

Guidance for Sites that Conduct Household Distribution of USDA Foods from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Determining and Recording Eligibility for Household Distribution:

To receive household distribution of USDA Foods through TEFAP in Vermont, individuals must self-declare that they meet the income eligibility requirements and that they live within the State of Vermont. In Vermont, income eligibility is set at 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or below. The distribution site cannot require households to have lived in the state for any period of time before they apply for TEFAP.

USDA regulations require that the distribution site collect "the name of the household member receiving commodities, the number of persons in the household, and the basis for determining that the household is eligible..." [7CFR 251.10(a)(3)]. Homeless persons, or people who have just arrived in the area, may not be able to provide an address, but this does not make them ineligible for USDA Foods. The regulations **do not require** that applicant households provide independent verification of address, income, or persons in household (for example, pay stubs, driver's license, etc.). Sites **should not** ask for any independent verification of any of this information, and **should not** ask for any additional information as a pre-requisite of receiving USDA Foods. If an agency requests additional information from the applicant to determine the eligibility for other assistance programs – including receipt of other donated foods – the agency must make it clear to the applicant that this information is not required in order to receive USDA Foods from TEFAP.

To determine and record eligibility to receive USDA Foods for household use (as opposed to congregate feeding/soup kitchens), distribution sites should use the "Statement of Eligibility to Receive USDA Foods from TEFAP." Follow these instructions for completing this form:

1. New applicants must enter their name and the number of persons in the household. The address and phone number lines are optional. If a person does not complete the phone or address line, they may still receive USDA Foods. If an applicant needs assistance completing this form, you may complete the information using the information they supply.
2. Review the income guidelines with applicant. The income guidelines reflect 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. If an applicant is not sure of their income, but is receiving any of the following forms of government assistance (3SquaresVT, Free or Reduced Price School Meals, Fuel Assistance/Home Heating Assistance), you may advise them that they do meet the requirements, as these programs use the same income eligibility guidelines as TEFAP. You may also advise applicants that receiving USDA Foods through the TEFAP program does not count as income when applying for assistance from any other federal, state, or local assistance program (7 CFR 251.10(b))
3. If an applicant says that they do not meet the income requirements or do not live in the State of Vermont, or if the applicant refuses to complete the form, they should not receive USDA Foods.
4. Each recipient must affirm that they meet the income guidelines for their household the first time that they receive USDA Foods from TEFAP during the period of eligibility. The period of eligibility runs July 1-June 30; they must sign and date the Statement of Eligibility to Receive USDA Foods from TEFAP. When recipients sign the form they are certifying that their household's gross income is at or below the limit listed on the form for households of their size. They are also certifying that they live in the State of Vermont.

5. The distribution site must retain the forms for 3 years from the end of the Federal Fiscal Year (October-September) during which they were last signed. Generally, new forms will be issued each July, showing updated income eligibility. When new forms are issued, begin using these forms right away.

Monthly Distribution Report (Form TEFAP-1):

Distribution sites are required to keep records of the amount of USDA Foods received and distributed to recipients. Sites should record this information by completing Form TEFAP-1 each month. On this form, the site should list each USDA Foods product that passed through the site during the month. Begin with the number of cases in inventory at the beginning of the month, list additional cases received, cases distributed, and ending inventory. The ending inventory from one month should match the beginning inventory the next month.

The distribution report also asks for the number of households and number of people served USDA Foods during the month. It may be tedious to gather this information from individual TEFAP-1 forms, so it is recommended that the site keep a tally of the number of households and individuals served on each distribution day – however keeping such a tally sheet is not a requirement.

It is not a federal requirement to record the specific foods -- for example, two cans of green beans, two boxes of corn flakes, etc. -- distributed to each household.

Handling of USDA Foods:

All distribution sites must sign a receipt for the USDA Foods that they receive and keep copies of VT Foodbank invoices listing the USDA Foods delivered.

USDA Foods are to be kept separate from non USDA Foods and labeled as such. USDA Foods may not be sold. USDA Foods may not be distributed to those who have not signed the Statement of Eligibility Form, unless they are used to prepare meals that are served at a congregate feeding site (a soup kitchen).

Thermometers are required in all freezers, refrigerators, and dry storage areas where USDA Foods are stored. Foods must be stored at the following temperatures:

Frozen Foods: 0° Fahrenheit or below
Refrigerated Foods: 32° to 40° Fahrenheit
Dry Foods: 50° to 70° Fahrenheit

If you have any questions, please call Caleb Sugarman at the Vermont Foodbank at 802-477-4106.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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