

Things to know about your first pantry visit

Preparing for visit:

- Know which pantry to visit. You can find this out by asking someone from your area that you know uses their local pantry, calling 211, visiting the Food Bank of the Southern Tier's website at foodbankst.org, or calling the Food Bank at 607-796-6061. If you mistakenly go to the wrong pantry, that's ok. Pantries will serve anyone the first time they come in, regardless of which one is appropriate to your address. They will also give you the information you need to know where to go for future pantry visits.
- Bring your ID and proof of address. If you are not able to bring these items with you, you should be served anyway, and you can bring them with you on your next visit.
- If you need to bring any children with you, try to bring something to keep them busy while you are there. Children need to be supervised.
- If you have dietary restrictions, you may want to call the pantry ahead of time to discuss this.
- Bring bags with you. While pantries try to keep some bags in case someone needs some, it is recommended that you bring your own bags to use.
- If you are walking, try to bring along someone to help you carry your bags home, or a cart to put your bags in.
- If you are unable to come to the pantry yourself, you may send someone to get food for you. Make sure they have a signed note from you giving them permission to pick up food in your name, as well as your ID and proof of address.
- Be prepared to spend about an hour at the pantry. It may take a little less or more, depending on how busy they are on that day.
- Expect to bring home approximately three days' worth of food. Some pantries allow more than one visit per month while others allow a single visit per month.

During your visit

- You will have a short intake process in which you will be asked to fill out a form and provide ID and proof of address. If you need any information or assistance in applying for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), ask the volunteer for the SNAP Outreach Worker's (NOEP) contact info.
- Once you finish with intake, you may have to wait in the waiting area until they finish serving anyone ahead of you.
- You will go through the pantry and choose from their selection of foods (shop). The volunteer will let you know how many to choose based on your household size. There will be a selection of meat and other proteins, grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy, some staples, and breads. These items can be frozen, fresh, canned, boxed, and refrigerated. Some pantries can help with some non-food items such as toilet paper, dish soap, toothpaste, diapers, etc. If you need any of these items, please ask if they are available.
- If you are offered an item that you cannot use, feel free to kindly tell the volunteer that you would like to pass on that item.

Please note that each location is different and may do things a little differently than what is described here. Rest assured, if you show up to a pantry for the first time, you will be served, regardless of documentation or location.

If you have additional questions about going to a pantry, please call 211, or the Food Bank of the Southern Tier at 607-796-6061, or visit the website at www.foodbankst.org.