi-Plato-Español](#)
- [Eating Right for a Healthy Weight](#) | [Eating Right for a Healthy Weight \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Healthy Snacking for Teens and Adults](#) | [Healthy Snacking for Teens and Adults \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Healthy Snacking for Kids](#) | [Healthy Snacking for Kids \(Spanish\)](#)

May: Mental Health Month

- [Mindful Eating Handouts](#)
- [Mindful Eating Infographic](#)
- [Mental Health Resources in Chicago](#)
- [Fight Stress with Healthy Habits](#) | [Combata El Estrés Con Hábitos Saludables Infographic](#)

June: Family Health and Fitness Day, June 12

Fad Diets

- [Skip the Fad Diet-Go the Healthy way](#)
- [Beware of Fad Diets](#)

July: UV Safety Month and National Youth Sports Week, June 19 - 23

- [Choose Healthy Drink Water](#) | [Choose Healthy, Drink Water \(Spanish\)](#)

August: Breastfeeding Month

Portion Control

- [Enjoy Your Foods but Eat Less](#)
- [Portion Sizes Then and Now](#)
- [How Much is a Portion \(Spanish\)](#)

September: National Fruits and Veggies Month and Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Fruits and Vegetables

- [Eat Right- Fruits and Vegetables](#) | [Eat Right – Fruits and Vegetables \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eat Right- Choose a Salad](#)
- [Smart Shopping for Veggies and Fruits](#)
- [Focus on Fruits](#)

October: Breast Cancer Month

Nutritional Tips on the Go!

- [Eating on the Run](#) | [Eating on the Run \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eating Foods Away from Home](#)
- [Fast Food Tips](#)

November: Diabetes Awareness Month

Added Sugar

- [Cut Down on Added Sugar](#)
- [Eat Right-Added Sugars](#)
- [Cut Back on Your Kids Sweet Treats](#)

December: National Handwashing Month, focus on Food Safety

Meal Planning

- [Meal Planning Made Easy](#)
- [Build Healthy Mealtime Habits](#)

Food Safety

- [Be Food Safe English](#) | [Be Food Safe Spanish](#)

Additional topics

If you are having trouble selecting a handout, use the resources below and try to focus on at least one topic each month. While each resource is beneficial, in the collection below the most useful handouts are listed first and are available in English and Spanish. You can find additional handouts by topic [here](#).

Eating on a budget

- [Eating on a Budget](#) | [Eating on a Budget \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Budget-Friendly Foods to Keep in Your Home](#) | [Budget-Friendly Foods to Keep in Your Home \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eating Better on a Budget \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Shop Smart and Save](#)

Selecting healthy food

- [Eating Right for a Healthy Weight](#) | [Eating Right for a Healthy Weight \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Can Processed Foods be Healthy?](#) | [¿La comida procesada puede ser sana?](#)
- [Eat Right for Older Adults](#) | [Eat Right for Older Adults \(Spanish\)](#)
- [MyPlate-English](#) | [Mi-Plato-Español](#)

Cooking for picky eaters

- [Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters](#) | [Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Phrases that HELP and HINDER](#)
- [We Can!® Parent Tips: Picky Eaters](#)
- [Healthy Habits Start Early: Tips for Feeding Picky Eaters](#)

Limiting sugar, salt, and unhealthy fat in your diet

- [Watch Your Fats, Sugars, and Sodium](#) | [Watch Your Fats, Sugars, and Sodium \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Eat Right-Less Salt](#) | [Eat Right-Less Salt \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Cut Out Added Sugars](#) | [Elimine los Azúcares Añadidos Infografía](#)
- [What Are the Types of Fat?](#)

Healthy snacking

- [Healthy Snacking for Teens and Adults](#) | [Healthy Snacking for Teens and Adults \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Healthy Snacking for Kids](#) | [Healthy Snacking for Kids \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Cooking Matters at Home](#) | [Cooking Matters en su Casa](#) Snacks in a Snap (p. 24-25)

Healthy hydration

- [Choose Healthy Drink Water](#) | [Choose Healthy, Drink Water \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Parent Tips: How Much Sugar and Calories are in Your Favorite Drink?](#)
- [Sip Smarter](#)

