



**Mississippi Food Network
Agency Handbook**

Revised (February 14, 2006)

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SECTION A

GENERAL INFORMATON

Mission Statement

Mississippi Food Network's mission is to relieve poverty-related hunger in our service area by distributing donated and purchased food and grocery products through a network of member churches and non-profit organizations. We provide nutrition education to our needy clients. We also emphasize advocacy and related needs.

History of the Mississippi Food Network

In 1983 a group of concerned and compassionate people recognized the need for a food bank. The Reverend Harry Bowie of McComb approached the outreach committee of Saint Andrews Episcopal Cathedral and Catholic Charities with the fact that Mississippi was the only state in the nation without a food bank. (A warehouse facility that would accumulate, store and distribute food and household items for charities that made the final distribution to needy people in the community.)

The original group consisted of Rev. Molly McBride, Robert Warren, Billy Bacon, W. E. Walker, Jr. and Father Elvin Sunds. Mr. Warren, Mr. Bacon, and Mr. Walker contributed a total of \$7,500 in cash and, with a building donated by Daniel T. Anderson, the Mississippi Food Network became a reality. Food for the warehouse was gathered by Marcie Skelton and Gay Yerger. When the food bank opened its doors in April 1984, it had 37 donors, 8 member agencies and 2300 pounds of food.

With the lean beginnings and no name recognition, but with a tremendous need, the originators had their work cut out for them. One board member contacted a local banker who raised \$30,000 from the oil and banking community, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program made a grant of \$15,000. From this meager beginning in a 4000 square foot building, the Mississippi Food Network has evolved into sprawling 82,000 square foot warehouses with over 300 member agencies (charitable organizations who meet the IRS non-profit 501(c)3 standard) in 74 counties of the state. Through the years there have been over 90 individual board members and three executive directors.

From its beginning in 1984 when 139,000 pounds of food were distributed to over million of pounds distributed annually now, the work goes on with the expansion into the newly renovated Annex across the street that houses several service agencies for the needy and the celebration of 20 years of service in June of 2003.

The Mississippi Food Network Board of Directors consists of 19 individuals who volunteer their time to provide MFN with strategic direction. The Board also assists with all aspects of the organization's work, including program development, fundraising, publicity and legal issues. MFN Board members are elected to three-year terms.

Sources for Mississippi Food Network (MFN)

40% of MFN's operating funds come from grants and gifts from individuals, area churches, businesses and foundations.

40% of MFN's operating funds come from USDA through the Mississippi Department of Health and from the Mississippi Department of Human Services for warehousing and distributing USDA products.

20% of MFN's operating funds come from a small handling charge paid by the member agencies based on the pounds of products received. There is no charge to any agency for USDA foods.

Sources of Food

- USDA foods through MS Dept. of Human Services and the MS Dept. of Health
- New grocery products from manufacturers throughout the United States
- Donations from wholesale food distributors
- Food drives by local groups
- Purchase of needed but seldom donated food and household items

Growth in Service

Pounds of food products distributed to member agencies:

1984	140,000	1994	3,300,000
1985	200,000	1995	3,600,000
1986	260,000	1996	4,500,000
1987	300,000	1997	6,600,000
1988	500,000	1998	8,200,000
1989	1,000,000	1999	12,000,000
1990	1,500,000	2000	10,850,000
1991	2,200,000	2001	13,143,000
1992	2,400,000	2002	12,909,000
1993	2,900,000	2003	13,240,000
1994	3,300,000	2004	13,770,782
1995	3,600,000	2005	15,975,748

Member Agencies

Participating agency membership is limited to charitable organizations and outreach programs recognized by the IRS as being either non-profit 501(c)3 or religious organizations who meet certain standards. These standards deal with such things as determining legitimate need of families and/or individual recipients, not charging any individual for food obtained through the Mississippi Food Network, non-discrimination in any form, proper record-keeping, food handling procedures and avoiding duplication of services. There is no charge to the agencies to become a member of MFN.

Nearly 400 organizations are currently member agencies of MFN. The member agencies perform the following services for the needy:

Emergency Food Pantries	Day Care Centers	Emergency Shelters	Senior Citizen Programs
Group Homes	Soup Kitchens	Homeless Shelters	Boys and Girls Centers
Alcohol and Drug Rehab	Teen Centers		

DEFINITIONS

MFN – Mississippi Food Network

FOOD BANK – An organization that solicits, warehouses and distributes donated and purchased food and other household products to charitable organizations so they can provide them to eligible needy individuals in the areas where they are located. MFN operates a Food Bank.

AGENCY – The title used to refer to a member church or charity affiliated with a food bank. The signed Agreements between a member church or non-profit do not create an agency relationship (as in the case of an insurance agent etc...). MFN's agreements document the services MFN offers agencies, and the agency's commitment to use the products only for the stated purpose and in compliance with MFN rules and regulations.

AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST (A2H) – The national organization of food banks and food rescue organizations.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) – The state agency that contracts with MFN to warehouse and distribute USDA (TEFAP) commodities.

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture – the federal agency that oversees federal commodity distribution

TEFAP (THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM) – government commodities distributed to the needy living in poverty. The commodities are now distributed in retail packages, not the bulk packages used in the past. This is distributed through the USDA and the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

CSFP (COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM) – A food box program for 5 year olds and seniors 60 and above. The boxes are packed with specific items to meet the specific nutrition needs of the two separate recipient groups. This is distributed through the USDA and the Mississippi Department of Health.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (MDH) – The state agency that contracts with MFN to distribute the USDA commodity CSFP food boxes.

MFN WEBSITE: www.msfoodnet.org

MEMBER AGENCY LOGIN USER NAME: all

MEMBER AGENCY LOGIN PASSWORD: midnight

America's Second Harvest, The Nation's Food Bank Network (A2H)

Who we are

America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network is the largest domestic hunger-relief organization in the United States. Founded in 1979, America's Second Harvest distributed 2.5 million pounds of food to a Network of 13 food banks in its first year operation. **Today, the national Network** secures and distributes nearly two billion pounds of food and grocery products to **more than 200 regional food banks and food-rescue organizations in all 50 states**, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

A2H *feeds* over 23 million hungry Americans each year, *educates* the public about hunger in America and *advocates* for public policies that positively impact hungry Americans. In 2004, Forbes magazine gave A2H a charitable commitment rating of 98%—meaning 98% of all product and financial donations received by America's Second Harvest go directly towards feeding hungry people rather than administration or fundraising.

How we work

A2H distributes food and grocery products to its Member food banks and food rescue organizations. The food banks and food rescue organizations then distribute food and grocery products to approximately 35,000 programs operating 50,000 feeding agencies nationwide including food pantries, soup kitchens, women's shelters, Kids Cafes and Community Kitchens.

America's Second Harvest has developed a remarkably efficient model for feeding our nation's hungry by reducing food waste, thanks to the generous support of more than 500 national grocery and food service companies, individuals, corporations and charitable foundations.

Who we help

America's Second Harvest provides emergency food assistance to more than 23 million hungry Americans, including nine million children and nearly three million seniors. Hunger, defined as the inability to purchase enough food to meet basic nutritional needs, does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, or sex. It affects the elderly, unemployed, disabled, homeless, working poor and victims of natural disaster.

