



American
Heart
Association.

Heart Healthy Food Drive

Toolkit



WHY HOST A HEALTHY FOOD DRIVE?

A lack of access to adequate, consistent and nutritious food contributes to negative health outcomes including chronic disease and poor mental health. A healthy eating pattern and lifestyle are important for good heart health, and eating healthy meals is easier when families have nutritious foods to prepare.

By hosting a healthy food drive, you are empowering community leaders at your local food access organization to provide nutritious foods that our neighbors need to live full, healthy lives. Food pantries want more healthy options, but donations are often low in nutritional value. Limited availability to nutritious foods makes it difficult for organizations to support shopper's health needs and may perpetuate inequities that contribute to negative health outcomes.

This toolkit will provide you with resources to hold a successful healthy food drive including tips for connecting and communicating with local food access organizations, materials to promote your event, a guide for meeting nutrition and cultural needs, and more.

If you need help along the way, email aha.national.heartball@heart.org.

While supporting healthy food drives is an impactful way to support our community, the American Heart Association is committed to sustainable efforts to achieve equitable health and nutrition security for all, so that ultimately food drives are unnecessary. To learn more about our efforts to change policies and systems including our commitment to health equity and access to healthy food, click [here](#) or [here](#).

FOOD INSECURITY

DEFINITIONS AND STATS

“A lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.”

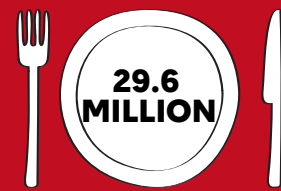


In the United States, an estimated 10.5% of overall population is food insecure.

42 MILLION



41.9 million people in the United States receive SNAP food assistance and 66% of participants are in families with children.



29.6 million children in the United States were enrolled in the free or reduced-price school lunch program in 2019.

HEALTH IMPACTS OF FOOD INSECURITY



Inadequate intake of nutrients



Increased risk of chronic diseases



Increased risk of negative pregnancy outcomes



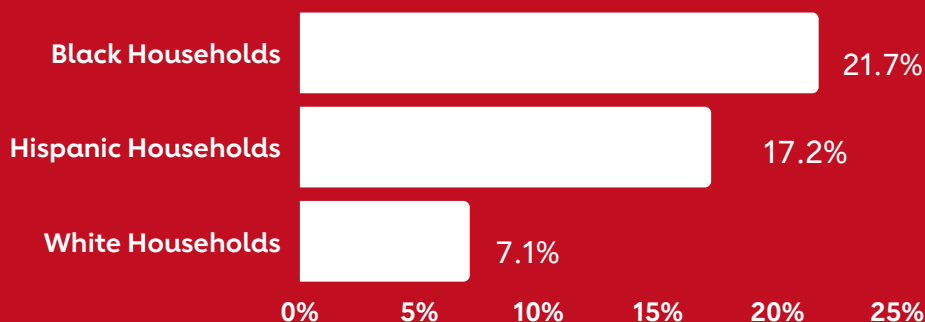
Long-term deficits in children's socioemotional, cognitive and motor functioning



Increased risk for negative mental health impacts

DISPARITIES IN FOOD SECURITY

Food Insecurity in the United States by Race



Black and Hispanic or Latino households are disproportionately affected by food insecurity compared to white families who are impacted at a much lower rate.

Social and environmental factors such as unequal access to healthy and culturally responsive options and structural racism contribute to and perpetuate food insecurity.

These factors, compounded by effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have only emphasized the disparities that exist between people of color and historically marginalized groups and their white neighbors.

PLANNING YOUR FOOD DRIVE

FOOD DRIVE TIMELINE



BUILD CONNECTIONS

Food access organizations are central to the health and wellbeing of the community and fill gaps in consistent access to healthy food. Connecting with the organization prior to organizing your food drive is important to gain information about how to best support the community that they serve and to establish a relationship with members of the food access organization team. You can then work with them to understand the unique cultural and health needs of their shoppers.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are your donation guidelines?
2. Can you tell me about the community your organization serves?
3. What needs does your community have for foods relevant to their dominant cultures? Are there other special dietary requests that we can assist with?
4. Do you have a list of high-need items?
5. Do you accept perishable or frozen items? Are there any capacity or space limitations we should consider, i.e., shelf space, freezer and refrigerator capacity?
6. What is your intake process like and how can we prepare our donations to make it easier for your team?
7. Are you able to accept direct delivery from retailers?



COMPANY PROTECTION

Under the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, your company is protected from criminal and civil liability when donating to a non-profit organization. This act allows you to support your community without worry of repercussions related to hosting a food drive and donating healthy food to the organization of your choice.

HEALTHY DONATIONS

+ WHY IT MATTERS

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY DONATIONS

Healthy food serves as the basis of optimal health and choosing healthy options is easier when food access organizations distribute foods that provide adequate nutrition.

People who face food insecurity are at a higher risk for chronic diseases like high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes, due in part to poor diet. Consistent access to adequate nutrition increases everyone's ability to live a healthy and full life and can even reduce risk of or help manage chronic disease.

When promoting your food drive, request that most of the items donated have low saturated fat, sodium and no added sugar. These foods are the highest in nutrition and lowest in the nutrients that are most dangerous in contributing to chronic disease.

Download more detailed guidance [here](#) (pg 13).