Planning meals

- [Make Easy and Healthy Family Meals](#) | [Make Easy and Healthy Family Meals \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Heart-Healthy Essentials for Meal Prep](#) | [Ingredientes esenciales para la preparación de comidas saludables para el corazón](#)
- [Cooking Matters at Home](#) | [Cooking Matters en su Casa](#)- multipage PDF with a variety of handouts

Basic cooking skills

- [Cooking Matters at Home](#) | [Cooking Matters en su Casa](#) - multipage PDF with a variety of handouts

Food safety

- [Keep it Fresh](#) | [Manténgalo Fresco](#)

Nutrition labels

- [Reading Food Labels](#) | [Reading Food Labels \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Coma Sabiamente a las Etiquetas de Información Nutricional](#)
- [Eat Smart with Food Nutrition Labels](#)

Selecting and preparing food for people with health conditions (diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, etc.)

Diabetes

- Photonovela about prediabetes and how to prevent it from becoming diabetes: [Hazlo por ellos! Pero por ti también. Fotonovela Bilingüe/Bilingual Fotonovela](#) (Spanish & English)
- [Tasty Recipes for People with Diabetes and Their Families](#)
- [Tips for Eating Healthy With Diabetes](#)

Food allergies, Dietary restrictions, and Intolerances

- [Gluten intolerance](#)
- [Gluten free guide](#) (Spanish)
- [Dairy alternatives](#)
- [Nut allergy information](#)
- [Common Food Allergies: What you need to know](#)

Physical Activity

- [Create Your Own Workout](#) | [Elija su Propio Entrenamiento](#)
- [How much physical activity do you need?](#) | [¿Qué cantidad de actividad física es necesaria?](#)
- [Recommendations for Physical Activity in Kids](#) | [Recomendaciones de Actividad Física Para Niños](#)

Seasonal Foods

- [Seasons of Eating](#) | [Alimentos de Temporada](#)

B. VIDEOS

Many people are visual learners and may want to learn from watching videos at home. Share the video resources listed below with clients. If you email or text your clients, you can link the video in the body of the communication. Alternatively, use a free [QR code generator](#) to link a video or playlist to a QR code that can be scanned by a cell phone. You can put this QR code on a flyer or send in an email.

Video resources

- [Cooking Matters by Share Our Strength](#) (Available in English and Spanish)
 - [Tips for feeding kids](#)
 - [What's on your plate?](#)
 - [Meal prep made easy](#)
 - [Consejos de cocina y compras](#) (Spanish)
 - [Cooking and shopping tips](#)
 - [Recipe demonstrations | Recipe demonstrations](#) (Spanish)
- [American Heart Association](#)
 - [Simple Cooking playlist](#)
 - [Health information from doctors](#)
 - [COVID-19 information](#)
 - [Home workouts](#)
 - [Move more](#)
- [USDA MyPlate](#)

C. RECIPES

Sharing recipes is a great way to inspire clients to cook meals using the pantry food. Consider printing and handing out individual recipes or directing clients to the recipe websites or apps linked below. You can also share recipes as part of a meal kit. For more details, see the "[meal kit](#)" section below.

Recipes for uncommon/unconventional food items

There are often foods that clients don't select week after week. Providing recipes that include these uncommon/unconventional items may encourage clients to select these foods and use them to create meals at home. See uncommon/unconventional food item recipes [here](#).

Greater Chicago Food Depository recipe resource (only available to pantry staff)

GCFD maintains a recipe resource where you can find 250+ healthy recipes and ingredient fact sheets. The resource is searchable by ingredient, and all resources are available in Spanish. The resource is only available to pantry staff/volunteers with a login; to share these recipes with clients you will need to download them, and print or email them for clients.

