

# Tenino Food Bank Plus



*Getting it done...*

## Food and Nutrition Policy

### Purpose and Guidelines

At Tenino Food Bank Plus, we have been filling the gaps in our community's food needs since the 1970's because we believe taking care of families means providing equitable access to healthy foods that enable them to thrive. We have witnessed the important role that food and nutrition play in our community's health, both to prevent and treat chronic illnesses that are associated with food insecurity. As an active community service organization, we strive to foster our clients' dignity by offering food choices that reflect their cultures, support individual health needs, and align with food preferences. We are committed to treating all clients with the respect they deserve.

Our Food and Nutrition policy demonstrates our commitment to our community through offering quality, nutritious foods that support our clients' overall health. We utilize the [Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines](#) (1) as a tool to guide our nutritional priorities. We will leverage this policy as a tool to address the national food system shortages by increasing the visibility of our organization and our clients' needs in our often under-resourced rural community.

### Overall Nutrition Commitments

In order to prioritize the health of our clients, we commit to limiting HER "choose rarely" category items to a maximum of one item in each pre-packed grocery bag. Foods in this category are high in saturated fat, sodium and added sugars, ingredients known to contribute to and exacerbate diet-related chronic illnesses like high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity. We choose to limit the amount of these items in response to client feedback and to align with HER recommendations. We aim to increase foods our clients request as well as foods from the HER "choose often" category, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, eggs and spices. We also strive to distribute items that meet the cultural and dietary needs of the diverse and expanding populations we serve.

### Food Purchases

When funding is available, we commit to purchasing items that align with our commitment to nutrition and overall client health. We will prioritize the purchase of fresh vegetables and fruit,

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at HYPERLINK "<http://healthyeatingresearch.org/>" \h<http://healthyeatingresearch.org>

*Adopted: 4/18/2023*

cooking staples and items on the “choose often” list of the HER guidelines. We will purchase canned/package items low in added sugars and sodium. We will not use funds to purchase candy. If we purchase juice, it will be 100% fruit juice. Our food purchasing decisions will be based on the feedback that many of our clients report needing to follow a heart healthy, low-sodium and low-sugar diet.

### **Food Donations**

We will communicate and advocate for our clients through our Donor Guidelines to guide donors toward food donations that support our clients’ health. These guidelines prioritize low-sodium and low-sugar options, highlight popular items that we use in our food access program and/or that clients request. To reduce food waste, we follow a “never say no policy” meaning we will find a purpose for all donations, either for our clients or to support the broader community. However, we appreciate food donations that are at their peak freshness (especially produce) as these foods best support the health of our clients.

### **Special Programs**

As we expand our food access programs, we are committed to meeting the specific dietary needs of different communities and providing relevant fresh produce, nutrient-dense items, and cooking staples to equip families to prepare healthy meals at home.

- In our children’s lunch program, we are committed to prioritizing snack and meal options for students that provide convenience while being nutrient dense and low in sugar and sodium.
- Our senior delivery program will include ample fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains wherever possible, and low sodium and low sugar items. These deliveries are for our homebound seniors who are living with chronic illnesses.

### **Broader Commitments**

We will nurture our partnerships with the public library and the Lion’s club, allowing us to offer healthy alternatives to convenience foods. We will help direct partners to healthy snack and ready-meal donation options available at local markets at an affordable price point. This will ensure our partners can continue to support our nutrition goals through affordable and healthy donations.

We aim to engage in participant-guided activities such as taste tests and cooking demonstrations, especially for those living with diabetes. We will connect participants to other resources as appropriate including hygiene items, clothing and household items and other essentials for our veteran population. We will continue to help arrange installation of fire detectors in partnership with our local fire department and continue to offer health services including vaccinations from the Thurston County Health Department. Collectively, these efforts

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holistically support the overall health, safety and well-being of our clients.

#### **Administration and Implementation**

This policy, approved by our Board on 4/18/2023 will take effect on 5/01/2023 at which time it will become part of our organizational policies and procedures. Our Executive Team will review this policy on an annual basis with all food bank staff and volunteers. All staff and volunteers will be given a copy of the policy and provided an orientation including an overview of its purpose and intention.