



## Partner Agency Grocery Rescue Program



## Standard Operating Procedures & Training Manual

**Our Mission:**

Bridging the gap for Arizona communities with nourishment for today and hope for tomorrow.

St. Mary's Food Bank  
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Phoenix, AZ 85009

Updated: 6/5/24

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*“Grocery Rescue has been a true blessing for Harvest Compassion Center and all of our guests. It has really turned us into a complete food bank. Our guests are very thankful for the variety of food that grocery rescue brings.”*

- Paul Thompson, Harvest Compassion Center

## Welcome and Overview

Welcome to the St. Mary's Food Bank (SMFB) Partner Agency Retail Grocery Rescue program! SMFB is a member of the Feeding America network which partners with more than 60,000 agencies across the United States to distribute food products to those in need. Agency partners are the most significant distribution avenue to fight food insecurity. We look forward to working with you to feed, nurture, and empower the community.

Feeding America is the nation's largest charitable hunger-relief organization with a network of more than 200 Member food banks and food-rescue organizations serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Annually, nearly 40 million Americans rely on food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and other emergency feeding programs served by the Feeding America Network, and the demand continues to grow.

A major source of food donations is the Grocery Rescue program. Grocery retailers agree to set aside products such as deli, dairy, produce, bakery and dry/canned items for donation to a food bank or a partner agency. This program allows for better coverage, less waste and more donations including nutritious perishables.

SMFB is properly trained in the inspection and handling of food for safe consumption and must follow strict guidelines for record-keeping, food handling and warehousing. SMFB will train and certify qualified partner agencies for participation in the Grocery Rescue Program. The Good Samaritan law protects businesses, volunteers and non-profit organizations from civil or criminal liability while donating fit and wholesome food or grocery products for distribution to needy people.

### **The following are 3 ways to participate in the Grocery Rescue Program**

- ***Grocery Rescue Pickups:*** Agency picks up donations on a daily/weekly basis.
- ***One Time Pickups:*** SMFB calls agency when donors have a one-time pickup.
- ***Store Route:*** SMFB drivers pick up donations and deliver directly to agency on a daily/weekly basis.

### **Top 10 Grocery Rescue Partners**

**July 2022 – June 2023**



1. Walmart/Sam's Club	7,467,337 pounds
2. Fry's/Kroger	3,397,439 pounds
3. Sprouts	2,344,536 pounds
4. Albertson's/Safeway	2,138,330 pounds
5. Target	1,443,692 pounds
6. Costco	954,014 pounds
7. Trader Joe's	869,243 pounds
8. Bashas'/Food City/AJ's	534,107 pounds
9. Aldi	141,714 pounds
10. Winco Foods	96,640 pounds

**Fun Fact: St. Mary's and our Grocery Rescue Agencies rescue over 1.8 million pounds of food every month!**

# Partnership Agreement Guidelines

## Becoming a Grocery Rescue Agency

### 1. Agency Requirements

- Facility Requirements:
  - Refrigerator, freezer and a temperature log
  - Scale to weigh donations
  - Food Safety Certification
  - Ability to pick up donations on a consistent schedule
  - Commit to the program for one year.
  - Ability to report donated pounds into MealConnect within 48 hours of donation pickup.
- Signed partner agreement required by Feeding America
- Compliance inspection by SMFB
- Communication with SMFB staff

### 2. Food Certifications

- All agencies who are participating in the Grocery Rescue program must have current food safety certification.
- Congregate feeding agencies must have current Food Managers Certification. Certification meets food safety agency training contractual requirements of Feeding America.

**Don't cut corners on food safety! Not only will you endanger your program, but you may endanger consumers and other partner agency's programs.**

### 3. Agency Matched to Stores

- The pickup schedule is established by the Food Resourcing Department and communicated to the stores and agency. A retailer may be paired with one or more partner agencies.
- Food Resourcing will meet agency for the first 3 Grocery Rescue pickups and does follow up training with agency.

As an agent of the Food Bank, you will be held to the highest of standards. Failure to abide by the terms and conditions in the Partner Agency agreement could lead to suspension and/or possible termination.

## Additional Required Pickup Equipment

- **Vehicle:** Prefer a refrigerated truck/van in good working condition. All vehicles used for transportation of donated products must be clean and sanitary.
- **Ice chests/coolers** – If vehicle is not refrigerated, ice chests/coolers with freezer blankets, thermal blankets or ice packs to transport product are required. All ice chests use to maintain and transport product must be kept clean and sanitized.
- **Thermometer device** - To temp product. Note: You will be required to record temperatures and maintain up to date temperature logs at the time of pickup and delivery to agency.
- **Gloves** – Required to handle product
- **Proper Attire** – Closed toe shoes, clean and neat clothes, ID badges, masks if required by store, hair tied back (SMFB will provide Grocery Rescue badges).



**REMEMBER: Agencies cannot sell or donate product obtained from grocery stores.**

## Building Partnerships with Donors



SMFB will help you and your agency build strong relationships by guaranteeing to the retailer that we will properly train and empower our partner agencies to be successful in this program.