To access the resource:

1. Log in to the [Agency Portal](#)
2. Open the link for the Resource Library

3. Click "Nutrition Education" under Resource Type
4. Browse the library or use the search function to find recipes by the ingredient you want to feature

Healthy Recipe Websites

- [UIC Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion](#)
- [American Heart Association Recipes](#)
- [Food Hero](#) (Available in English and Spanish)
- [MyPlate](#) (Available in English and Spanish)
- [Cooking Matters](#)
- [Eat Move Save University of Illinois Extension](#)
- [Eat Right](#)
- [Cooking Light](#)
- [North Dakota State University Extension](#)

Healthy Recipe Apps

- [VeggieBook](#) (Available in English and Spanish)

Healthy Recipe e-Book

- [Good & Cheap](#) | [Good & Cheap \(Spanish\)](#)

D. MEAL KITS

Meal kits are a great way to show clients how to combine pantry food to make a recipe or to show clients how to combine less popular ingredients with their favorite foods to make something delicious. Find meal kit recipes [here](#).

E. VIRTUAL COOKING CLASSES

Instructed by your food pantry staff or volunteers

Your food pantry can host virtual cooking classes via Zoom, Google Meets, or another video call platform. If you are comfortable leading a class, wonderful! You may also consider reaching out to your West Side United hospital partner to see if there may be a dietitian, health educator, or even an intern to help lead the sessions.

Preparation:

- *Determine the frequency and duration* - how long will the classes be and how often will you have them? Will the classes stand alone or be part of a series where classes build off of one another?
- *Select your curriculum* - see several options below, or search to find one that works for you. It is not recommended to create your own curriculum or lessons unless you have a volunteer or staff with nutrition expertise.

- *Determine how clients will get the materials for your classes* - will you purchase materials like food and kitchen supplies for clients, provide them with a list of what to purchase, or find an alternative?
- *Consider incentives* - will you incentivize clients to come to the program by providing them with something for attending a certain number of classes?
- *Select a date and time* - survey your clients to determine the date and time that work best for them
- *Advertise your classes* - consider using flyers, social media, emails, calls and text messages

Existing curricula to consider:

Multi-class curricula

- [Cooking Matters in Your Food Pantry](#)
- [Cooking Matters in Your Community](#)
- [Food Smarts](#) (available in English, [Spanish](#), Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean)
- [Healthy for Life Community Nutrition Program \(HFL\)](#) (Available in English and [Spanish](#))
- [Families Eating Smart and Moving More \(FESMM\)](#) (Available in English and [Spanish](#))
- [Heart Smarts](#) (available in English and [Spanish](#))
- [Healthy Choices for Every Body Adult Nutrition Education Curriculum](#) (available in English, [Spanish](#), and French)

Single lessons

- [Basic Knife Skills](#)
- [Teaching Knife Skills](#)

Self-paced

Self-paced nutrition education or cooking classes allow pantry clients to learn about cooking and nutrition on their own schedule and at their home. Simply share resources with clients and allow them to learn on their own. Consider checking in with clients or creating a discussion group to motivate them to complete the lessons and share what they learned.

Existing curricula to consider: [Food eTalk](#)

4. NUTRITION EDUCATION IN THE PANTRY

A. VIDEOS

Videos are a simple way to educate clients while they might have down time, like while waiting for their turn to receive food from your pantry, or when waiting to engage in another type of nutrition education. At your pantry, consider setting up a TV or computer to play videos where clients congregate. Playlists of YouTube videos for each month of the year, based on national health and nutrition monthly and weekly themes, are listed below. Each playlist contains 15-20 minutes of videos, which will automatically play one after another. The videos in the playlist are both English and Spanish. You can use these monthly themes, or show videos based upon themes that you create at your pantry. You can also consider creating your own playlists with videos from nutrition experts to meet the needs of your pantry and your clients.

Video playlists

January: [Healthy Weight Week Playlist](#)

February: [Heart Health Month Playlist](#)

March: [Nutrition Month and Breakfast Week Playlist](#)

April: [Public Health Week Playlist](#)

May: [Mental Health Playlist](#)

June: [Family Health and Fitness Day Playlist](#)

July: [UV Safety Playlist](#)

August: [Breastfeeding Month Playlist](#)

September: [Child Obesity Awareness and Fruits and Vegetables Playlist](#)

October: [Breast Cancer Playlist](#)

November: [Diabetes Awareness Playlist](#)

December: [Hand Washing and Food Safety Playlist](#)

Additional video resources: See [here](#)

B. NUTRITION EDUCATION AND COOKING CLASSES

Your food pantry can host cooking and nutrition education classes in your pantry space or in a community location that is convenient for you and your clients.