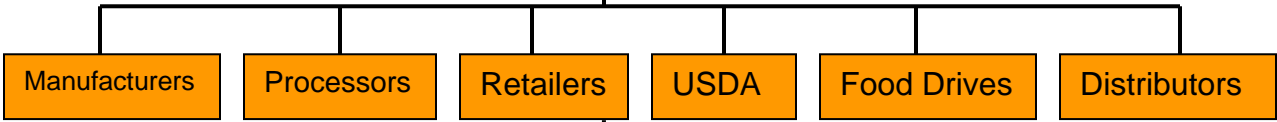
In 2001, America's Second Harvest released *Hunger in America 2001*—the most comprehensive research study on emergency food providers and recipients ever undertaken. *Hunger in America 2001* provides thorough data and analysis on the nonprofit charitable sector's response to hunger. Key findings include: of more than 23 million Americans served each year by the America's Second Harvest Network, 39% are from households with working individuals, nearly half (47%) live in rural or suburban areas, 39% are children (17 and under), and 11% are seniors (over 65). America's Second Harvest will release new statistical data when its statistical compilation, *Hunger in America 2005*, is complete in November 2005.

HOW AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST WORK



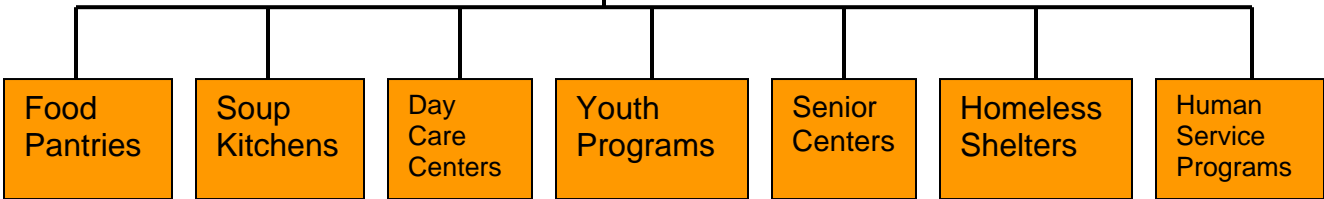
The Flow of Food from the Food Bank to the Hungry

Products

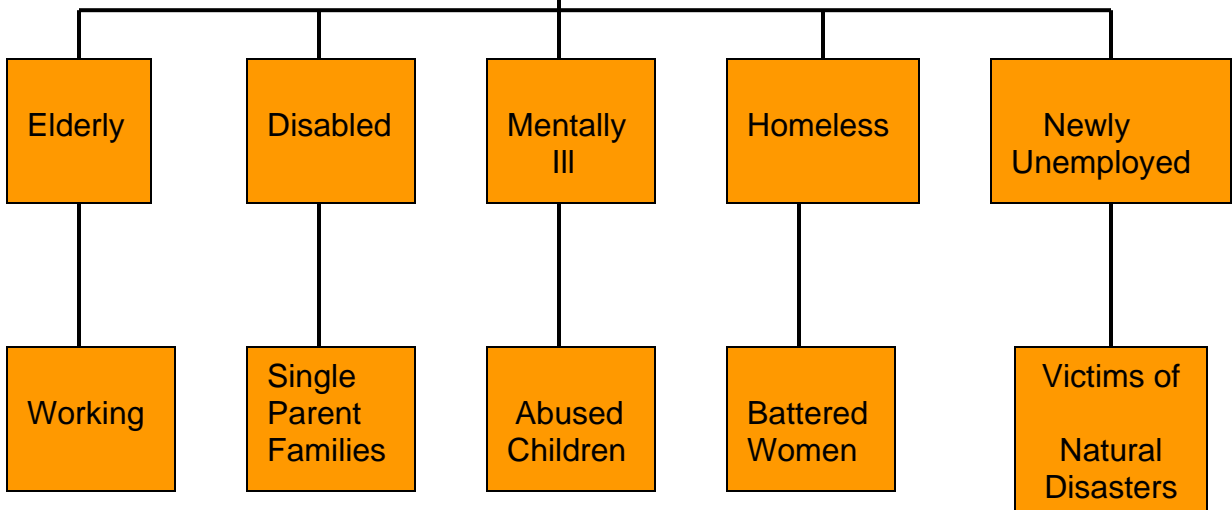


Mississippi Food Network

Agencies



The Hungry



TEFAP

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. [What is The Emergency Food Assistance Program?](#)
2. [Who is eligible to get food?](#)
3. [How do TEFAP foods reach recipients?](#)
4. [What foods are available through TEFAP?](#)
5. [What other food and nutrition assistance can TEFAP recipients get?](#)
6. [Are homeless people eligible for TEFAP food?](#)
7. [When and why did TEFAP start?](#)
8. [How much does the program cost?](#)
9. [Who should I contact for more information about TEFAP?](#)

1. What is The Emergency Food Assistance Program?

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a Federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost.

Under TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes commodity foods available to State Distributing Agencies. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn, distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.

These organizations distribute the commodities for household consumption or use them to prepare and serve meals in a congregate setting. Recipients of food for home use must meet income eligibility criteria set by the States. States also provide the food to other types of local organizations, such as community action agencies, which distribute the foods directly to needy households.

TEFAP is administered at the Federal level by the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. State agencies receive the food and supervise overall distribution.

2. Who is eligible to get food?

(a) Public or private nonprofit organizations that provide food and nutrition assistance to the needy through the distribution of food for home use or the preparation of meals. See below:

- Organizations that distribute food for home use must determine the household's eligibility by applying income standards.
- Organizations that provide prepared meals are eligible to receive commodities if they can demonstrate that they serve predominately needy persons.

(b) Households that meet State eligibility criteria. Each State sets criteria for determining what households are eligible to receive food for home consumption. Income standards may, at the State's discretion, be met through participation in other existing Federal, State, or local food, health, or welfare programs for which eligibility is based on income.

States can adjust the income criteria in order to ensure that assistance is provided only to those households most in need. However, recipients of prepared meals are considered to be needy and are not subject to a means test.

3. How do TEFAP foods reach recipients?

USDA buys the food, including processing and packaging, and ships it to the States. The amount received by each State depends on its low-income and unemployed population.

State agencies work out details of administration and distribution. They select local organizations that either directly distribute to households or serve meals, or distribute to other local organizations that perform these functions.

4. What foods are available through TEFAP?

The types of commodity foods USDA purchases for TEFAP distribution vary depending on the preferences of States and agricultural market conditions. More than 60 products were made available for Fiscal Year 2005, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• canned & dried fruits• canned vegetables• fruit juice• dried egg mix• meat/poultry/fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nonfat dry milk• pasta products• peanut butter• rice/grits/cereal• soups
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

For a complete list of Foods Available for TEFAP for FY 2005, visit the Food Distribution web site at: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/fy05-tefapfoods.pdf

5. What other food and nutrition assistance can TEFAP recipients get?

Many TEFAP households, including low-income senior citizens, may be eligible to get food stamps through USDA's Food Stamp Program. Low-income people can also get food and nutrition assistance through other USDA programs, including the following:

- National School Lunch Program;
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Nutrition Service Incentive Program (NSIP)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

All together, USDA provides nearly \$40 billion annually for food and nutrition assistance to low-income households.

6. Are homeless people eligible for TEFAP food?

Yes. Homeless people, including low-income senior citizens, can benefit from the program through organizations like soup kitchens that provide prepared meals, or food pantries that distribute commodities to individuals.

