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# The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides nutrition assistance to needy Americans through the distribution of USDA commodities. Under TEFAP, USDA provides commodities to States for distribution to food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other charitable organizations that prepare or distribute the food. These organizations often receive food from private donations as well. USDA also provides funding to State and local agencies to administer TEFAP.

Recipient organizations may use the food to serve prepared meals or distribute it to households for their use. Available foods vary depending on market conditions. Typically, canned fruits and vegetables and canned meats, peanut butter, and rice are available. If there are not enough commodities for Statewide distribution, States may rotate distribution of some foods among counties so that there is an equitable share among local organizations.

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## Community Involvement

- Do local food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens take advantage of TEFAP resources?
- Does your community provide information about emergency food sources for people in need and about their potential eligibility for nutrition assistance?
- Is there a toll-free telephone number for people in need to call for information about emergency food programs in your community?
- Are emergency feeding sites located in easily accessible locations? Do the hours of operation reflect the needs of your community?
- Are food banks and food pantries able to provide nutrition assistance?
- Do food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens in your community take advantage of gleaning and other food recovery operations?
- Do emergency feeding sites deliver to the homebound, people with disabilities, or rural clients?

- Are there enough volunteers and adequate equipment to serve people seeking nutrition assistance in your community?

Emergency food resources provide a means for families with low incomes to get through the month. Food pantries, soup kitchens, and other emergency meal providers offer important support to people with needs not met by other nutrition assistance programs. They should have flexible hours of operation in locations that serve the working poor, homebound, people with disabilities, and rural clients.



- Do food pantries and meal programs in your community treat all people who come to them with courtesy and respect?

The atmosphere created by volunteers and staff is important to the program support of those in need.

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## Referrals

- Do sites in your community refer recipients to other nutrition assistance programs?

People in need seek out assistance in a variety of locations: food pantries, soup kitchens, health clinics, and community centers. Appropriate program referrals can help meet client needs effectively and conveniently. Food distribution sites can work actively with public health officials and schools to ensure that agencies share information to maximize use of the nutrition assistance programs.

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## THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- ▶ Talk with your State officials about the possibilities of expanding TEFAP in your community.
- ▶ Partner with local officials to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of nutrition assistance programs to the health and well-being of your community members.