Preparation:

- *Determine the frequency and duration* - how long will the classes be and how often will you have them? Will the classes stand alone or be part of a series, where classes build upon one another?
- *Determine a location* - do you have space to host classes at your pantry? Some curricula require a kitchen while others don't so keep that in mind. If you don't have space at your pantry, contact organizations in your community that have space and/or a kitchen that you can borrow. You can also set up a mobile kitchen by purchasing portable butane stoves and basic cooking supplies required for the cooking or nutrition education classes

- *Select your curriculum* - see several options below or do your research to find one that works for you. We do not recommend creating your own curriculum or lessons unless you have a volunteer or staff with nutrition expertise
- *Consider incentives* - will you incentivize clients to come to the program by providing them with something for attending a certain number of classes?
- *Select a date and time* - survey your clients to determine the date and time that work best for them
- *Advertise your classes* - consider using flyers, social media, emails, calls and text messages

Existing curricula to consider: See [here](#)

C. COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS AND FOOD TASTINGS

Led by your pantry staff or volunteers

Your pantry staff or volunteers can lead cooking demonstrations during your food pantry hours. Consider cooking an easy recipe or demonstrating how to prepare a food that may be less-frequently chosen by your clients. Your pantry staff or volunteers can also provide tastings of food or recipes that incorporate pantry foods during your food pantry distribution. Consider offering tastings of foods that are selected by clients less often.

Existing resources:

- [Cooking Matters in Your Food Pantry](#)
- [Cooking Matters in Your Community](#)

Led by someone else

If you are comfortable leading a class or food tasting, wonderful! You may also consider reaching out to your West Side United hospital partner to see if there may be a dietitian, health educator, or even an intern to help lead the sessions.

There are two groups in Chicago that specialize in assisting pantries with offering nutrition education. Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion can lead cooking demonstrations, food tastings, and other activities during your food pantry distribution. Contact [Shirley Vouris](#) for more information. Contact Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion for general information [here](#). CPHP may also have posters and recipes available [here](#).

University of Illinois Extension also works with pantries serving families. Contact [Serri Ann Ambrose](#) to learn more about their programming. Contact UI Extension for general information [here](#).

Office of Extension and Outreach

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D. CLIENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Many clients desire to give back to a food pantry that has helped to improve their health and food security. Consider the following ways to engage clients in volunteer opportunities related to nutrition at your pantry:

Client volunteer opportunities

- *Clients Advisory Committee:* Create a committee of clients who are interested in weighing in on nutrition-related changes at the pantry. These individuals can ground your work to ensure that the changes that you are making benefit your clients. Make sure that your advisory committee is diverse and represents your client population.
- *Volunteer nutrition educator:* Invite client-volunteers to hand out flyers to other clients, assist with cooking demonstrations and tastings, assist with nutrition and cooking education classes, or help facilitate environmental changes to make the pantry more conducive to healthy choices. Before placing clients in volunteer roles, provide them with the education they will need in order to provide nutritionally-sound information.
- *General pantry volunteer:* Invite client-volunteers to assist with distribution day at the pantry. They can help set up, help clients select food as part of the client choice model, or help clients pack up their food. Ensure that these clients are able to receive food on pantry day as well.
- *Training:* Volunteers can attend the Greater Chicago Food Depository's monthly nutrition webinars to learn more about nutrition topics. Register for the webinars [here](#).

5. NUTRITION POLICY

NUTRITION GUIDELINES

Nutrition guidelines are a written document that outlines what foods your pantry will stock and/or how you will provide food to clients.