Homeless people can receive prepared meals served in a congregate setting without making an application. Homeless people must meet State income eligibility requirements in order to receive TEFAP food that is not served in prepared meals.

7. When and why did TEFAP start?

TEFAP was first authorized as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program in 1981 to distribute surplus commodities to households. The name was changed to The Emergency Food Assistance Program under the 1990 farm bill.

The program was designed to help reduce Federal food inventories and storage costs while assisting the needy.

Stocks of some foods held in surplus had been depleted by 1988. Therefore, the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 authorized funds to be appropriated for the purchase of commodities specifically for TEFAP. Foods acquired with appropriated funds are in addition to any surplus commodities donated to TEFAP by USDA.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture makes commodity foods available to State and local agencies, which in turn, distribute the food to eligible recipients participating in foods banks and soup kitchens.

8. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$190 million for TEFAP for Fiscal Year 2005--\$140 million to purchase food, and another \$50 million for administrative support for state and local agencies.

This is the same level of funding as was provided in Fiscal Year 2004. In addition to the \$190 million that was appropriated for TEFAP in Fiscal Year 2004, about \$242 million worth of surplus commodities were delivered to States for distribution through TEFAP.

For Fiscal Year 2003, Congress provided \$190 million for TEFAP--\$140 million to purchase food, and another \$50 million for administrative support for State and local agencies.

In addition to these funds, about \$240 million worth of surplus commodities were donated to TEFAP in Fiscal Year 2003.

For Fiscal Year 2002, Congress made \$135 million available for TEFAP food purchases, and \$55 million for program administration. In addition, about \$172 million worth of surplus commodities were donated to TEFAP in Fiscal Year 2002.

9. Who should I contact for more information about TEFAP?

Since this program is administered at the State level, we suggest that you contact your State distributing agency for more information about TEFAP. A list of State Contacts may be found on the FD web site at: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm

CSFP

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

1. What is the CSFP?

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children up to age six, and elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodity foods. It provides food and administrative funds to States to supplement the diets of these groups.

- The population served by CSFP is similar to that served by USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), but CSFP also serves elderly people, and provides food rather than the food vouchers that WIC participants receive. Eligible people cannot participate in both programs at the same time.
- CSFP food packages do not provide a complete diet, but rather are good sources of the nutrients typically lacking in the diets of the target population.
- CSFP is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- The program is authorized under Section 4(a) of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973. Federal regulations covering CSFP can be found in 7 CFR, Parts 247 and 250.
- An average of more than 521,000 people each month participated in the program in fiscal year (FY) 2004, including more than 458,000 elderly people and more than 62,000 women, infants, and children.

2. How does the program operate?

USDA purchases food and makes it available to State agencies and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs), along with funds for administrative costs. State agencies that administer CSFP are typically departments of health, social services, education, or agriculture. State agencies store the food and distribute it to public and non-profit private local agencies.

- Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and provide nutrition education.
- Local agencies also provide referrals to other welfare, nutrition, and health care programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Medicare

3. How much does CSFP cost?

For FY 2005, Congress appropriated \$106.854 million for CSFP. Annual appropriations may be supplemented by unspent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year, if available.

4. Is this program available in every State?

No. The CSFP is authorized to operate only in the following States:

<u>Alaska</u>	<u>New Hampshire</u>
<u>Arizona</u>	<u>New Mexico</u>
<u>California</u>	<u>New York</u>
<u>Colorado</u>	<u>North Carolina</u>
<u>District of Columbia</u>	<u>North Dakota</u>
<u>Illinois</u>	<u>Oglala Sioux Reservation (SD)</u>
<u>Indiana</u>	<u>Ohio</u>
<u>Iowa</u>	<u>Oregon</u>
<u>Kansas</u>	<u>Pennsylvania</u>
<u>Kentucky</u>	<u>Red Lake Reservation (MN)</u>
<u>Louisiana</u>	<u>South Carolina</u>
<u>Michigan</u>	<u>South Dakota</u>
<u>Minnesota</u>	<u>Tennessee</u>
<u>Mississippi</u>	<u>Texas</u>
<u>Missouri</u>	<u>Vermont</u>
<u>Montana</u>	<u>Washington</u>
<u>Nebraska</u>	<u>Wisconsin</u>
<u>Nevada</u>	

For the address and telephone number of the State Distributing Agency that administers the program in any of the States listed above, click on the applicable State above.

5. What are the requirements to get food through CSFP?

Women, infants, children, and the elderly must reside in one of the States or on one of the Indian reservations that participate in CSFP. While elderly persons must have income at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (currently \$16,679) for a family of two), women, infants, and children must meet income eligibility requirements established by the State (typically 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines), States may also establish local residency requirements based on designated service areas (but may not require a minimum period of residency). States may also require that participants be at nutritional risk. Risk assessment can be based on a variety of measures, including height and weight measurements and blood tests. Examples of nutritional risk conditions include anemia and inappropriate weight for height.

6. What foods are provided to participants?

Food packages include a variety of foods, such as infant formula and cereal, non-fat dry and evaporated milk, juice, farina, oats, ready-to-eat cereal, rice, pasta, egg mix, peanut butter, dry beans or peas, canned meat or poultry or tuna, and canned fruits and vegetables. For a list of foods available for CSFP for fiscal year 2005, visit the FD web site at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/fy05-csfpfoods.pdf>.

7. Who should I contact for more information about CSFP?

For more information about this program, we suggest that you contact your CSFP State Distributing Agency. A list of State Contacts may be found on the FD web site at: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm

Visit us at www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/

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AGENCY ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Proof of 501 (c)(3) status

- A letter, on IRS letterhead, which states that the agency is “...exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the internal code,” and that the agency is not a foundation.
- **OR** the agency must meet the IRS requirements for classification as a church. (*See Unincorporated Churches below*)
- **OR** the agency may have received its IRS classification before section 501 (c)(3) was instituted. In this case the number to look for in the letter is 101 (6).
- **OR** the agency must be under the umbrella of a parent organization, which holds a 501 (c)(3) exemption.

Unincorporated Churches – any applicant organization which is a religious organization is to submit a letter on its letterhead and signed by its Chief Executive Officer affirming that the organization is, in fact, a religious organization and has not applied to the IRS for 501 (c)(3) status and been denied or had its 501 (c)(3) status revoked by the IRS and essentially meets at least 9 of the following 14 criteria employed by the IRS in defining a church:

1. A Distinct Legal Existence
2. A Recognized Creed and Form of Worship
3. A Definite and Distinct Ecclesiastical Government
4. A Formal Code of Doctrine and Discipline
5. A Distinct Religious History
6. A Membership Not Associated With Any (other) Church or Denomination
7. A Compete Organization of Ordained Ministers Ministering to their Congregations
8. Ordained Ministers Elected After Completing Prescribed Courses of Study
9. A Literature of Its Own
10. Established Places of Worship
11. Regular Congregations
12. Regular Religious Services
13. Sunday Schools for Religious Instruction of the Young
14. Schools for the Preparation of Ministers.

Please note that the IRS objective in employing this list of characteristics is to screen out what are essentially tax-avoidance schemes. The IRS and MFN recognize, however, that not all legitimate religious organizations will necessarily meet all 14 criteria. The applicant organization’s letter must name each criteria with which it is in compliance.

THE BILL EMERSON FOOD DONATION ACT

One Hundred Fourth Congress of the United States of America
At the Second Session

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Wednesday, the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six.

