



American Heart Association®

Healthy for Good™

STOCKING HEALTHY PANTRIES

Heart Healthy Food Drive

Toolkit





WHY HOST A HEALTHY FOOD DRIVE?

A lack of consistent access to adequate nutritious foods contributes to negative health outcomes including chronic disease, tooth decay and poor mental health. A healthy eating pattern and lifestyle are important for good heart health. 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 with needed assets to provide the nutrition access our neighbors need to live full, healthy lives. Food access organizations 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 a map of local food access organizations, tips for communicating with them, materials to promote your event, a guide for meeting nutrition and cultural needs and more.

If you need help along the way, feel free to reach out to your local American Heart Association contact or email us at Puget.Sound@heart.org, we are happy to answer your questions or provide additional resources.

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 nutritious food, [click here](#).

This toolkit is made possible by Delta Dental of Washington and Radiant Global Logistics, proud local sponsors supporting nutrition security in the Puget Sound.

FOOD INSECURITY

DEFINITIONS AND STATS

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



Rural counties (20%)¹ and neighborhoods within South King County (over 26%)² experience the highest rates of food insecurity in the state.



Nearly 900,000 people in WA receive SNAP food assistance. Over half of WA SNAP participants are families with children.³



Over 2 million kids in Washington are enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch programs.⁴

HEALTH IMPACTS OF FOOD INSECURITY⁵



Inadequate intake of essential nutrients



Increased risk of chronic diseases



Increased risk of negative pregnancy outcomes



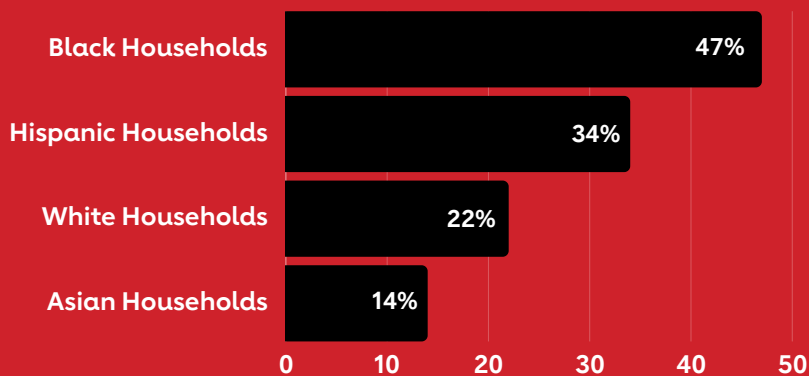
Long-term deficits in children's socioemotional, cognitive and motor functioning



Increased risk for negative mental health impacts

DISPARITIES IN FOOD SECURITY

Food Insecurity by Race in Washington State⁶



Households that self-reported very low food security

In a 2023 statewide survey, many respondents (43%) in households with food insecurity rated their general health and diets as poor or fair.

Food insecurity was higher in households of BIPOC respondents and households with children.

Communities of color are disproportionately affected by food insecurity due to systemic barriers such as unequal access to healthy and culturally relevant options which perpetuates food insecurity disparities.

PLANNING YOUR FOOD DRIVE

FOOD DRIVE TIMELINE



CHOOSE AN ORGANIZATION

Click the map for a comprehensive list of food access organizations in Washington including food banks, food pantries, community organizations and religious organizations that are working to provide healthy food to their community. Click on the pinpoints for location, website and contact information and decide which you would like to support. Before you start planning your food drive, plan to have a conversation with a member of the food access organization team.



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.



BUILD CONNECTIONS



Food access organizations are central to the health and wellbeing of the community as they 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 best to support the community where they are located 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

What guidelines can you share for the donations you accept?

Can you tell me about the community your organization serves?

What needs does your community have for foods relevant to their dominant cultures? Are there other special dietary requests that we can assist with?

Do you have a list of high-need items?

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?

What is your intake process like and how can we prepare our donations to make it easier for your team?

Are you able to accept direct delivery from retailers?