Advantages

The following are advantages of adopting nutrition guidelines at your pantry:

- Consistency and reach - all guests experience the benefits of nutritious food no matter who is working/volunteering
- Guest confidence - guests are sure that their nutrition and health are being considered
- Sustainability - initiative sticks around in the long term
- Accountability - to the health and wellness of your clients
- Complement other nutrition initiatives
- Influence the system - be a role model and help impact the overall community

Actionable steps to implementing nutrition guidelines

- Build a diverse team that supports your initiative - staff, volunteers, guests, leadership, donors, suppliers
- Determine your baseline using an assessment
 - a. Celebrate successes
 - b. Review opportunities
 - c. Resources for assessments - contact Kathryn Bernstein from the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) at Kathryn.Bernstein@iphionline.org
- Gather input from guests and stakeholders
 - a. Options: conversations, interviews, surveys, focus groups, photovoice
- Develop guidelines
 - a. Review examples → revisit the input that you've gathered → brainstorm with team → use a template or write your own
- Formal adoption by leadership (i.e. CEO, Executive Director, Board of Directors)
- Staff and volunteer training
 - Staff and volunteers can attend the Greater Chicago Food Depository's monthly nutrition webinars to learn more about food pantry topics. Register for the webinars [here](#).
- Monitoring

Existing nutrition guidelines to consider

Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP)

The Good Food Purchasing Program transforms the way public institutions purchase food by creating a transparent and equitable food system built on five core values: local economies, health, valued workforce,

animal welfare, and environmental sustainability. The Center for Good Food Purchasing provides a comprehensive set of tools, technical support, and a verification system to assist institutions in meeting program goals and commitments (<https://goodfoodpurchasing.org>). In Chicago, the Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Food Policy Action Council, and the Illinois Public Health Institute implement the GFPP and support organizations who are interested in implementation.

GFPP Advantages

- Supporting local BIPOC farmers
- Keeping food dollars within your community and supporting the local economy
- Supporting ethical sources of food

GFPP Challenges

- Smaller spend - you may spend less money on food than large corporate food entities, which can give you less buying power
- Tracking purchases systematically - you may not have a mechanism for tracking purchases long term, which is helpful when implementing a GFPP
- Food is donated - if you benefit from donated food to stock your pantry, you may have less control over the food that you receive
- Volunteer-run - many pantries are run by volunteers, who may not support the GFPP or have the capacity to implement it

The Illinois Public Health Institute provides free technical assistance to pantries that are interested in implementing the GFPP, which can help overcome the barriers listed above. See the “Resources” section below for more information about how to receive support.

Good Food Purchasing Pledge

To make the GFPP more practical for pantries, the Chicago Food Policy Action Council has created the Good Food Purchasing Pledge. The pledge includes a commitment to one strategy in each Good Food Standard to start, with the intention that pantries will expand to include more than one strategy in each category. Additionally, instead of conducting large-scale data analysis that is often performed by a paid vendor, the pledge allows for the self-reporting of data to track progress on goals. The pledge is adaptable to meet a variety of pantry environments and allows for action plans with increased flexibility over the originally GFPP. For more information, contact the IPHI using the information in the “Resources” section below.

Resources

- [Good Food Purchasing Policy Website](#)

Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP)

Overview

Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) uses a “stoplight system” to rank food based upon levels of saturated fat, sodium, and sugar due to their link to chronic diseases. This is the system that the Greater Chicago Food Depository recommends. “Green” indicates foods to choose often because they are low in saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. Green foods support health. “Yellow” indicates foods to choose “sometimes,” because they can - but don’t always - contribute to good health. “Red” indicates foods to choose rarely because they contain high levels of unhealthy fat, sodium, or sugar. Red foods should be thought of as treats which have limited-to-no health benefits. The goal of SWAP is to improve the supply of healthier foods at the pantry and increase client demand for those foods.

Steps to use SWAP at your food pantry

1. Fill out the [Foodshare form](#) to receive a SWAP toolkit
2. Rank the foods at your pantry (video instructions [here](#))
 - a. Determine the food group using the “food group guide” found in the SWAP box
 - b. Read the nutrition label to determine the saturated fat, sodium and sugar
 - c. Use the SWAP ranking guidelines to assign a color (green, yellow, or red) to the food
 - i. If fat, sodium, and sugar levels fall into the green categories, the food is green
 - ii. If fat, sodium, or sugar fall within multiple colors, categorize this food by the least encouraged color, either yellow or red
 - b. Shelf food and label it with tags
 - c. Enter food’s rating into your paper or online inventory system

SWAP Resources

- [Video overview from Beyond Hunger](#)
- [SWAP Nutrients video from Beyond Hunger](#)
- [SWAP food categories from Beyond Hunger](#)
- [SWAP Raking Foods from Beyond Hunger](#)
- [SWAP messaging for clients video](#)
- [Basic SWAP handout](#)

General Nutrition Policy Resources

The Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) is available to provide free technical assistance and training to food pantries that are interested in developing, adopting, implementing, or monitoring nutrition policies or guidelines. She can work directly with your pantry to revise existing policies, or assist with the creation of your own policy, to ensure a good fit for your operations and your clients. Contact Kathryn at Kathryn.Bernstein@iphionline.org.