An Act

To encourage the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals by giving the Model Good Samaritan Food Donation Act the full force and effect of law.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Section 1.

CONVERSION TO PERMANENT LAW OF MODEL GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION ACT AND TRANSFER OF THAT ACT TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966.

(a) Conversion to Permanent Law. -- Title IV of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended --
-
by striking the title heading and sections 401 and 403 (42 U.S.C. 12671 and 12673); and
in section 402 (42 U.S.C. 12672) --

(A) in the section heading, by striking "model" and inserting "bill emerson"

(B) in subsection (a), by striking "Good Samaritan" and inserting "Bill Emerson Good Samaritan:"

(C) in subsection (b)(7), to read as follows:

"(7) GROSS NEGLIGENCE. -- The term 'gross negligence' means voluntary and conscious conduct (including a failure to act) by a person who, at the time of the conduct, knew that the conduct was likely to be harmful to the health or well-being of another person.";

(D) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

"(c) LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES FROM DONATED FOOD AND GROCERY PRODUCTS.

"(1) LIABILITY OF PERSON OR GLEANER. -- A person or gleaner shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the person or gleaner donates in good faith to a nonprofit organization for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

"(2) LIABILITY OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION. -- A nonprofit organization shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the nonprofit organization received as a donation in good faith from a person or gleaner for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

"(3) EXCEPTION. -- Paragraphs (1) and (2) shall not apply to an injury to or death of an ultimate user or recipient of the food or grocery product that results from an act or omission of the person, gleaner or nonprofit organization, as applicable, constituting gross negligence or intentional misconduct."; and

(E) in subsection (f), by adding at the endb the following: "Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede State or local health regulations.".

(b) TRANSFER TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966. -- Section 402 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12762) (as amended by subsection (a)) --

is transferred from the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966; is redesignated as section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966; and is added at the end of such Act.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT. -- The table of contents for the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended by striking the items relating to title IV.

Newt Gingrich
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Strom Thurmond
President of the Senate Pro Tempore

Approved 10/01/96
William J. Clinton
President of the United States

P.L. 104-210

SECTION B

ORGANIZATION OF FOOD PANTRY

ORGANIZATION OF A FOOD PANTRY

Important considerations when operating a food pantry:

- **Location** – will the pantry be located at your present site or will you be using an off-site facility. Whatever location you choose, it should provide:
 - Security against intruders (a secure room)
 - Adequate space for projected program size
 - Shelves and/or cabinets for storage of dry goods
 - Adequate cold storage
- **Service Times** – Definite days and hours of operation should be established. (Note: It would be better to start small, one or two days a week and expand than to begin a five day a week program and have to cut back)
- **Boundaries** – Decide what your service area will be. You may be able to offer citywide service or need to restrict service to your immediate area. Again, it is wise to start small and expand.
- **Staff** – Staffing is an important consideration. To be unable to maintain your regular service hours because of lack of staff would create a hardship on other pantries in the area and also for your potential clients. Whether your staff is paid or volunteer they must have a commitment of helping the needy and supporting your program.
- **Resources** – Of all the considerations in the organization process, resources are of primary importance. A continued source of donated food items and financial support must be available to keep your food pantry stocked. Suggestions for local support & sources of food donations:
 - Churches, organizations, or clubs which would be willing to sponsor food drives for you
 - Private contributions from parishioners or private citizens
 - Canned food collection sites located at your facility
- **Referrals** – You can alert the local social service organizations of your existence and ask them to refer people to your pantry, i.e. Food Stamp Office, WIC Office, Civic or Service Clubs and local churches. You might want to consider a call-ahead referral service. Ask the social service organization to call you with the client's name or have them give the client your phone number so they can call you.
- **Documentation** – It is important to keep accurate and required documentation. Records of donations, cash and food, are important to your parent organization and also helpful when soliciting future donations. Data showing the number of individuals you service on a daily basis are important to your agency in order to demonstrate your volume of service. In addition, these statistics are used to report the degree of hunger to local, state, and national agencies and **are required reporting to the Mississippi Food Network.**

Food Box Contents Suggestion for Pantries

(Please Note: This document is a guide only. MFN does not always provide these exact items.)

In the process of organization “little things” are often overlooked. Keep these suggestions in mind:

- **Collect supermarket bags and boxes**
- **Prepare forms and index cards for record keeping**
- **Plan your meals around your food supply**
- **Prepare a list or poster showing what kind and quantities of food to give to different family sizes.** The following suggestions are made for four different family groups. Keep these suggestions in mind as you create your own distribution system.

Single Person Family

Instant Non-Fat Dry Milk – 1-25.6 oz. Pkg.
 Vienna Sausage – 1-5 oz. Can
 Spaghetti – 1-15 oz. Can
 Macaroni & Cheese – 1-15 oz. Can
 Peanut Butter – ½ cup
 Orange Drink Crystal – to make 12 oz. (3 servings)
 Fruit – 2 – 8 oz. Cans
 Vegetables – 3 – 8 oz. Cans

Suggested Foods and Quantities for 2,4, and 7 Member Families for a			
3 day period			

Food	2 Members	4 Members	7 Members
<i>Milk:</i>			
Instant Non-Fat Dry to Make	3 Quarts	6 Quarts	12 Quarts
<i>Protein or Meat:</i>			
Peanut Butter	1- 24 oz. Jar	1- 24 oz. Jar	2 – 24 oz. Jar
Canned Meat	1- 12 oz. Can	1- 12oz. Can	2- 12 oz. Can
Canned Tuna	1- 6.5 oz. Can	2- 6.5 oz. Can	3- 6.5 oz. Can
Navy or Kidney Beans			1 pound
<i>Fruits and Vegetables:</i>			
Drink Crystals to make	6 servings	12 servings	12 servings
Fortified Fruit Drink			1- 46 oz. Can
Canned Fruit	1- 16 oz. Can	1- 16 oz. Can	2- 16 oz. Can
Canned Vegetables	3- 16 oz. Cans	3- 16 oz. Cans	4- 16 oz. Cans
Instant Mashed Potatoes	1- 5 oz. Box	1- 9 oz. Box	1- 15 oz. Box

SECTION C

AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Membership and Orientation Overview for Prospective Agencies

Agency Applications

If a member agency with one or more approved programs has an additional, similar program for which they would like to receive food, the agency may submit an application. If necessary requirements are met, staff will approve the program and inform the Board of Directors at the next meeting.

Agency Changes

If the previously approved program has changed significantly, but still wishes to receive food from the Mississippi Food Network, the agency must:

1. Submit an application for the new program; and
2. Have the program monitored by Mississippi Food Network.

Inactive Agencies & Suspended Agencies

If an agency has not picked up food for six (6) months, Mississippi Food Network will send a letter of inquiry to the agency. All agencies that have not picked up food for one (1) year will automatically be suspended. If the agency wishes to resume food pick up, and the agency's program has not changed, the agency must:

1. Submit a letter of intent to Mississippi Food Network; and,
2. Have the program monitored by Mississippi Food Network.

Orientation

Agency representatives who will be picking up food must attend an Agency Orientation and have an authorization letter on file. After completing the training session, agency representatives will become authorized shoppers. Each agency picking up food must have at least one authorized shopper accompanying them.

Orientation sessions will be held the 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m.