### Tips:

- Educate donors about your agency and how their donations are having an impact in the community.
- Be flexible and patient at the back door of the store; you may have to go to each department to collect the donated product at some retail donors.
- Be on time. Call the store if you are running late. If a regularly scheduled pickup will be missed for any reason (holidays, volunteers calling in sick, etc.), it is the partner agency's responsibility to communicate to SMFB and the store.
- Send a copy of your closure schedule for the year to SMFB and assigned donors. Overly communicate with your donors!
- Always check with the receiving department before taking donations.
- Any issues with a donor your agency is unable to resolve should be immediately communicated to SMFB.
- Make a connection with your donors based on their interests.
- Thank your contacts each time you pick up donations. You may want to send thank you cards and recognize the stores that donate to you with community recognition awards, recognition in community newsletters, etc.

**YOU WILL CATCH MORE  
FLIES WITH A SPOONFUL  
OF HONEY THAN WITH  
A GALLON OF VINEGAR**

**Remember you are the ambassador for your agency as well as a representative of St. Mary's Food Bank.**



## Holidays and Closures

Lack of communication with the stores regarding closures and no-shows leads to donor frustration and unnecessary waste. It can even result in a donor leaving the program. Be sure to communicate well with each donor and with SMFB to ensure ongoing goodwill and participation.

### Holidays

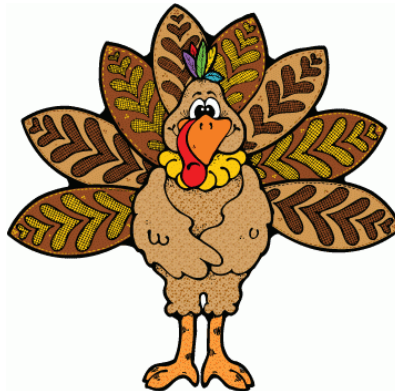
Most donors remain open on holidays and expect donation pickups. It is important that your agency communicates any holiday closure to the stores on your route as well as to SMFB. Usually, the store will accommodate the single day closure and hold onto their donated product until your next pickup.

### Closures, Delays, and Emergencies

Please send your schedule of closures for the year to SMFB at the beginning of the year and any time you change or add an agency closure.

Short term closures of a day or two, same day delays and cancellations due to emergency or illness should be communicated directly to the store. Please let SMFB know as well, and alert us if you hear of any stores that will need alternate arrangements.

Longer closures should be communicated directly to SMFB for temporary re-assignment as needed. Send all closure information to Kim Warren, [kwarren@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:kwarren@stmarysfoodbank.org) or call 602-343-3139.



## Pickup Process

Each store must follow their corporate guidelines which will determine the type of product they are allowed to donate. Agencies will be instructed on donations they are able to receive from each department at each store.

**Agencies cannot choose what donations they want. Agencies must take all donations “as is.”**

### Steps for product pick up at a store:

1. Upon arrival, check in with the Receiving Department.
2. Go to the designated pickup location. Some retailers may ask you to go to each department to pick up donations while others may have the product staged in one location. If you are unsure whether a certain product should be donated, ask someone within the department. If you cannot locate someone, do NOT take the product.
3. Gather product from all the perishable departments and separate the perishables (meat, deli, dairy, produce and bakery) and non-perishable product. Meat should always be separated by species. Never mix poultry with beef!
4. Check in with Receiving before leaving with product so that the receiver can make sure all donations are scanned and accounted for.
5. Place all refrigerated and frozen products in a temperature-controlled device.



*Each store should have an area marked for donations.*

### Meat Department

The meat department usually includes random weight meats, prepackaged meats and hanging meats. At some grocery chains, the meat department may include seafood and specialty (gourmet cuts) meats. All meat must be frozen prior to expiration date.

- **Random Weight Meats:** beef, chicken and pork packaged fresh either at a plant or in the store. Retailers with specialty meat departments may also include product wrapped in butcher paper which is acceptable if a label is attached showing the sell-by date.
- **Hanging Meats:** (also known as hard pack): lunchmeats, prepackaged bacon, sausages, hot dogs and vacuumed packaged ham and turkey breast are the most common items in this category.
- **Frozen Meats:** beef, chicken and pork that are shipped, stored and merchandised in a frozen state. These products may be ready to serve, may contain prep work such as breading, or may have spices already added.

### Produce Department

Produce departments carry bulk and prepackaged fresh fruits and vegetables. Some produce departments will carry dried fruits and gourmet salad dressings as well.

- Product: slightly bruised, ripe and close dated fruits and vegetables.

### Deli Department

Deli departments vary substantially from sliced meats and cheese to extensive prepared food offerings.

- **Bulk Meats and Cheeses:** product is sliced to order, which provides limited opportunity for donations. Close-dated product is rarely available. Delis that choose to donate ends should wrap and label the product.
- **Prepackaged Deli Meats and Cheeses:** prepackaged high-grade cuts of meat and cheeses. The product is generally vacuum-packed.
- **Prepackaged Side Dishes:** side dishes such as potato salad, pork & beans and salsas that have been prepackaged at a plant.