6. REFERENCES

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3. Feeding America. *The Power of Nudges: Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice in Food Pantries.*; 2016.
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4. Cornell University, Feeding America. *Nudges: Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice*.
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5. Feeding America. *Common Foods Shelf Tags*.
<https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/common-foods-shelf-tags/>

7. APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL NUTRITION EDUCATION HANDOUTS

CLOCC and West Side United Nutrition Education Toolkit

Eating on a Budget

- [Good Food on a Tight Budget](#) (32 pages - consider printing sections to share out instead of sharing the whole document at one time)
- [Eating Healthy on a Budget](#)
- [Eating on a Budget — The 3 P's](#)
- [Simple Cooking with Heart](#)

Selecting Healthy Food

- [Healthy Lifestyle Goals Calendar](#)
- [How to Build a Healthy Eating Pattern](#)
- [Simple Cooking with Heart](#)
- [Start Simple With MyPlate Today](#)
- [Request MyPlate Materials](#) (for pantry staff only)
- [Fruits and Vegetables: What's a Serving?](#)
- [What is a healthy diet?](#)
- [Building Healthy Habits at Lunch](#)
- [What is clean eating?](#) | [¿Quiere comer bien?](#)

Cooking for Picky Eaters

- [Kids Food Critic Activity](#)

Limiting Sugar, Salt, and Unhealthy Fat

- [Sodium in Your Diet](#) | [Sodium in Your Diet \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Spice it up!](#)
- [Sodium Can Be Sneaky](#) | [El Sodio Puede Ser Engañoso](#)
- [Change Your Salty Ways in 21 Days](#) | [Cambie su consumo de sal en 21 días](#)
- [The Salty Six for Kids](#) | [Las seis fuentes de sal para los niños](#)
- [The Salty Six](#) | [Los Seis Salados](#)
- [How too much sodium affects your health](#) | [Cómo demasiado sodio afecta su salud](#)
- [Sodium Myths for Kids](#) | [Sodio: Mitos y realidades para niños](#)
- [Sodium Myths Busted](#)
- [Cut Down on Added Sugars](#)
- [Parent Tips: How Much Sugar and Calories are in Your Favorite Drink?](#)
- [The Sugary Six](#)
- [Life is Sweet with these easy sugar swaps!](#)
- [Sip Smarter](#)

- [Sugar is not so sweet](#)
- [Fats-Saturated, Unsaturated, and Trans Fats](#)
- [Choosing Heart-Healthy Fats](#)
- [Healthy Fat is Good for your Body](#)
- [The Facts of Fat](#)
- [4 Ways to Get Good Fats](#)

Planning Meals

- [Simple Cooking with Heart](#)
- [Power Up with Breakfast by Eat Right](#) | [Power Up with Breakfast \(Spanish\)](#)

Physical Activity

- [Tips for Being Active with Diabetes](#)
- [Healthy for Good Make Every Move Count](#)
- [Keep Your Feet Happy](#)
- [How to Keep Cool During Warm Weather Workouts](#)
- [Is Your Workout Working](#)
- [Get the Right Sneakers for Your Workout](#)
- [Get into Working Out](#)
- [Warm Up to Cool Weather Workouts](#)

Meal Kit and Recipe Ideas

CLOCC and West Side United Nutrition Education Toolkit

Most Common Items Donated to GCFD

Fresh produce	Canned fruit	Canned vegetables	Canned fish
Soup	Stew	Beans	Bread
Cereal	Eggs	Jelly	Macaroni & cheese
Meat	Milk	Pasta	Pasta sauce
Peanut butter	Rice		

3 Can Chili

Tips: Add tomato sauce for a saucier chili. Add ground beef, turkey, or chicken. Add other veggies you have on hand (onion, bell pepper, hot pepper, mushrooms).