THE MISSISSIPPI FOOD NETWORK MONTHLY REPORTING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Mississippi Food Network is committed to being the leading source of information relating to hunger issues in its service area. To obtain certain information, MFN relies on its member agencies.

This policy is developed to give MFN's member agencies a clear understanding of what is expected from them in the completion of monthly reports. With this policy, MFN clearly defines the role a member agency plays in educating the community about hunger.

ALL active member agencies MUST complete a report showing client activity on a monthly basis, whether or not food was picked up at MFN. This report is known as the "MONTHLY REPORT". These reports are due to MFN's Agency Relations Department no later than the 5th calendar day of the month following the reporting month. For example; a January report is due no later than February 5, a March report is due no later than April 5, and etc. Agencies may complete and send in their reports anytime after their last working day of the month but before the 5th. For example; an agency's last working day is Saturday, the 22nd. The agency has from then until the 5th calendar day of the following month to have the report turned in to MFN. NOTE: If an agency is closed for the month or serves no clients, a report is required showing "0" people served.

The only exception to this policy will be granted by the Director of Agency Development to seasonal agencies such as summer camps and Christmas clubs. These agencies will be required to report only during the months in which they are operating. This must be an arrangement with prior notice.

There will be NO grace period. Reports are delinquent after the 5th calendar day. Agencies will be suspended at that time from all MFN programs and activity including but not limited to picking up food at the warehouse, food deliveries and nutrition classes. To be REINSTATED, the agency must turn in the delinquent reports with a \$20.00 reinstatement fee.

If a member agency becomes delinquent in submitting monthly reports for sixty days or more, the agency will be placed in an "INACTIVE" status. The agency will not be able to receive any food or services from MFN until reinstatement occurs. At this point, reinstatement includes completion of all outstanding monthly reports, a \$20.00 reinstatement fee, all outstanding balances due to MFN, and a monitoring visit by the Agency Relations department staff member.

Agencies repeatedly failing to submit, or repeatedly turning in monthly reports late, will be brought to the attention of Director Agency Development. The Director of Agency Development is authorized to discontinue the agency's privileges should he/she deem that action necessary.

All agency suspensions will be documented by the Director of Agency Development in the agency's permanent file. Should this situation occur twice within a 12 month period, the membership of the agency may be terminated for non-compliance of MFN policies.

MFN will make blank copies of the reports available through the Agency Relations Department. Member agencies may pick up these reports at anytime during normal business hours or they may call to have a copy of the report mailed or faxed to them.

How to complete the Monthly Report

FOOD PANTRY

To complete the report, a food pantry will record on the total number of households it served for the month. A household is defined as a family of any size residing together. A family of six living together is a household. A person living alone is a household. Of those households, the pantry will track the number of ADULTS, (ages 18-59), the number of CHILDREN, (ages infant to 17), and the number of ELDERLY, (ages 60 and above). These numbers will be reflected on the report.

ON-SITE FEEDING PROGRAM

To complete the report for an on-site feeding program, the agency must keep track of the number of meals it served. For example, a community kitchen serving lunch only will keep a running total of the people served and report the monthly grand total on the report under lunch. The process is the same for other meals served, such as breakfast and dinner. A supplemental meal is described as a snack such as a mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack. If a client receives a second helping, they need only be counted once.

**Completed reports may be mailed to:
Mississippi Food Network
440 West Beatty Street
Jackson, MS 39205**

**Completed reports may be faxed to (601) 948-6710 or
Completed reports may be dropped off at The Mississippi Food Network Warehouse.**

Monitoring Procedures

One of the ways in which the Mississippi Food Network maintains its relationship with member agencies is through regular site visits. MFN will conduct an on-site visit to your agency prior to acceptance as a member agency. Once approved, you agency will be monitored a minimum of every two years.

A trained representative of Mississippi Food Network must monitor all member agencies at least once every two-(2) years. Before the visit, a representative will contact your agency to arrange for a convenient date and time.

Mississippi Food Network, using its own discretion, reserves the right to perform RANDOM and ADDITIONAL monitoring visits if it is determined that such visits are warranted.

MFN generally visits agencies once every year. On a site visit, the MFN representative will evaluate your agency's facility and food program.

This visit also provides an opportunity for you to provide feedback on MFN products and services. The representative will also check to make sure that your agency is complying with policies in this manual and the Membership Agreement.

In preparation for the visit, your agency may utilize the Agency Monitoring Form, which is included in the Appendix.

Monitoring may be done by on-site visits and/ or oral written communication at any time.

COMPLIANCE POLICY

When member agencies are not in compliance with policies and procedures of the Mississippi Food Network, some action may be necessary to bring the agency back into compliance. The following sanctions are examples of actions taken with member agencies out of compliance.

DOCUMENTED VERBAL NOTICE

The Director of Agency Development will address the agency representative directly and make a note of the incident in the agency file. A copy of the incident write up will be forwarded to the Executive Director.

PROBATION

Probation is used most often in the case of record keeping or the lack thereof. Agencies are given the opportunity to remain active while improving record keeping skills. The Agency Relations staff instructs agencies on proper record keeping skills. The Agency Relations staff instructs on proper record keeping practices, then make a subsequent appointment to re-check records in 30-60 days (up to staff discretion). If records are still not satisfactory, then suspension of MFN privileges may be instituted. For serious offenses in compliance, probation is not appropriate. Probation is more appropriate in situations where there is no threat to human safety, i.e. record keeping.

SUSPENSION

Any violation or non-compliance in general, may result in suspension of all MFN privileges for periods ranging from 30-90 days to be determined using the Agency Relations staff's discretion. Length of suspension periods are decided based on several factors: severity of non-compliance, likelihood that non-compliance may cause danger to others, non-compliance has happened repeatedly, agency has been on probation or suspended before for the same compliance issue, etc.

Compliance issues that may warrant a 30-90 day suspension include:

- Agency representative not identified properly,
- Refusal to accept MFN referrals
- No record of MFN invoices
- No distribution records
- Discourteous or belligerent behavior at the MFN warehouse
- Non-payment of agreed shared maintenance fees
- Storage facilities are not appropriate to ensure wholesomeness of the food until used.

Agencies that come into compliance in the specified suspension period will have their full MFN privileges reinstated.

Compliance issues that may merit indefinite suspension periods may include:

- Inappropriate storage and/or food handling
- Storing food in private residences
- Non-payment of agreed shared maintenance fees.

Agencies are given criteria for resuming MFN privileges in writing and are to contact MFN when they meet the criteria. The suspension period is indefinite due to the time frame necessary to come into compliance. Agencies that come into compliance will have their full MFN privileges reinstated.

TERMINATION

Termination is certainly the most serious consequence of agency non-compliance. Compliance issues that may warrant termination include:

- Forms of discrimination in the distribution of MFN products to the needy,
- Requiring a fee for the meals or food boxes,
- Requiring or soliciting donations from clients served,
- Selling or exchanging MFN products for money or services,
- Using MFN product for fundraising purposes.

Any of these offenses may result in termination of agency privileges at the Mississippi Food Network.

Termination of MFN membership is last resort. It is the least often employed form of the agency sanction. Efforts to educate or improve agency compliance are employed most often.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Any agency that has been sanctioned in any way for non-compliance may appeal that decision. The agency may request in writing an appeal interview with the Executive Director. After reviewing with the agency, the Executive Director deliberates and determines the disposition of the matter. The absolute last stop for an agency is a written appeal to the Mississippi Food Network Board of Directors, handled in the same fashion as outlined above.