### Dairy Department

- **Dairy:** milk and milk byproducts such as cottage cheese, whipping creams, half & half and eggs. These products generally come from a local or regional dairy and egg-producing farm.
- **Cooler:** pre-packaged cheeses, yogurts, juices, dips, egg substitutes and refrigerated bread and cookie dough.

### Bakery Department

Most bakery departments contain bakery items produced by the retailer (either on site or at their plant) and product delivered directly to the store by a vendor.

- Bakery: mostly dated pastries and private label breads.

## Reporting Donations

SMFB uses agency reporting to compile poundage for monthly reporting to the donors as well as to spot trends and identify needs and opportunities. Each agency will be set up in MealConnect, which is an online platform supported by Feeding America and will also receive training.

### MealConnect Reporting Guidelines:

- Must have at least (1) scale available to weigh donations.
- Agency is responsible for reporting weight for each received donation within 48 hours.
- Weigh and record product by category and store/donor number. See MealConnect Tab for step-by-step easy instructions.
- Timely reporting is vital to our donors and to our mission. Therefore, failure to properly report may jeopardize participation in the program and could result in suspension or termination of partnership.

**MealConnect™**



<https://mealconnect.org>

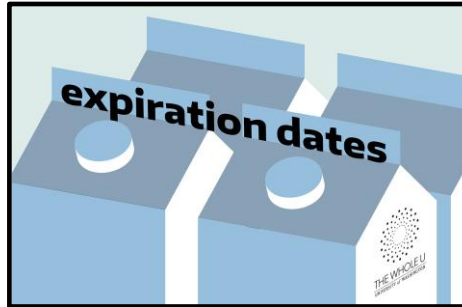


## Perishable Donation Handling and Storage Guidelines

- Items must be in sealed/unopened labeled packaging with code date visible, including pre-cut and deli foods. (Exception: fresh uncut produce)
- Items should not be in compromised packaging. Minor damage to exterior packaging is acceptable for donation if inner packaging is intact.
- Product must be free of discoloration, off odor, mold or decay, leakage or seeping.
- Code date refers to sell-by, best-by, use-by and expiration.

Dept.	Handling/Storage	Donate by
<b>Bakery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at room temperature in a dry, clean area</li> <li>• No stale or moldy product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 3 days past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Dairy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep refrigerated at or below 40°F</li> <li>• Broken eggs cannot be donated or used for meals</li> <li>• Fresh eggs cannot be frozen</li> <li>• Refrigerated dairy/juice up until code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By code date</li> <li>• If frozen by code date: 3 months past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Meat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store in freezer at 0°F or below while awaiting pick up and/or freeze prior to code date</li> <li>• Meats should be kept separated by category (beef, pork, poultry and seafood) to prevent cross-contamination</li> <li>• No defrosted, refrozen, freezer burn, discolored product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frozen Seafood only: 3 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Frozen Meat (preferred): 6 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Fresh meat: 7 days prior to code date</li> </ul>
<b>Deli</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at 40° or below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepared items: by code date</li> <li>• Meats/cheese: Freeze or donate within 24 hours of code date</li> </ul>
<b>Dry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry storage, product must be kept 6" off the floor/ground</li> <li>• OTC and prescription medications are not accepted.</li> <li>• Keep non-food, pet food and food items separated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canned: 18 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Dry food: 12 mo. past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Produce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at 40° F</li> <li>• In good condition, not moldy or decayed or having bad odor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate while in good condition</li> </ul>
<b>Frozen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be maintained at 0° F</li> <li>• Defrosted and/or refrozen items should not be donated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 months past code date</li> </ul>
<b>Baby Food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at room temperature</li> <li>• "Wet" baby food accepted from retail/wholesale donors only</li> <li>• No individual/residential/food drive donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate 21 days <i>before</i> code date.</li> <li>• Safety chain must be traceable.</li> </ul>

## Explanation of Expiration Dates



**Sell by date** – Tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The store rotates stock to be sure the oldest is sold first. Consumers can add days to this date before eating it.

**Best when used by date** – Tells you when to eat or drink the product for the best flavor of quality. This is not a safety date.

**Use by date** – The last date for use of the product at peak quality.

**Closed or coded date** – Packing numbers for the food company.



### **Why is there dating on some foods - not on others?**

Dating is *not* required on most foods. In fact, federal agencies often discourage food processors and supermarkets from placing a date on the label. They know that dating can lead to food waste. Dating is needed on baby food, formula and most states require dating on fluid milk (which includes milk, cream, sour cream, cottage cheese and yogurt).

### **The food bank says we can safely extend the date. Is this true?**

SMFB follows the food company's rules for making the product life longer. The same people who set the date have now added more days or weeks to it! That's because the original date was very conservative. The people in quality assurance are ready to safely extend the "use by" date, because they know that the food has been shipped and stored under good conditions.

### **Why does the food bank stop distributing food at the "extended date"?**

We do as the donor requires. The donor cares about representing their brand well, even though it is donated. They care that the consumer finds their product fresh and tasty. Even though it is perfectly safe, they require that we stop distributing at a chosen date.