DONATION SUGGESTIONS



BEVERAGES

Water
100% Fruit juice
Low-fat, powdered milk



PROTEINS

Unsalted nuts
Peanut butter
Canned meat
Beans, dried or canned



WHOLE GRAINS

Whole wheat pasta
Whole wheat crackers
Whole grain cereals
Whole grain granola bars
Brown rice



CANNED AND DRY GOODS

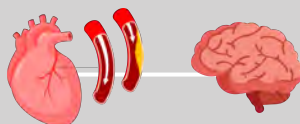
Canned vegetables
Canned fruit in 100% fruit juice
Applesauce
Soups, reduced sodium
Dried fruit
Healthier cooking oils (canola, corn & olive oil)

*Look for products with lower amounts of sodium, added sugars and saturated fat.

WHY IT MATTERS

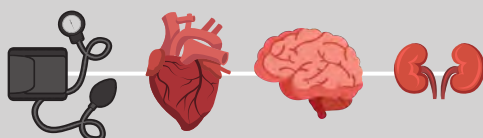
HEALTH RISKS OF DIETS HIGH IN SATURATED FAT, SODIUM, ADDED SUGAR

SATURATED FAT



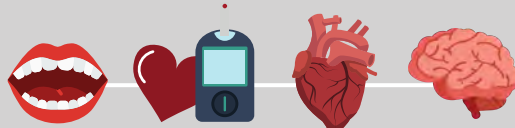
Consuming too much saturated fat raises the level of cholesterol in your blood. High levels of LDL cholesterol in your blood increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. [Learn more.](#)

SODIUM



Excess sodium puts you at risk for high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and stroke, cancer and kidney disease. [Learn more.](#)

ADDED SUGAR



The number one source of added sugar in our diet is sugary beverages. Excess added sugar may cause oral health problems, weight gain and more and is linked to a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and cognitive issues. [Learn more.](#)

BEST PRACTICES

PROVIDE HEALTHY, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE OPTIONS

Ensure that your food drive is collecting food that provides healthy and culturally responsive food options reflective of the community the organization serves. It is important to provide culturally responsive options so that the individual has access to food they enjoy eating, have the knowledge to prepare and doesn't violate any dietary or religious restrictions.

When there is a lack of culturally responsive, healthy food options, shoppers may choose unhealthy, inexpensive options to alleviate hunger which further contributes to poor health outcomes.

LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITY NEEDS

You can discover how to best meet the needs of the community you are aiming to support by:

- Talking to the organization to ask about their needs
- Analyzing community demographics
- Engaging a diverse group of employees in your outreach and collection



EXPIRATION DATE GUIDANCE

Did you know that FDA does not require food to have "sell by", "best by" and "use by" dates printed on food products (except baby food)? These are arbitrary dates printed on food items by the manufacturer based on expected handling and temperature exposure.

Generally, food access organizations accept perishable food items past the "sell by" and "best by" dates as they are safe to eat. They do not however accept donated food that has passed its "use by" date. The exception is if the food past its "use by" date is frozen it may still be accepted

Collecting donations of food shortly past its "sell by" and "best by" helps to reduce food waste and provides food access organizations with an increased quantity of food that may be otherwise discarded. However, check with the site first to ensure these items meet their guidelines.

PROMOTE YOUR FOOD DRIVE

SPREAD THE WORD

Click [here](#) for a handy and easy to customize flyer template to promote your food drive within your company. Update with the due date for food donations after speaking with the food access organization. Share via email with your colleagues and hang around your office.

GET SOCIAL



Share information about your company's volunteer experience using the AHA approved social media posts below along with a photo of your volunteer activity.

"We are a proud local sponsor of the [event name] but our support of the American Heart Association goes beyond the ballroom. Today, we are getting to the heart of the matter, and being a relentless force by [insert activity]."

"It is not about dressing up. It is about showing up – for our community – and being a relentless force for longer, healthier lives. Today we are going beyond the ballroom and joining together in the spirit of the American Heart Association's mission, volunteering with other non-profit organizations that care about our community. We are a proud local sponsor of the [event] and are happy to celebrate today's Heart of (insert city name) Serve Day."



HOST YOUR FOOD DRIVE

DAY OF TIPS

- Arrange a convenient spot to drop off food donations.
- Maintain social distancing and wear your mask (follow federal, state and local public health guidance).
- Bring sufficient boxes/storage to collect your donations.
- Arrange for transportation of all donations to the food access organization.
- If you have access to a car with large cargo space or a truck with a bed, this will allow for the easiest transportation.
- Coordinate with a member of the food access organization ahead of time to let them know when you expect to drop off donations so they can arrange staff support as needed.

TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Take photos and videos to capture your event and share them with your local American Heart Association staff person!

Before sharing, make sure that all people have signed our [photo release form](#) so they are aware their photo may be shared in various places including social media or our website.

THANK YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

Sample thank you email to volunteers:

Dear NAME,

Thank you for supporting our COMPANY NAME'S healthy food drive. With your help, our food drive provided X number of items to the NAME OF FOOD BANK to support our neighbors facing hunger. We appreciate your support and couldn't have made such a big impact on our community without your involvement. Together, we are working with the American Heart Association to increase access to healthy food so everyone in our community can live long, healthy lives.

DOLLARS FOR DOERS

Pro Tip: Turn your Time into Treasure! If your company offers Dollars for Doers, be sure to encourage employees to log their volunteer hours to increase their impact even more! Visit www.heart.org/matchinggifts and scroll to the bottom of the page see if your company offers these dollars.