THE MISSISSIPPI FOOD NETWORK POLICY ON AGENCY CONDUCT

This policy is established to provide a clear and equitable means of dealing with individuals representing and/or member agencies who become abusive either verbally, physically or in any other way, as deemed inappropriate by The Mississippi Food Network (MFN), towards MFN's staff, its volunteers or other member agencies while conducting business with MFN. This policy will outline the consequences and actions MFN will take at each level of non-compliance.

First Offense: MFN's Director of Agency Development will issue a verbal warning to the individual and submit an advisory letter to the agency's Executive Director. The Director of Agency Development will place a copy of this letter in the agency's permanent file at MFN.

Second Offense: The Offender will be suspended for up to six months, depending on the severity of the abuse. For a member agency's second offense, the Director of Agency Development will issue a written warning to the agency's Executive Director advising the agency of the situation and pending suspension from all MFN services and programs. The Director of Agency Development will forward copies to MFN's Executive Director. The Director of Agency Development will place documentation of all actions in the agency's permanent file at MFN.

Third Offense: The Offender will **NOT** be allowed at MFN. The individual will be permanently barred from all MFN activities and programs regardless of their agency affiliation. After a member agency's third offense, the Director of Agency Development will suspend the agency for 30 days from all MFN activities and programs. The Director of Agency Development will notify the agency's Executive Director by letter, suspension effective upon receipt. The Director of Agency Development will place documentation of all actions in the agency's permanent file at MFN.

The Director of Agency Development will forward copies to MFN's Executive Director and Board of Directors. Normal reinstatement practices will be implemented at the end of the suspension period, including clearing of any outstanding account balances, remitting the \$20.00 reinstatement fee, updating all missing monthly reports and updating the permanent file information. In addition, a meeting will be held between MFN's Executive Director and Director of Agency Development, and the agency's Executive Director.

Agency representatives who work with MFN, i.e., pantry director, food service director, house manager etc. are encouraged to attend.

Fourth Offense: The agency's membership in the MFN network will be **permanently terminated**. The Director of Agency Development will notify the agency's Executive Director by letter, and will place documentation in the agency's permanent file at MFN. The Director of Agency Development will forward copies to MFN's Executive Director and the Board of Directors of the action taken.

Collection of all outstanding account balances will be made, including but not limited to any legal action deemed necessary by MFN legal counsel. MFN's Director of Agency Development will be responsible for enforcing and implementing any and all actions, with the advice of MFN's Executive Director and Board of Directors, regarding this policy.

THE MISSISSIPPI FOOD NETWORK

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS PROSELYTIZING

It has been the policy of MFN, since its inception; to forbid member agencies from making it mandatory for clients to attend religious services in order to receive food and related products. This policy reinforces that issue.

1. Clients will not be required to attend any type of religious service in order to receive product distributed by The Mississippi Food Network and its member agencies. Food and related products are intended for distribution to those eligible ill, needy or infant individuals without regard to religious preference and without condition of attendance at a religious service.
2. Member agencies wishing to distribute printed materials to clients may do so understanding that the client has the right to refuse such material without the fear of being denied service.

I understand this policy and therefore will act accordingly.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Note: Please make a copy of this document for your records and send to Mississippi Food Network P.O. BOX 411 Jackson, MS 39205



USDA Distribution Guidelines For Pantries:

- To avoid duplication of services, **PLEASE** stay within the established Zip code or geographic distribution areas.
- A family residing out of the designated Zip code or service area may receive service one time. However, they must be informed that, in the future, it will be necessary for them to receive commodities from an agency serving the Zip code in which they reside. They can obtain this information by contacting Food Connection at 1-800-984-3663.
- If a family is living in a car, they may be served. If this is a continuing situation, the Zip code where the car is parked may be used as the designated Zip code.
- An individual **cannot** be made to sit through a religious service in order to receive commodities.
- Discrimination is **prohibited** based on race, national origin, age, religion, politics, gender, or sexual orientation.
- Commodities **cannot** be sold, used as barter for services or materials, nor shall voluntary contribution be solicited in connection with the receipt of donated foods.
- The agency distributing commodities is accountable for any lost or damaged product. If product has been damaged, it must be reported to Mississippi Food Network **immediately**. Mississippi Food Network will contact the state representative for advice on disposal of the product. **Do not dispose of any USDA commodity without direction from the Food Bank's representative.**
- Before commodities are distributed, recipients must sign the Participant Eligibility Certification for Receipt form. The item and amount of distributed commodity must also be recorded.
- Commodities are for home distribution only.
- Agencies are responsible for reporting to Mississippi Food Network any misuse of commodities or any other pertinent information.
- The distributing agency is required to complete and submit to Mississippi Food Network a monthly report. The report includes the number of households and persons served during the month. Forms are available in the Food Bank's agency checkout room and in the front office.
- If more detailed information is needed concerning distribution guidelines or regulations, refer to the Commodity Administrative Manual for Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program Operators. Contact Mississippi Food Network for a copy.



USDA Distribution Guidelines For Soup Kitchens and Shelters:

- Provide meals to needy and/or homeless individuals on a regular basis in a congregate setting as an integral part of normal activities.
- An individual **cannot** be made to sit through a religious service in order to receive commodities.
- Discrimination is **prohibited** based on race, national origin, age, religion, politics, gender, or sexual orientation.
- Commodities **cannot** be sold, used as barter for services or materials, nor shall voluntary contribution be solicited in connection with the receipt of donated foods.
- The agency distributing commodities is accountable for any lost or damaged product. If product has been damaged, it must be reported to Mississippi Food Network **immediately**. Mississippi Food Network will contact the state representative for advice on disposal of the product. **Do not dispose of any USDA commodity without direction from the Food Bank's representative.**
- Commodities are for congregate feedings only and cannot be given to participants to take from the premises.
- Agencies are responsible for reporting to Mississippi Food Network any misuse commodities or any other pertinent information.
- If more detailed information is needed concerning distribution guidelines or regulations, refer to the Commodity Administrative Manual for Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program Operators. Contact Mississippi Food Network for a copy.

The distributing agency is required to complete and submit to Mississippi Food Network a monthly report. The report includes the number of persons and meals served during the month. Forms are available in the Food Bank's agency checkout room and in the front office.

SECTION D

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

SHARED MAINTENANCE

The Mississippi Food Network (MFN) has what is called a shared maintenance fee on some of the food accessed by Member Agencies. **Please note that USDA commodities do not have shared maintenance fees.**

Shared maintenance is a handling fee paid to MFN by member agencies in return for services provided to them by our food bank. **The cost is associated with soliciting, procuring, transporting, unloading, storing, distributing, and maintaining the integrity of the product donated, equal to a great deal more than the average \$0.16 per pound an Member Agency shares with MFN.**

Food banks pay rent or mortgage for the warehouse, cover building utility and maintenance costs; staff and equip the warehouse (including staffing and organizing food drives), operate large freezers and coolers and transport food, in their own or leased trucks, to the food bank. Shared maintenance fee helps to defray a portion of these costs.

What does this mean?

The Mississippi Food Network (MFN) and the food that we distribute belong to our member agencies.