### **You mean the date never matters for safety?**

No. Fresh products like meat, fish, poultry, milk, and eggs can be unsafe. You should check the date and the product. The "sell by" date still allows a few days at home before consumption. Freezing will safely extend the date further.

## Sorting Product

The initial sorting of product at the agency location is critically important for the success of a Grocery Rescue program. Agencies are required to adhere to the donation handling and storage guidelines found in this manual, no exceptions.

SMFB may conduct an inspection at any time either at the agency facility or during a store pickup with or without prior notice.

Follow the guidelines below and....

**REMEMBER: Use the rule when evaluating product of “when in doubt, throw it out.”**



### Evaluate the Donation Box

<b>Action:</b>	<b>First steps:</b>	<b>If:</b>
Examine the exterior of the box.	Look for any signs of contamination or infestation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rips or tears</li> <li>• Dry or liquid spills.</li> <li>• Gnaw marks, etc.</li> </ul>	Any of these signs of contamination are present, the entire box and contents should be discarded.
Open the box and check the lid for signs of contamination or infestation.	Examine the content for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toxic substances or any chemicals that might be harmful or fatal if swallowed.</li> <li>• Open pet foods.</li> <li>• Rodent droppings and urine.</li> <li>• Insects, active, or carcasses.</li> <li>• Mold.</li> <li>• Broken glass.</li> <li>• Sour or rotten odors</li> <li>• Stains caused by contaminants or other hazards, such as cooking oil, tomato juice, sauces, etc.</li> </ul>	Any of these signs are present, discard the entire box and contents

## Evaluate the Product Packaging

Signs of Infestation	If in:	Then:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rat or mouse droppings and urine</li> <li>• Pin sized holes which are often found in flour, grain or pasta containers and are signs of insect bores.</li> <li>• Gnaw marks</li> </ul>	Permeable container	Discard
	Non-permeable container	Discard or sanitize
<b><u>Evaluation of Canned Goods</u></b>		
<p>If a can has a serious defect such as the ones listed below, discard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulged lids and ends, crushed cans, holes or leakage.</li> <li>• Metal stem cut, rust or severe dents or torn label that cannot be read or a missing label.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Evaluation of Glass Containers</u></b>		
<p>Discard any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any home canned products and chipped, cracked or glass containers.</li> <li>• Any obviously defective glass containers: chipped, cracked or have tops missing.</li> <li>• Any jar that shows signs of leakage/signs of dirt, mold under the lid.</li> <li>• Any jar whose top is not tight (finger-loose or a seal is missing).</li> </ul> <p><b>Exception:</b> Some products have inner seals. If cap is loose, examine the inner seal for damage. If none is found, these products may be distributed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulging, swollen, rusted, dented, or crooked jars or a jar whose button in the center is raised.</li> <li>• Any jar which shows the presence of foreign objects, mold, discoloration, or unusual product separation.</li> <li>• Mold in fruit juice often appears as clumps or stringy, rope-like growths.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Evaluation of Dry Product Food Containers</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check products in a dry container for rips, punctures, split seams, etc. and discard.</li> <li>• Packages that have, at any time, been torn or cut open shall not be approved for distribution.</li> <li>• If the inner seal in the container is not broken, then the product is safe to distribute. Tape outer container.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Evaluation of Paper Goods and Food Service Items</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, paper products may be redistributed.</li> <li>• A broken container may have allowed dirt to infiltrate the product. Examine carefully, tape all breaks and store away from food products.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Evaluation of Cleaning Supplies</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning products are primary sources of cross-contamination due to their toxic, abrasive or liquid nature.</li> <li>• Torn containers of dry or powdered soap may be taped.</li> <li>• Discard containers of liquid soaps and other cleaning supplies that are leaking or broken.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Evaluation of Personal Care and other Non-Food Items</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discard items such as diapers, feminine hygiene products, toothpaste whose containers are torn or broken.</li> <li>• Discard aerosol cans/containers that are pump-operated or pressurized and are missing an outer cap.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Over the Counter Drugs</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMFB prohibits partner agencies from receiving over the counter drugs and alcohol.</li> <li>• If accidentally received, please discard for the safety of your clients.</li> </ul>		

## Product Consumption Requirements

There are specific guidelines for the consumption of dated product. The guidelines listed below are general consumption guidelines that are conservative in nature and represent the best practices within the hunger relief field. If at any time an agency or a recipient feels that a donated product is unsafe, the product should be destroyed.

**REMEMBER IF IN DOUBT...THROW IT OUT.**

You can also download the **FoodKeeper App** which is constantly being updated by the USDA for additional guidance on safe handling and consumption of food products.