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1 can beans, low-sodium undrained (pinto, kidney, red, or black 15.5 ounces)
- 1 can corn, drained (15 ounces, or 10-ounce package of frozen corn)
- 1 can crushed tomatoes, undrained (15 ounces)
- chili powder (to taste)

[Bean and Rice Burrito](#)

Tips: Add shredded chicken, or ground beef/turkey/chicken. Add any vegetables you have on hand (bell pepper, tomato, corn).

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 2 cups rice (cooked) (Sub: any rice)
- 1 onion (small, chopped)
- 2 cups kidney beans (cooked, or one 15 ounce can, drained) (Sub: any canned beans)
- 8 flour tortillas (10 inch) (Sub: Any tortilla or wrap)
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1/2 cup cheese (shredded) (Sub: Any cheese)

[Beans and Rice with Veggies](#)

Tips: Add cooking ground turkey or chicken. Remove dill and add cumin, chili powder, paprika, and cilantro for Spanish rice. Possible vegetable options: broccoli, onion, bell pepper, carrot, celery, snap peas, tomato, corn, potatoes, etc.

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1 cup vegetables, frozen or fresh (cut into bite size pieces)
- 1/2 cup chicken broth, reduced sodium (or use water)
- 1 cup brown rice, cooked (sub: any rice)
- 1/2 can kidney beans (about 7 oz) (sub: any canned beans)
- dill weed (fresh snipped or dry, to taste) (sub: cumin, chili powder, paprika, cilantro)
- pepper (to taste)

[Black Eyed Peas and Collard Green Soup](#)

Tips: Use any kind of ham for deli ham. Any hearty leafy green will work well with this soup. Add any other vegetables you have on hand (green beans, tomatoes, corn).

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (Sub: Any cooking oil)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4-pound deli ham, sliced (4 ounces) (Sub: Ham hock, ham steak)
- 3 cups collard greens, stems removed and chopped (1/2 pound) (Sub: Any hearty leafy green)
- 1 can (14.5 ounce) broth (fat-free, low sodium chicken or vegetable) (Sub: bullion)
- 4 cups black-eyed peas, canned (2 cans, 15 ounce each, drained and rinsed) (Sub: any canned beans)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar (Sub: any vinegar)

[Fried Rice](#)

Tips: Add an egg or two for protein. Add your favorite meat (chicken, beef, ground meats all work great). Use any veggies you have available. Save soy sauce packets from takeout meals.

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 2 cups white rice, cooked (sub: brown rice)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (sub: any cooking oil)
- 1/2 cup celery (chopped)
- 1/4 cup onion (chopped)
- 1 package frozen/canned/fresh vegetables (10 ounce)
(sub: any vegetables you have on hand)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- dash pepper

[Mac and Cheese with Veggies](#)

Tips: Add tuna, chicken, ground beef or turkey for protein, add or substitute whatever veggies you have on hand (carrots, green beans, peas, onion peppers etc.)

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups milk (1%, low fat)
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, low-fat shredded
 - (sub: boxed mac and cheese)
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups broccoli (cooked and chopped) (sub: any vegetables you have on hand)

[One Pan Spaghetti Sauce](#)

Tips: Consider making this without meat, or substitute ground beef with ground chicken or turkey. Add or substitute whatever veggies you have on hand (bell peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes).

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1-pound ground beef (lean) (optional, sub: ground turkey)
- 1 onion (medium, chopped)
- 3 1/2 cups water
- 1 can tomato sauce (15 ounces) (sub: prepared "spaghetti" sauce)
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 16 ounces spaghetti noodles
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese (shredded) (optional)

[Squash Squares](#)

Tips: This recipe is great for zucchini, yellow squash, or both. Make your own biscuit mix if you don't have any on hand. Use any cheese. Substitute sweet potatoes for carrots.