The shared maintenance is a fee paid to a MFN when an agency orders (\$.16 per pound) and is based on the number of pounds ordered. This can be viewed as a deposit into the food bank to ensure that the food that belongs to each agency is stored and delivered properly. Much like a financial bank, a food bank takes the shared maintenance and utilizes its national resources to purchase and deliver the best products at the most economical rate to our member agencies. This process enables member agencies to operate one food distribution system (Mississippi Food Network), thereby saving individual charities the high cost of storage, personnel and transportation, which would be required to receive large food donations directly.

ORDERING PROCEDURES

PLACING ORDERS FOR PICKUP

Orders may be placed the day before an agency plans to pick up according to the agency type (see Call In Schedule)

Orders may be phoned in to MFN @ 601-353-0438.
Pickup time will be scheduled when the order is placed.

***NO PICKUPS ON FRIDAY UNLESS EMERGENCY**

Ordering procedures for truck delivery differ slightly, see Truck Delivery.

Order guides are sent out every Wednesday along with the current calendar.

Please review the calendar for delivery days and times to your area.

PRODUCT PICKUP SCHEDULE

Appointments are taken from 7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday

No pickups on Friday unless emergency. Warehouse closes at 11:00 a.m. on Friday.

All agencies must sign in on arrival at the Food Bank.

Staff is at lunch from 12:00 – 12:30.

SELF SERVE SHOPPING AREA

Each agency is allowed two (2) boxes from the self-serve shopping area. This product comes from broken cases and food drive donations. Let the front office know when you have shopped in the self-serve area.

WAREHOUSE PROCEDURES FOR PICKING UP FOOD

BASIC GUIDELINES

General

1. Partnering agencies are responsible for knowing and observing all agency policies and warehouse procedures. Orientation sessions are available for new volunteers and staff every third Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. Advance reservations must be made with the Agency Relations Department 2 weeks in advance. Please call 601-353-7285 for information concerning orientation sessions.
2. Each agency is assigned a set pickup date and time. Present yourself at the appointed time. If your agency wishes to change its designated pickup time or day, arrangement can be made with the Office Manager by calling 601-353-7286.
3. Because of space limitations, we ask only 3 people per agency come to pick-up food. We must have the name of at least one “authorized” representative from your agency on file. If the authorized shopper needs to be changed, please do so by submitting the representative(s) name(s) on agency letterhead to the Director of Agency Development. All authorized shoppers must attend an orientation session prior to picking up.

Sanitation and Safety Requirements

1. Smoking, drinking, and eating are not permitted in the warehouse or dock area.
2. High heels and open-toed shoes are not permitted in the warehouse.
3. No children under the age of 16 are allowed in the warehouse. Do not leave children or pets unattended by an adult in vehicles while in the loading zone or parking areas adjacent to MFN and its annex building.
4. Proper lifting techniques must be used.
5. Do not attempt to operate any machinery within the MFN warehouse.
6. Do not climb in or on pallet racks – please ask a MFN staff member for help.
7. Agency representatives are expected to exercise good judgment and to refrain from any activity that would pose a hazard to themselves or others.
8. Notify MFN staff immediately of any hazardous or unsanitary conditions.

CALL IN SCHEDULE – PICKUP ONLY

<u>Type of Agency</u>	<u>Call in Day</u>	<u>Pickup Day</u>
Emergency Shelters	Friday	Monday
Pantries	Monday	Tuesday
Day Care & Group Homes	Wednesday	Thursday

***NO PICKUPS ON FRIDAY, UNLESS EMERGENCY**

GUIDELINES:

- **Be on Time**
- **Be Patient**
- **Please check orders before signing for them**
- **Be careful in Warehouse – Tow motors, etc...**
- **Stay in designated areas only (no wandering)**
- **If accompanied by children please have them stay in the lobby or your vehicle**

TRUCK DELIVERY

Call to place orders between 7:30 & 10:30 a.m. on Friday or Monday between 7:30 and 3:00 p.m.

***Product delivered per calendar**

Guidelines:

- **Call in orders as soon as possible**

Agencies can only order items they are eligible for and the amount of allocated items that have been designated for their program. Items that are ordered that the agency is not eligible for or are beyond the allocated amount will be deleted from the order.

- **Be on time at the drop site**

Agencies should provide a detailed map to the delivery site; include a contact name and phone number.

- **Call if you can't come or are running late**

- **Bring appropriate size vehicle**

The driver will off load the product to the curb only. He/she will not be able to move the product to the storage area or stock shelves. Items cannot be refused by the agency at time of delivery.

- **Have help at drop site to load and unload**

Agencies must provide sufficient volunteers to transport food from the MFN truck to the building in which the product will be stored for distribution.

Ordering Produce:

- **Fresh produce and other refrigerated items change often. Orders for specific items in these categories may not be able to be filled. It is recommended that agencies order "fresh vegetables" or "fresh fruit" and allow the Operations staff to fill the order with what is available.**

SETTING UP AN ACCOUNT

- \$150 deposit is required to set up your account
- You may order against this balance
- Deposits to this account may be made at any time
- Account Activity Statements are sent out each month

PAYMENT METHODS

- An agency check will be accepted as the preferred method of payment
- MFN can't accept cash, money orders or personal checks
- 1st Returned Check = \$20 charge
- 2nd Returned Check = Program Cut Off

MFN requests that all invoices are due and payable upon pick up or delivery

SECTION E

FOOD STORAGE AND FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

GENERAL STORAGE PRACTICES

- **MONITORING TEMPERATURES.** **It is strongly recommended that agencies check and record temperatures on a daily basis year round.** An alarm system may be used in lieu of a daily check. Temperature charts are required and should be used to record the date, temperature, area and the name of the person responsible for monitoring the temperatures.
- **PRACTICE FIRST IN, FIRST OUT (FIFO).** Commodities are to be stacked so that the commodities with the **oldest pack dates are in front and are used first.** NOTE: If commodities are taken out of the case, the can/box/container must be marked with the pack date.
- **SHELF LIFE.** Shelf life is the length of time that commodities can be stored from pack date at appropriate temperatures without affecting food quality. **USDA recommends that the agencies keep no more than a six-month supply of inventory on hand.**
- **BEST IF USED BY DATE.** The “best if used by” date is intended to suggest how long the product will retain its best flavor or quality. The term **is not a food safety date.** “Best if used by” dates are intended only as useful guidelines. But, because many factors can shorten the useful life of a commodity such as improper handling and inadequate storage temperatures, the inventory control method of **“first in, first out” should be practiced by those responsible for commodities and inventories and distribution.** Commodities kept and used past the “best if used by” date are not necessarily out of condition. Such foods may be eaten without concern if the commodity has been properly stored and handled and the primary container is in good condition.
- **PEST CONTROL.** Insects and rodents are particularly attracted to the conditions and commodities in the dry storage area. **Monthly extermination treatments should be applied by a licensed professional exterminator** with an excellent reputation for safe application of chemicals. Good management practices that will protect the dry storage area from continued infestation include a plan to:
 1. Inspect incoming supplies for contamination
 2. Inspect and repair holes in walls, floors and ceilings.
 3. Inspect and repair holes in windows and screens.
 4. Organize and store commodities in an orderly manner. Weekly sweep and sanitize dry storage area.
 5. Discard empty cartons (they invite bugs to breed).
 6. Clean up spilled food immediately.
 7. Post and follow a cleaning schedule.