### MEAT

Product:	Requirement and expiration:	Unacceptable condition:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or frozen meats.</li> <li>• Processed, packaged meats (fully cooked lunch meats, hotdogs, cheeses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be frozen at 0° F or below on or before the expiration date:</li> <li>• If meat is <b>frozen</b> on or before its expiration date, you can consume up to 3 to 4 months past its expiration date. Do not defrost and refreeze product.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defrosted product</li> <li>• Severe freezer burn</li> <li>• Discolored product</li> <li>• Unfrozen past expiration date</li> <li>• Damaged or compromised packaging</li> </ul>

### DAIRY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Yogurt</li> <li>• Sour Cream</li> <li>• Cottage Cheese</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Cheese</li> </ul>	Keep refrigerated at or below 40°F		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damaged or compromised packaging</li> <li>• Off odor</li> <li>• Off discoloration</li> <li>• Off color or smell</li> <li>• Mold</li> </ul>
	<b>Type</b>	<b>Can consume ...</b>	
	Half and Half/Whipping Cream	3 days past expiration	
	Eggnog	3 - 5 days past expiration	
	Milk	7 days past expiration	
	Yogurt, sour cream	7 - 14 days past expiration	
	Cottage Cheese	7 days past expiration	
	Cheese, hard	6 months unopened 3 – 4 weeks opened	
	Cheese, soft	7 days past expiration	
	Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In shell: 21 days</li> <li>• Hard cooked: 7 days</li> <li>• Pasteurized: 10 days</li> <li>• Substitute: 10 days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open items</li> <li>• Compromised packaging</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damaged/compromised packaging</li> <li>• Off odor, taste</li> <li>• Discoloration.</li> </ul>

## BAKERY

Product:	Requirement and Expiration:	Unacceptable Condition:
Bread	To ensure safe consumption, all bakery items should be consumed fresh or 2 to 3 days past sell by dates. Store in a cool, dry and clean area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried out or stale products</li> <li>• Molded products</li> <li>• Hard bread items, such as old baguettes.</li> </ul>

## DELI

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deli Meats</li> <li>• Cold Salads</li> <li>• Rotisserie/Fried chicken</li> <li>• Cut fruit</li> <li>• Hummus</li> </ul>	Keep refrigerated at or below 40°F		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damaged or compromised packaging</li> <li>• Off odor</li> <li>• Off discoloration</li> <li>• Off color or smell</li> <li>• Sticky or tacky service</li> </ul>
	<b>Type</b>	<b>Can consume ...</b>	
	Store sliced deli meats	3 – 5 days past expiration	
	Cold salads	3 - 5 days past expiration	
	Rotisserie/Fried chicken	3 - 4 days past expiration	
	Cut fruit	Package date: 4 days after opening	
	Hummus	Package date: 4 - 7 days after opening	

## DRY AND CANNED GOODS

<b>Product:</b>		<b>Requirement and Expiration:</b>	<b>Unacceptable Condition:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cereal</li> <li>• Crackers</li> <li>• Dried beans/pasta</li> <li>• Mayonnaise</li> <li>• Salad dressing</li> <li>• Canned goods</li> </ul>	Cereal	12 months past expiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insects</li> <li>• Mold</li> <li>• Stale product</li> <li>• Damaged packaging</li> <li>• Not packaged in food grade packaging</li> </ul>	
	Crackers	8 months past expiration		
	Dried beans/Pasta	Must be stored in a well-ventilated and climate-controlled area.  Can be consumed 2 - 3 years past its expiration date.		
		Mayonnaise/dressing	Product should be stored in a well-ventilated and climate-controlled area.  Shelf -stable mayonnaise and dressing can be stored up to 1 year past expiration date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaking jars</li> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Broken seal</li> <li>• Discolored</li> <li>• Off odor</li> </ul>
		Canned goods	Store in a cool, dry, clean area. Labels on cans should be fully intact. Can be consumed 3 years after expiration date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opened, punctured, or bulging top.</li> <li>• Visible signs of leakage or spoilage.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Dairy beverages such as rice milk, soymilk, oat milk</li> </ul>		If stored properly, non-dairy products can be consumed up to 6 months past its expiration date. Stored in cool, dry and clean area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damaged or compromised packaging</li> <li>• Off odor/discoloration</li> <li>• Swollen or bulging container.</li> </ul>	

## Frozen Food: When to Save and When to Throw Out

Thawed or partially thawed food in the freezer may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40 °F or below. Partial thawing and refreezing may affect the **quality** of some food, but the food will be **safe to eat**. **Note:** Always discard any items in the freezer that have come into contact with raw meat juices. You will have to evaluate each item separately. Use this chart as a guide.

Food Categories	Specific Foods	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed and held above 40 °F for over 2 hours
<b>MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD</b>	Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
	Poultry and ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
	Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
	Casseroles, stews, soups	Refreeze	Discard
	Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze. However, there will be some texture and flavor loss.	Discard
<b>DAIRY</b>	Milk	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	Discard
	Eggs (out of shell) and egg products	Refreeze	Discard
	Ice cream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
	Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	Discard
	Hard cheeses	Refreeze	Refreeze
	Shredded cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
	Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
	Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard
<b>FRUITS</b>	Juices	Refreeze	Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops.
	Home or commercially packaged	Refreeze. Will change texture and flavor.	Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops.
<b>VEGETABLES</b>	Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 40 °F for 6 hours.
	Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40 °F for 6 hours.



Food Categories	Specific Foods	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed and held above 40 °F for over 2 hours
BREADS, PASTRIES	Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
	Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
	Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur.	Refreeze. Quality loss is considerable.
OTHER	Casseroles – pasta, rice based	Refreeze	Discard
	Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
	Breakfast items –waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
	Frozen meal, entree, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods)	Refreeze	Discard

Adapted from [Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency \(USDA\)](#).

