

HARVEST HOPE FOOD BANK 2026

FOOD SAFETY AGENCY TRAINING





General Food Safety for Pantries 2026



The following training is intended for programs that provide food to households to take home. This training is not appropriate for programs that prepare meals for consumption. In those instances, courses provided by ServSafe® are required.

Harvest Hope Food Bank requires Food Safety Training for all agency partners. Proper Food Safety can help prevent food borne illness.

Personal Hygiene

- Wash your hands frequently
 - Especially after eating, drinking, smoking, touching your face, nose, ears, hair, handling waste, using the restroom, coughing or sneezing, etc. (**Assessment questions 2 & 5**)
 - Use hot water, liquid soap, and disposable paper towels. You should scrub your hands and arms for at least 10-15 seconds (**Assessment question 16**)
- Jewelry, watches, nail polish, false fingernails should not be worn when handling food
- Wash hands after handling raw foods (*uncooked meat, poultry, eggs, produce, etc.*) and before handling cooked foods. Wear gloves if required. Wear aprons if required.

Receipt of Food

- Check all food that you receive
- Canned food must be labeled and not have: Swollen Ends, Leaks, Seal problems, Lids that are popped, Major dents, or Rust. (**Assessment question 13**)

Motto to live by: *When in doubt, throw it out!*

Product Dates

- A “sell by” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
- A “Best if used by (or before)” date is a recommendation to help you get the best quality or flavor. It is not meant as a purchase or safety date.
- A “Use-by” date is the last date recommended for the use of the product **at peak quality**. The product’s manufacturer determines this date.
- Please **Do not** distribute baby food and formula after it has expired. (Assessment question 12)

Storage

- Rotate to ensure that the oldest food is used first. First In, First Out (FIFO). (Assessment question 7)
- Check the shelf life of food.
- Store food and supplies properly:
 - Store at least 6 inches off the floor. (Assessment question 6 & 15)
 - Store at least 4 inches away from the wall.
- Store food at the proper temperature.
- Store food separate from sanitation, maintenance, and consumer chemicals like shampoo, cleaning supplies, etc. (Assessment question 1)

Cross-Contamination

- The transfer of a contaminant from one surface to another (Assessment question 3)
- Prevent cross-contamination when storing and handling food.
- When cross-contamination occurs, report it.
- Cross-contamination with allergens is serious: Allergens include wheat, soy, milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.

Types of common contaminants include:

- Physical: Wood, metal, glass, paint chips, hair, etc.
- Chemical: Cleaning chemicals, maintenance chemicals, pesticides, etc.
- Biological: Microorganisms, insects, rodents, birds, etc.

Controlling Time and Temperature

- Each refrigerator and Freezer should contain a thermometer.
- Document temperature readings for your refrigerators and freezers.
- Harvest Hope Food Bank has temperature logs available.
 - Store and transport refrigerated foods at 40° F, or less.
 - Store and transport frozen foods at 0° F, or less. (**Assessment question 14**)
- Check the temperature of food and storage areas with verified thermometers.
- Thaw frozen foods at 40°F, and never at room temperature. Food may also be thawed by using a microwave oven, or under running cold water.
- Keep hot food at 135°F (57°C) or higher. (**Assessment question 9**)
- Keep cold food at 40°F (5°C) or lower. (**Assessment question 10**)
- Keep frozen food frozen.
- Separate raw and cooked foods in refrigerators. Raw meat should be stored below other foods.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- To properly clean you should:
 - Clean the surface, rinse the surface, sanitize the surface, and allow to air-dry (**Assessment question 4**)
 - Surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized each time you use them (**Assessment question 8**)
- For non-porous surfaces:
 - You can make a simple sanitizer by combining 1 tablespoon of household bleach with 1 gallon of water
- For porous surfaces:
 - 3 tablespoons of bleach with 1 gallon of water

Pest Control

- Preventative Maintenance is the key to keeping your area pest free.
- The food storage area should be kept clean and free of debris. (**Assessment question 11**)
- Ensure that all stored products are sealed properly.
- Inspect the food storage area every 30 days for signs of pest infestation. We recommend that you document findings.
- Work with a licensed Pest Control company to eliminate any pests.
 - Inspect stored products to ensure that no damage or infestation has occurred. Once evidence of pest infestation has been determined, discard any damaged products.

Final Thoughts:

Please Make sure.....

- You practice good personal hygiene
- Food is prepared and handled in a safe manner
- The food you receive is safe and stored properly
- You are being proactive to prevent cross contamination
- You have thermometers in refrigerators and freezers and you check and log temperatures daily
- All food handling equipment and all surfaces are clean and sanitized after each use
- Preventative pest control is being practiced

2026-Food Safety for Food Pantries Assessment: Please answer **true or **false****

1. It is ok to store shampoo above food if the shampoo is stored _____
2. You should wash your hands after you take out the trash _____
3. Cross-contamination occurs when a pathogen is transferred from one surface to another _____
4. The correct steps to clean and sanitize are: clean, rinse and sanitize _____
5. You do not need to wash your hands after taking a smoke break _____
6. Food should be stored 4 inches off the floor _____
7. The oldest food should be given out first _____
8. Surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized once a day _____
9. Hot foods should be kept at a minimum temperature of 120°F _____
10. Refrigerators should be kept at 40°F or below _____
11. The food storage area should be kept free of debris to prevent pest infestation _____
12. Baby food can be distributed after the expiration date _____
13. Cans that are leaking should be thrown out _____
14. 2° F is an acceptable temperature for a freezer _____
15. Food can be stored on the floor if it is in the case _____
16. It is ok to wash your hands with cold water _____

Date: _____

Food Pantry Name: _____

Pantry Volunteer Printed Name: _____

Pantry Volunteer Signature: _____

2026 General Food Safety for Pantries **KEY**

Assessment: Please answer **true** or **false**

1. It is ok to store shampoo above food **FALSE**
2. You should wash your hands after you take out the trash **TRUE**
3. Cross-contamination occurs when a pathogen is transferred from one surface to another **TRUE**
4. The correct steps to clean and sanitize are: clean, rinse and sanitize **TRUE**
5. You do not need to wash your hands after taking a smoke break **FALSE**
6. Food should be stored 4 inches off the floor **FALSE** (SIX INCHES)
7. The oldest food should be given out first **TRUE** (FIFO-FIRST IN, FIRST OUT)
8. Surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized once a day **FALSE** (EACH TIME IT IS USED)
9. Hot foods should be kept at a minimum temperature of 120°F **FALSE** (135 ° OR HIGHER)
10. Refrigerators should be kept at 40°F or below **TRUE**
11. The food storage area should be kept free of debris to prevent pest infestation **TRUE**
12. Baby food can be distributed after the expiration date **FALSE**
13. Cans that are leaking should be thrown out **TRUE**
14. 2° F is an acceptable temperature for a freezer **FALSE** (0 ° OR LESS)
15. Food can be stored on the floor if it is in the case **FALSE**
16. It is ok to wash your hands with cold water **FALSE**