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 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 added sugar. These foods are the highest in nutrition and least likely to contribute 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

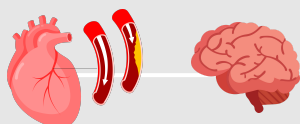
Canned vegetables*
Canned fruit in 100% fruit juice*
Applesauce*
Soups, low or reduced sodium
Dried fruit*
Healthier cooking oils (canola, corn and olive oil)

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

WHY IT MATTERS

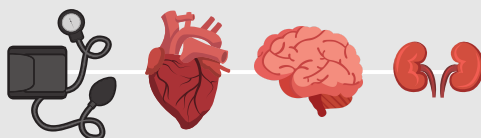
HEALTH RISKS OF DIETS HIGH IN SATURATED FAT, SODIUM, ADDED SUGAR

SATURATED FAT



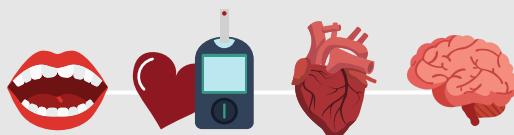
Consuming too much saturated fat raises the level of cholesterol in your blood. High levels of LDL cholesterol increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. [Learn more.](#)

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 and more.

[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, has the knowledge to prepare and doesn't violate dietary or religious restrictions.

When there is a lack of culturally responsive, healthy food options, individuals may defer to 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

To learn more about cultural food preferences* in the Puget Sound area, check out [NW Harvest's Community Perspectives Report](#).

**This report represents the responses of individuals who participated in listening sessions and is not intended to reflect entire populations.*



EXPIRATION DATE GUIDANCE

Did you know that the 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 organization shoppers with an increased quantity of food that may be otherwise discarded. However, check with the site you are donating to 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. Update with details about your food drive after speaking with the food access organization. Share via email, LinkedIn, hang around your office, on your website or in your neighborhood.

GET SOCIAL



Sharing information about your food drive is an effective and quick way to reach a lot of people. Share the news about your partnership with your local food access organization on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

[Click here](#) for a customizable graphic to promote your food drive on social media. Simply add it with the date, time and location of your food drive, save as a JPG and post.

Sample post: We're hosting a food drive for @NAMEOFORG in partnership with @americanheartWA from START/END DATE at LOCATION. To best serve our community, we are especially looking for heart-healthy options like X,Y,Z foods. Hope we can count on your support!



HOST YOUR FOOD DRIVE

DAY OF TIPS

- Arrange a convenient spot to drop off food donations.
- Don't forget your signage. Many people you may be asking for donations don't already know about your food drive. Make sure you bring your flyer to advertise your event and keep fast facts on hand about the food access organization you are supporting.
- 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.
- Follow local public health guidance and updated safety protocols.

TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Take photos to capture your event, with subjects' permission, and share on social media to encourage more people to donate and thank the community for their support.

Don't forget to tag @americanheartWA!

Reminder, if you plan on sharing photos from your food drive with us, ensure that all subjects in the photo have signed our publicity consent release form so they are aware their photo may be shared in various places including social media or our website. [Click here](#) to electronically sign the American Heart Association's release form.

THANK YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

Sample thank you email:

Dear NAME,

Thank you for supporting COMPANY NAME'S healthy food drive. With your help, our food drive provided X POUNDS OF FOOD to the NAME OF FOOD ORG to support our neighbors facing hunger including non-perishable items, fresh produce and culturally responsive staples. We appreciate your support and couldn't have made such a big impact on our community without your involvement. Together, we are working to increase access to healthy food so everyone in our community can live long, healthy lives.



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heart.org/washington
@americanheartWA

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2. King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community and Public Health - Seattle & King County Community Health Needs Assessment 2024/2025). Available at <<https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/dph/documents/reports/chna/2024-2025-hhc-chna-key-findings-pdf.pdf?rev=29725c042acc4747b7defb956c3a1f94&hash=2D53BB253EAD95F9ECCB262282FE7F15>>
3. 2023. Whom Does SNAP Reach?. [ebook] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_washington.pdf>
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5. Food insecurity screening | Healthy food playbook. Food insecurity screening. Food insecurity screening | Healthy food playbook. <https://foodcommunitybenefit.noharm.org/resources/implementation-strategy/food-insecurity-screening>. Published 2018.
6. Otten JJ, Spiker ML, Dai J, Tseng AS, Buszkiewicz JH, Beese S, Collier SM, Ismach A. "Food Security and Food Assistance in the Wake of COVID-19: A 4th Survey of Washington State Households" (February 2023). Washington State Food Security Survey. <https://nutr.uw.edu/cphn/wafood/brief-12>