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 4 eggs (beaten lightly)
- 1/4 cup oil (Sub: any cooking oil)
- 3 cups thinly sliced squash (use zucchini or yellow squash)
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup biscuit mix
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley (or 2 T chopped fresh parsley)
- 1/3 cup grated cheddar cheese (Sub: any cheese)
- 1 cup grated carrots (Sub: sweet potato)

[Tuna Noodle Casserole](#)

Tips: Use any noodle or cream-based soup. Use any canned or bagged seafood tuna/salmon. Add other vegetables (mushrooms, onion).

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1 cup water
- 5 ounces egg noodles (wide) (Sub: any noodles)
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup (10.75 ounce) (Sub: any cream based canned soup)
- 1/3 cup skim milk (Sub: any milk)
- 1 can tuna (6.5 ounces, packed in water, drained)(Sub: canned/bagged salmon)
- 1 cup green peas (frozen/fresh/canned)(Sub: other vegetables)
- 1 cup bread crumbs (fresh)

[Tuna Quesadilla](#)

Tips: Add veggies (onion, celery). Substitute Greek yogurt or sour cream for mayonnaise.

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 1 can tuna fish, packed in water (drained)
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise, light (Sub: Greek yogurt, sour cream)
- 4 flour tortillas (Sub: any tortilla)
- ½ cup cheddar cheese, low-fat (grated)(Sub: any cheese)

[Veggie Frittata](#)

Tips: Add ¼ cup of cheese, substitute any potato/sweet potato, substitute any dark leafy green for kale.

Ingredients for meal kit:

- 4 large eggs
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 medium unpeeled red potatoes (sub: any potato even sweet potato)
- ½ tablespoon olive oil (sub: any cooking oil)
- 4 cups Italian kale (sub: any leafy greens)
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ½ red bell pepper (chopped) (sub: any vegetables you have on hand)

Recipes for Uncommon/Unconventional Food Items

Artichokes

- [Lemon Artichokes](#)
- [Spinach and Artichoke Dip Pasta](#)
- [Cheesy Spinach and Artichoke Stuffed Spaghetti Squash](#)

Beans

- [Cowboy Caviar](#)
- [Beans Hot Dish](#)
- [Three Bean Salad](#)
- [Red Bean Quesadilla](#)

Brown Rice: Can always be subbed for white rice

- [Brown Rice Pilaf](#)
- [Brown Rice Tabbouleh](#)
- [Brown Rice with Chicken and Vegetables](#)

Eggplant

- [Ratatouille](#)
- [Mediterranean Roast Eggplant with Tomato Sauce](#)
- [Eggplant and Pepper Dip](#)

Garbanzo Beans

- [Roasted Chickpeas \(Garbanzo Beans\)](#)
- [Hummus](#)
- [Hearty Mashed Potatoes with Garbanzo Beans](#)
- [Falafel with Yogurt Sandwich](#)

Greens (Any Dark Leafy Green will work!)

- [Smothered Greens](#)
- [Okra and Greens](#)
- [Collard Green Gumbo with Ham Hock](#)
- [Seared Greens](#)

Lentils

- [Lentil Chili](#)
- [Lentil Stew](#)
- [Red Lentil Cakes](#)
- [Lentil Tacos](#)
- [Curried Potatoes with Red Lentils](#)

Mushrooms

- [Herb Stuffed Mushrooms](#)
- [Mushroom Steak Fajitas](#)
- [Mushroom Onion Risotto](#)
- [Mushroom Barley Soup](#)

Pumpkin

- [Pumpkin Mac and Cheese](#)
- [Pumpkin Bread](#)
- [Pumpkin Soup](#)

Squash

- [Summer Squash \(Yellow\) Italian Style](#)
- [Stuffed Summer Squash \(Yellow\)](#)
- [Squash Soup \(Acorn, butternut, Crook neck\)](#)
- [Spicy Carrots and Squash](#)

Steel Cut Oats

- [Overnight Oatmeal](#)
- [Peach Bake Oatmeal](#)
- [Blueberry Steel Cut Oat Muffins](#)

Sweet Potatoes or Yams

- [Sweet Potato Casserole](#)
- [Sweet Potato and Apple Bake](#)
- [Sweet Potato Pancakes](#)
- [Sweet Potato Hash](#)
- [Oven Baked Sweet Potato Fries](#)