

Food Pantries: Opportune Venues to Increase Access to Healthy Food



Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions

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April 28, 2021

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Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions

Serve as a resource for the charitable food system to:

- Increase access to healthy food
- Address root causes of hunger
- Identify best practices to reduce food insecurity
- Promote a paradigm shift towards long-term solutions to hunger

Offerings:

- Monthly newsletters
- Wednesday Webinar series
- Consulting services with a flexible fee structure

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Time for a Quick Poll!

Who is here today?

What type of organization are you representing?

- Local food pantry/meal program
- Regional food bank
- Pathways grant coordinator
- Community-based organization
- Other



Charitable Food System

200 FA Food Banks



+ ~170 regional Food Banks

+ >60,000 food pantries



Millions of Americans rely on food pantries for food on a chronic basis

Food pantries are part of our national and local food systems.



According to a recent national study, among food pantry clients:



58%
OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A
MEMBER WITH HIGH
BLOOD PRESSURE



33%
OF HOUSEHOLDS
HAVE A MEMBER
WITH DIABETES

47% of clients responded they are in **fair or poor health**
29% of households all members have **no health insurance**
55% of households report some **medical debt**

There is demand for healthy food

Three studies with consistent findings:

- Clients rank fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins as items they want most
- Clients rank soda, candy and snack foods as the items they want least

Healthy food is less available in low-income neighborhoods, while unhealthy food is available and cheap.



Food pantries can be opportune settings to:

- Address social determinants of health
- Reduce health disparities
- Create healthy food environments



But what the heck is "healthy" food?



Chunky Beef Stew




This can has **2,425 mg** of sodium.
= **105%** of daily recommendation

Goals for SWAP

Developed in 2016

- Simple
- Intuitive
- Transparent
- Capture all food groups found in food pantries
- Create “nudges” for healthy behavior





SWAP

SUPPORTING • WELLNESS • AT • PANTRIES

GREEN

Choose often; low in saturated fat, sodium and sugar; supports health

YELLOW

Choose sometimes; medium levels of fat, sodium or sugar; can contribute to good health

RED

Choose rarely; high levels of fat, sodium or sugar; think of as treats; limited health benefits

ARTICLE IN PRESS



PRACTICE APPLICATIONS
Topics of Professional Interest

Supporting Wellness at Pantries: Development of a Nutrition Stiplight System for Food Banks and Food Pantries

THE FOOD BANKING SYSTEM, composed of food banks that warehouse food and food pantries that distribute food, is a critical source of groceries for more than 40 million Americans living in households with food insecurity each year.¹ The majority of food banks or pantries in the United States, however, do not have an on-site registered dietitian or other professional feeding specialist relationship with the food sectors and other providers who provide access to food to their food banks. Several food banks that distribute food to nearby food pantries, and meal programs such as community kitchens, food pantries, and community feeding organizations that provide the food to people in need. Although this network is vital to the emergency food system, recent national data show that 80% of hunger hotspots are still in need of support on a regular basis to help with their monthly food budget.² Several studies have found that people who visit food pantries experience a double burden of food insecurity and chronic disease.^{3,4} And recent data indicate that more than half of food pantries do not have a household inventory with appropriate and use that information with clients.⁵ Despite the

strong link between food insecurity and chronic disease, the emphasis of many food banks and food pantries is on quantity of pounds distributed rather than quality of food. A key to more food security for food pantries, however, does not necessarily need to be more food. The focus of this article is on the development of a stiplight system for making food in food banks and food pantries by specific nutrition criteria and the piloting of SWAP in food pantries.

Food pantries have significant potential to provide better food for their communities.⁶⁻⁸ While a couple of dietary changes have been empirically tested by this system, the strategy is to generate food selections for clients based on health profiles. An example is a pilot study conducted by <http://www.epi-right.org>⁹ that revealed food pantries' needs with regard to diabetes management support. The findings were promising and suggest that this intervention led to significant improvements in the client dietary quality and ability to manage their blood sugar. Other strategies in food pantries have shown that a client choice food inventory management system increased diet quality¹⁰ and a cooking classes program improved cooking skills.¹¹

