

Top 10 Tips for PTA/School Community Food Distribution Partnerships

For PTAs/School Communities Operating a Food Distribution Program:

1. **Set a weekly goal.** Number of bags or families served and timeframe (how frequently to distribute, how many weeks the program should last).
2. **Make a grocery list.** Work with your school social worker to develop a standard list of food items your families need.
3. **Consider what help you need.** What assistance would be helpful from partners – volunteers, financial assistance, food items, pre-bagged groceries, grocery gift cards (specify which stores), other assistance? Consider what help would NOT be helpful or could be disruptive. Clearly communicate your needs with your partners.
4. **Reach out to potential partners.** Other PTAs/school communities, civic associations, community organizations, and others in your community. Determine who can help – how often and in what way.
5. **Set up a regular communication check-in.** Share contact information (name, email, phone) for your organizing committee with your partners. Have a weekly (or more often) phone call with your organizing committee to review how the week went and to adjust processes and goals, as needed. Communicate with your partners to give feedback on the prior week and to adjust needs, when needed.

For PTA/School Community Partners:

6. **Follow the lead of the organizing PTA/school community.** Even if you have connections at the partner school, please work directly with the organizers. Coordinating through the organizers helps avoid extra work or disrupting systems already in place. Take some time to observe and support the process before suggesting process improvements.
7. **Ask the organizers what kind of partnership would be most helpful.** Types of assistance, frequency, duration, etc. Also ask what kind of well-intended actions might be disruptive or unhelpful. Don't assume you know what they need.
8. **Set achievable goals.** Consider what your PTA/school community can feasibly support – one-time assistance or on-going assistance. Partner PTAs/schools will appreciate if you set an achievable goal you can commit to on a weekly basis. If you cannot support on a weekly basis, be clear about that with your partner about what support is feasible for your organization. Work with your PTA structure/school community group to organize volunteers or to vote on actions, if required by PTA by-laws.
9. **Establish a coordination team.** Call for a few regular volunteers who can organize your PTA/school community's efforts to support your partner's food distribution program. Assess how volunteers can support ongoing partnership needs (weekly support, specific assistance, as needed?).
10. **Communicate.** Share contact information (name, email, phone) for your coordination team with your partner. Set a weekly check-in with your partner PTA/school (phone call, email or text) to get feedback on the prior week and what changes may be needed for the upcoming week. Set up communication channels with your coordination team. Communicate with your own PTA/school community to ask for help and to share the impact the partnership is having.