DRY STORAGE OF COMMODITIES

- **CANNED COMMODITIES.** **Maintaining the temperature between 50°F-70°F in a well-ventilated area** provides ideal conditions for the storage of canned commodities. Permanent placement of a sturdy wall thermometer in the warmest section of the dry storage area, along with the temperature storage chart, will ease temperature monitoring and prevent commodity spoilage.
- **STORING AND STACKING.** **Storing commodities at least six inches off the floor** on vented shelves and /or pallets promotes good air circulation. Storing foods no close than two inches between shelves and walls also helps good air circulation. Unopened cases of commodities may be stored on shelves or stacked on pallets, but once opened the cases are to be discarded and the cans marked with the pack date for FIFO. Unopened large bags (50-100 lbs.) of rice, flour and cornmeal are to be cross-stacked to prevent sliding off the pallets and lower shelves. Once opened, they must be transferred to sanitary cans or bins that are movable.

REFRIGERATED STORAGE

- **REQUIREMENTS.** **Refrigerated food storage is to be maintained at a temperature of 35°F-45°F, and must be monitored daily.** Temperature storage charts are to be placed in or very close to the refrigeration unit. A reliable, rust resistant and non-breakable refrigerator thermometer is to be placed in the warmest area of the refrigerator.
- **STORAGE AND AIR CIRCULATION.** Air circulation is important in maintaining optimum temperature and humidity in a refrigerated storage. The following guidelines apply:
 1. Do not overload shelves.
 2. Do not jam or pack foods together.
 3. Allow at least two inches of space between the food and the walls of the refrigerator.
 4. For walk-ins, do not store food directly on the floor.

REMEMBER – Foods requiring refrigeration are PERISHABLE and must used quickly.

- **STORAGE AREA.** **The refrigerated storage area must be maintained in a neatly organized manner,** using proper storage techniques that will avoid spoilage and waste and development of illness for contaminated food. Large or small, the agency can avoid clutter, waste and spoilage of its refrigerated foods by packaging, labeling and dating them along with an appropriate plan for their use.
- **GOOD HOUSEKEEPING AND PEST CONTROL.** **The refrigerated storage area must be cleaned at least weekly inside and out.** Develop, post and follow a cleaning schedule in accordance with the manufacturer's directions. Roaches thrive in dirty, sticky, food-filled gaskets of refrigerators. Rodents are also a problem when they gnaw through refrigerator walls and make nests in the refrigerator insulation. Inspect these problem areas and take immediate action to resolve them by cleaning and extermination.

FREEZER STORAGE AREA

- **TEMPERATURE AND STORAGE GUIDELINES.** **The freezer storage area must be maintained at 10° to 0°F.** The same general care and storage guidelines for dry and refrigerated storage apply to freezer storage with respect to monitoring temperatures, practicing FIFO, dating, labeling, organizing and practicing good management principles. However, freezer interiors are not on the same weekly schedules as refrigerators. Freezers generally do not require emptying and defrosting more than once or twice a year or as manufacturer's instructions mandate.
- **FOOD STORAGE.** Food quality during freezer storage can be maintained if food is stored only for the recommended period.
- **POWER OUTAGE.** If a power outage causes a complete shutdown of the freezer, **food should NEVER BE REFROZEN.** It must be inspected by the Health Department then destroyed and a Commodity Loss Report submitted. If the outage is discovered before the food is completely defrosted, it can be cooked and used. Consult your local health department for guidance for the proper disposal of food if a complete failure occurs.

GUIDANCE FOR SMALLER AGENCIES

- Agencies without separate storerooms **MUST** practice the same general guidelines as previously outlined. Even facilities with home style pantries and kitchen cabinets must:
 1. Keep food safe from theft (locked cabinet)
 2. Store food separately (label cabinet or shelf)
 3. Monitor temperature (use wall thermometer and temp storage chart)
 4. Practice FIFO by storing, stacking, and labeling food by pack date
 5. Use appropriate containers and markers for repacking and labeling bulk foods
 6. Keep appropriate records and inventory.

INVENTORY OF USDA COMMODITIES

- **KEEPING RECORDS ON COMMODITIES RECEIVED.** A major activity of receiving USDA commodities is keeping an accurate record of the commodities received.
- **COMMODITY CONTROL LOG.** Develop a Commodity Log to track the receipt of commodities.
- **PERPETUAL INVENTORY RECORD.** Once a quantity of a commodity has been received into the agency's facility the agency should monitor or track the usage through a perpetual inventory record.

MISSISSIPPI FOOD NETWORK

GUIDELINES FOR PERISHABLE AND NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS

Item	Storage Temperature	Storage Length	*Discard
Eggs	40° F or Below	Eggs in shell – 3 weeks past expiration date Hard cooked – 1 week past expiration date Pasteurized or substitute – 10 days past expiration date	Off odor, color or taste
Milk * Borden	40° F 0° F	Consume 4 days past expiration date *Borden milk is up to expiration date 3 months past expiration date	Off odor or taste
Yogurt/Sour Cream	40° F (Do not Freeze)	14 days past expiration date	Mold, off odor or taste
Frozen Meat	0° F or below	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Off odor, color, open package or freezer burned
Cheese	40° F 0° F	14 days past expiration date 3 months past expiration date	Discard if package is open
Baked Goods	Keep in cool and dry place	Up to 10 days past expiration date	Any visible mold, discard whole piece
Non-Perishable Prepackaged Food (can items)	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 5 years past expiration date	Bulging or springiness on ends, leaking, severe dents, pitted rust or rust under the rim
Baby Food	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Discard after expiration date	Popped safety seal, cracks, leaks
Adult Formula	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Discard after expiration date	Popped safety seal, cracks, leaks
Cans/bottles/aseptic containers	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Bulging, springiness on end, leaking, damaged seals, severe dents or rust, popped safety seal
Cereal/Crackers	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Stale, insects
Dried beans/pasta	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Insects, mold or stale

Freezer products	0° F or below	Up to 1 year past expiration date	Off odor or taste
Prepared salads/foods & dips	40° F	Use by expiration date,	Past date
Refrigerated juices & teas	40° F	Up to 4 weeks past expiration date	Mold, fermentation, off odor or taste
Rice	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Up to 3 years past expiration date	Insects, mold or stale
Mayonnaise	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	3 months past expiration date	Jar is leaking, open or seal has been broken. Food is discolored or has off odor
Dressings	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	10 months past expiration date	Jar is leaking, open or seal has been broken. Food is discolored or has off odor
Processed refrigerated foods (tofu, lunchables)	40° F	UP to 30 days past expiration date,	Seal is broken in all compartments, Food is discolored or has off color.
Produce	40° F Temperature may vary depending on type of produce	Refer to discard	Mold, decay, fungus, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste
Prepackaged Lettuce	40°F.	Up to 14 days past the expiration date, If past expiration date check for off odor before consuming	Mold, decay, fungus, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste
Candy	Store in well ventilated and climate controlled area	Refer to discard	Candy is wrapped and does not have an outer sealed package, decay, insects, discoloration, off odor or taste

APPENDIX OF FORMS

The following forms are enclosed separately for your convenience. Please make the necessary copies needed to ensure that all data is properly documented according to MFN standards.

Appendix A.....	TEFAP Client Eligibility Form
Appendix B.....	TEFAP Racial Ethnic Group Form
Appendix C.....	TEFAP Notice
Appendix D.....	TEFAP Temperature Guidelines
Appendix E.....	Food Storage Temperature Chart