## Grocery Rescue Frequently Asked Questions

The Grocery Rescue (GR) program not only offers Partner Agencies more food, but a greater variety of donated food from different community collaborators. Food collected from the GR program helps to reduce food waste and allows partner agencies to deliver high quality food to their neighbors quicker, reducing the time-to-table.

It is a unique program that helps agencies feel a greater sense of empowerment as they build community-driven relationships to rescue good quality food, which is used to positively impact neighbors and their mission. Below are some frequently asked questions and answers regarding the GR program.

### **Q: What types and how much food will I receive?**

**A:** Although there is no guarantee a specific food item or product from each category will be received, the types of foods made available include bakery, produce, dairy, deli, meat/frozen, dry/non-perishable, and non-food. Product amounts depend on various factors such as, inventory levels, time of year and store/receiver relationships. Direct deliveries could see four to ten pallets, anywhere from 1600 lbs. – 3000 lbs. per delivery. If an agency is doing grocery rescue pickups an agency could receive 2-3 boxes or up to a pallet, anywhere from 50 lbs. – 500 lbs., per donor.

### **Q: Do I need a refrigerated truck or any special equipment to participate? Where can I purchase these items?**

**A:** No, a refrigerated vehicle is not required. While there are some retail stores that require a larger, refrigerated vehicle to pick-up due to the volume of donations; passive cooling is allowed for most stores. Passive cooling involves the use of both large coolers/tubs and ice packs/blankets to maintain proper temperature control of perishable items. A larger vehicle (van or truck) is preferred, but store pickups can be done with any size vehicles.

Along with passive cooling equipment, there are two other required items to participate in the program. A scale to weigh boxes of donated items, and thermometers or temperature guns to ensure the food has been maintained at the correct temperature. The size, brand, and types of equipment are left up to the agencies' discretion but SMFB recommends utilizing [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.uline.com](http://www.uline.com), or [www.staples.com](http://www.staples.com) to see the selection of products.

### **Q: Are there any special certifications I need in order to participate?**

**A:** Food safety certification is required for all agencies. If your agency is a meal site or a food pantry repackaging donated product, food manager's certification and health inspection are required for the facility.

### **Q: I already have a busy schedule and am not sure if I could dedicate time to any more programs. How much time will GR take away from my day?**

**A:** Grocery Rescue is a full-time commitment and will take some planning. Participation in direct delivery in which SMFB delivers directly to an agency is a minimum of one day per week; however, it could be anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours to get through the unloading, weighing, storage, and reporting process. Having volunteers/staff to help is key and will help the process move quicker. The program requires a one-year commitment from all agencies.

Agency pickups may occur more days during the week, sometimes up to five days, and there is travel time that needs to be factored in. At the agency, product is unloaded, weighed, stored, and reported. Also, while pick-ups/deliveries may not occur on holidays, accommodations will need to be made as donations are still collected. Donations tend to be heaviest the day after holidays.

**Q: There is a grocery store right down the street from me. Can I pick up at that location?**

**A:** Although we realize that there are retail stores close to your organization, we cannot guarantee that location is available. SMFB will work with you to see what stores are available, nearest to your agency.

**Q: Do I report my GR numbers with my Monthly Reports I send in at the beginning of every month?**

**A:** No. All donated pounds rescued as part of the Grocery Rescue program need to be reported in MealConnect, a Feeding America internet-based platform that is very user-friendly. Information needs to be reported within two business days (holidays excluded) of product being received. Agency accounts are created ahead of time by SMFB and an agency training will be scheduled to ensure comfort with MealConnect.

**Q: Why can't I just report my numbers monthly like I do with my other programs (CSFP, TEFAP, etc.)?**

**A:** The weights reported through MealConnect are relayed back to SMFB and Feeding America, and subsequently both local and National Corporate donor contacts. Pounds must be reported within 48 hours of receiving the donation. Our donors rely on receiving accurate, timely reports to better gauge how their employees are doing with the company-driven donation programs. They utilize your information to change, improve, and educate employees in all aspects of their donation programs.

**Q: I don't think I'll have the time or staff to commit to deliveries or pick-up's, but I really like the program. Is there anything else I can do?**

**A:** There are one-time or on-call donations. Examples of this would be leftover prepared foods from events, over-ordered product, product with a short shelf life that will not be utilized in time, or product rejected due to damaged packaging. These pickups are a one-time only situation, but still require that the proper transport, weighing, and reporting processes be followed.

**Q: We are closed for the holidays. What happens to the food?**

**A:** It is important for agencies to communicate any closures to the stores and to SMFB as soon as possible. Some stores are able to hold the product until the agency is ready to pick up. While others will need interim pickups by SMFB or other agencies. Often, when the stores are not notified, they throw product away and can grow frustrated, sometimes leading to the store leaving the GR program. The more communication, the better. Same day delays should also be communicated to the stores to ensure they hold onto the donations and don't grow frustrated.

**Q: What stores will be assigned to our agency?**

**A:** SMFB matches stores to agencies based on location, agency capacity, the type and quantity of donated products, and the requested days, times and frequency of pickups. As any of these factors change, stores may be added or re-assigned to best fit the needs of both your agency and the donor.

# MealConnect Reporting

## Meal Connect Reporting

Welcome! Thank you for being a part of our Grocery Rescue team that supports our communities by recognizing national donors and agencies through the reporting of poundage via MealConnect. This document will show you how to enter pounds into Meal Connect.

Please follow the instructions below to log in to your Meal Connect account.

1. Go to <https://mealconnect.org/>  
Reporting should be done within 48 hours of grocery rescue pickups/delivery.
2. Log in with your email and password using the email address partner log in option.



HOME HOW IT WORKS DONATE FOOD LOGIN



## Peel.

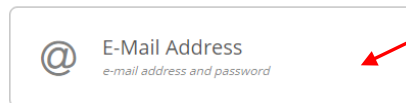
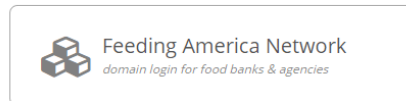
It's now that easy to rescue food.

You're just a couple simple steps away from donating your surplus food to help nourish your community. It's free, safe, and fast!

GET STARTED DONATING FOOD

Email: your email address  
Password: Mealconnect1!

### Partner Login



3. You will see a Add New Receipt screen. For the pickup date, select the date that you received the donation. Select the donor from the drop-down menu. Underneath the donor field, you will see a schedule pickup not attempted and a no pounds field. If either one of these apply, select the box that applies

4. You will now record your donations starting with the category field. See screenshot below.

**Category** - Select the appropriate category: Bakery, Beverages, Dairy, Meat, Mix (Frozen, Cooler and Dry items), Nonfood, Prepared/Perishable, Produce, Deli Items.

**Storage** – Select Refrigeration, dry or frozen

**Description** – You do not need to put a description

**Pounds** – enter the pounds

Select the add button. Then select the Add Another Line Item button to enter the next category of donation. Once you are done, you can select the Add Receipt and Review button and then select the Submit Receipts button.

Add New Receipt

09/08/2023

Fry's (694)

Scheduled Pickup Not Attempted  No Pounds

Category	Storage Requirement	Product Description	Pounds	
Mix	Frozen	None	75	Delete Edit

Add Another Line Item

Add Receipt and Review

Please ensure you submit your receipt(s) after review.

RECEIPTS READY FOR SUBMISSION

Pickup Date	Donor	Number of Items	Total Pounds	Status	
09/08/2023	Fry's (694)	1	75	New	Delete Edit

Add New Receipt

Submit Receipts

Note: You can edit any information within a receipt (including deleting) up to 24 hours from your initial submission. You are done! Please reach out to Bobbie Tomasek at 602-343-3103 or email [btomasek@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:btomasek@stmarysfoodbank.org) with questions.

## MealConnect Reporting Categories



**Bakery** – Bread, biscuits, rolls, tortillas, pie crusts, bagels, etc.

**Beverages** – Water, juice, energy drinks, cold coffee, soft drinks, etc.

**Dairy** – Eggs, milk, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, cheese, whipping cream, half and half

**Meat** – Should always be frozen when picking up donations (includes chicken, beef, turkey, pork)

**Mix – Frozen, Cooler, Dry items.**

**Frozen** – Ice cream and frozen items.

**Cooler** – Refrigerated bread, cookie dough, items that are refrigerated that aren't dairy items.

**Dry** – Shelf- stable food, cereal, canned goods, dried beans, rice, crackers.

**Nonfood** – Dog food, toilet paper, shampoo, etc.

**Prepared/Perishable** – Ready to eat foods, sandwiches, dips

**Produce** – Any fresh vegetables or produce

**Deli** – Bulk meats and cheese, chicken wings, potato salad, salsas, deli salads, whole roasted chicken, olives

## MealConnect Trouble Shooting

### **Correcting Mistakes**

Go to Previous Receipts.

If the receipt is still within the 24-hr period after entry, the Status will be "Submitted," and an Edit button will be available in the action column. If the receipt is past the 24-hour time, contact SMFB.

### **Viewing Receipts**

Receipts can be viewed, and reports generated on the Reports tab.

### **Changing to another language in Google Chrome**

1. Open the More Options Menu (the button in the top right corner)
2. Select "Settings"
3. Select "Show Advanced Settings"
4. Select "Languages"
5. Select "Language and input settings..."
6. Select "Add"
7. From the drop-down, select your desired language
8. Select "Display Google Chrome in this language"
9. Select "Done"
10. Close and restart Google Chrome
11. Chrome will ask if it should translate webpages. Set them to display in desired language.

### **Buttons not Working**

This is usually caused by an out-of-date internet browser or a poor internet connection. Download the most recent versions of whatever browser you are using.

### **Website is unresponsive**

Press Shift and Refresh.

### **Cannot add or submit receipt**

Most/all fields are required. Leaving certain fields blank may prevent you from adding a line item and/or submitting a receipt.

### **New User or Lost Password**

Contact SMFB Food Resourcing Department to set up new users or reset current users.

## A Few Reminders



Maintaining food safety for our neighbors is our priority. However, keeping open doors of communication and continuing top notch representation of the Grocery Rescue Program is every agencies responsibility. Please make sure all authorized staff/volunteers are equipped with the appropriate items and trained effectively to ensure the safety of the cold chain custody and store pickup procedures.

### Agency Responsibilities

- ID Badges must be worn – Authorized staff/volunteers Only. Contact SMFB Food Resourcing Department for replacement badges
- Closed toe shoes during store pickups (both toe and heel)
- Proper forms are signed/filled out upon leaving with donations if required by store (know your store requirements)
- Neat clothes and proper hygiene (no tank tops, T's with inappropriate verbiage or images)
- Maintain professionalism at all times
- No children in the receiving area or in store while doing a pickup
- Maintain current food handlers cards for all staff/volunteers who pick up/driver for this program and send updated copies to SMFB

### Communication Expectations

- Regular open communication with donor stores and SMFB during emergencies that impede store pickups
- Advanced communication with both SMFB and donor for holidays or other closures
- Exchange of contact information with your donors

### Reporting

- Report pounds in MealConnect within 48 hours of receiving donation
- Please notify St. Mary's Food Bank if you are going to have delays with reporting

Please feel free to reach out to your St. Mary's Food Bank Agency Services Representative or Food Resourcing Department if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to support you! Thank you for all you do.





## Grocery Rescue Do's and Don'ts



- Must have a scale and weigh product
- Must be responsible in documenting weight for each pick-up/delivery within 48 hours in MealConnect (failure to do so may result in suspension)
- Must use refrigerated vehicle or ice coolers to maintain and transport all cold product obtained from participating grocery stores to agency
- Must use ice, ice packs or thermal blankets (if applicable)
- Must have a device to temp product obtained from grocery stores
- Must accept product “as is”
- Must handle product with care and use appropriate gear (i.e., gloves & face masks)
- Must inspect all product received to ensure it is safe and fit for human consumption
- Person(s) picking up product must have valid food safety certificate(s)
- Must be responsible in picking up product on your scheduled days/times agreed up
- Must communicate issues to Kim Warren and your Agency Services Representative **prior** to changes
- Product CANNOT be redistributed/shared with other agencies and/or agency programs unless written approval from SMFB has been given
- Product CANNOT be sold or used for personal use
- Product must be taken directly to the agency



## Driver Checklist

**On Every Visit Bring:**

- Temperature Gun or thermometer
- Plenty of thermal blankets or coolers with ice packs

**Temperature Check:**

- Frozen foods stored at 0°F or less
- Refrigerated foods stored at 41° F or less

**Look at labels:**

- All food should be clearly labeled except for whole produce
- Labels include all ingredients
- Donor may supply an ingredient statement or allergen disclaimers
- Labels must have dates or codes on them for traceability

**Watch for:**

- Foods should be wrapped and free of mold, rot or decomposition
- Do not accept packages that are torn, open, wet or stained on interior or single layer packaging
- Do not accept canned goods that are bulging on the ends, very rusty, dented on the seams or ends
- Do not accept items that have been opened or the safety seal is broken
- Chemical must be store away from food items

**Watch the Clock:**

- Food should arrive at the food bank or agency within 30 minutes after pickup.

## Grocery Rescue Program Contacts



### Grocery Rescue Program Contacts

Kim Warren  
602-343-3139 (Office)  
480-688-0530 (Cell)  
[kwarren@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:kwarren@stmarysfoodbank.org)

Nick Siefker  
602-343-2548 (Office)  
480-798-7518 (Cell)  
[nsiefker@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:nsiefker@stmarysfoodbank.org)

Bobbie Tomasek  
602-343-3103  
[btomasek@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:btomasek@stmarysfoodbank.org)

Or email:  
[fooddonations@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:fooddonations@stmarysfoodbank.org)



## Internet Resources

**1. MealConnect Website for reporting pounds:**

<https://mealconnect.org/>

**2. Equipment/supplies may be found at these or other suppliers:**

- a. <https://www.amazon.com/>
- b. <https://www.uline.com/>
- c. <https://www.staples.com/>

**3. Additional food safety information**

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/>

**4. Food and Beverage Storage**

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

**Daily Freezer/ Refrigerator  
Temperature Log**

**Instructions:** This log will be maintained for each refrigerator and freezer (both walk-in and reach-in units) in the facility. A designated food service employee will record the time, air temperature and their initials. Maintain this log for a minimum of five years or until given permission to discard it. If corrective action is required on any day, circle the date in the first column and explain the action taken on the back of the chart or on an attached sheet of paper. Refrigerators should be between 38°F and 41°F. Freezers should be between -10°F and 0°F.

Month/Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Description: Freezer/Cooler Unit# \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time Temp. Taken	Temperature	Food Service Worker's Initials	Time Temp. Taken	Temperature	Food Service Worker's Initials
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
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22						
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24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						
31						

Supervisory Employee's Initials and Date: \_\_\_\_\_