Although the research to date has employed approaches ranging from a sustainable system depends on the ability of food pantries staff and volunteers to make programs about the food quality it provides to their clients, so they can identify items that are appropriate to purchase and be able to improve their own. In the current knowledge, there are no systems designed specifically for food pantries to allow staff or low to determine

the nutritional quality of foods. The project aims to create a system that would assist food pantries with this. There are a number of challenges in creating a nutrition rating system for use in food pantries. First, pantries are typically not primarily by volunteers who have no experience with rating a food item. Therefore, widely recognized staff in other nutrition level or food pantries in use or suggest a tool to be concrete enough for reliable implementation. At the same time, the system cannot be too complicated. Scientists have created algorithms that score foods on a scale (eg, from 1 to 100) based on a range of positive and negative indicators. (eg, the Nutri-Score algorithm developed by the National Institute for Research in Food Safety and Nutrition¹² or the Nutri-Score model in the United Kingdom¹³). These systems are not feasible to implement in a food pantry because they require access to a computer to calculate the score. A second challenge is that pantries do not have access to a wide range of food pantries; every item that is available from their region of food bank and food pantries. Because of this, pantry staff may believe that have limited capacity to change what is stocked on the shelves. Therefore, the system must set reasonable standards for the types of foods that are available so staff members do not feel like something they stock in the “bad” budget category.

SWAP uses an intuitive stiplight system with simple messaging while incorporating the most current nutrition guidelines and recommendations. It is designed to be implemented by a staff member using a food inventory system. Unlike other food pantries, SWAP was also developed to be simple by categorizing foods based on only three attributes: saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. These were chosen because they are most associated with chronic disease risk.



SWAP™ GUIDE

SUPPORTING • WELLNESS • AT • PANTRIES

Revised 2020

FOOD CATEGORY	CHOOSE OFTEN			CHOOSE SOMETIMES			CHOOSE RARELY		
	SATURATED FAT	SODIUM	ADDED SUGAR*	SATURATED FAT	SODIUM	ADDED SUGAR*	SATURATED FAT	SODIUM	ADDED SUGAR*
Fruits and Vegetables	≤2g	≤230 mg	0g (≤12g for Total Sugar)	100% juice and plain dried fruit are yellow.			≤2.5g	≤490mg	≤12g (≤24g for Total Sugar)
				≤2.5 g	231-479mg	1-11g (13-23g for Total Sugar)			
Grains	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≤2.5g	231-479mg	7-11g	≤2.5g	≤490mg	≤12g
	≤2g	≤230mg	≤6g						
Protein	≤2g	≤230mg	≤6g	2.5-4.5g	231-479mg	7-11g	≤5g	≤490mg	≤12g
Dairy	≤3g	≤230mg	0g (≤12g for Total)	3.5-6g	231-479mg	1-11g (13-23g for Total)	≤6.5g	≤490mg	≤12g (≤24g for Total)
Non-Dairy Alternatives	≤2g	≤230mg	≤6g	≤2.5g	231-479mg	7-11g	≤2.5g	≤490mg	≤12g
Beverages	0g	0mg	0g	0g	1-140mg	1-11g	≤1g	≤141mg	≤12g
Mixed Dishes	≤3g	≤490mg	≤6g	3.5-6g	491-599mg	7-11g	≤6.5g	≤500mg	≤12g
Processed and Packaged Snacks	None			If a grain is the first ingredient, it must be a whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≤2.5g	≤141mg	≤7g
				0-2g	0-140mg	0-6g			
Desserts	None			None			All desserts are red		
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Not ranked. Examples include salad dressing, sauces (except tomato sauce), jelly, syrup, oils, flour, sugar.								
Miscellaneous Products	Not ranked. Examples include baby food, nutritional supplements, protein powders.								

*Use the added sugar value when available on the Nutrition Facts Label. If it is not available, use the total sugar value. The thresholds are the same for all categories except fruits and vegetables and dairy.

Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System

In 2019, *Healthy Eating Research (HER)*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, convened a panel of experts in the charitable food system, nutrition, and food policy fields to create clear, specific recommendations for evidence-based nutrition guidelines tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the charitable food system. The intent of these recommendations is to improve the quality of foods in food banks and pantries in order to increase access to and promote healthier food choices. More information about the expert panel methodology and the detailed recommendations can be found in the full report at: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>.



- Panel of nutrition experts and food bank staff
- Focused on what is practical for food banks and pantries

*** Important Notes ***

- SWAP has been revised to align 100% with the HER nutrition guidelines.
- SWAP is a suite of tools and resources to implement the HER guidelines in food banks and food pantries.
- SWAP can help put the HER guidelines into action.
- Feeding America is recommending (not requiring) that food banks use the HER guidelines.

Getting closer to one national system!

How to Categorize Food using SWAP

STEP 1

Determine what food group the item is in

STEP 2

Look at the Nutrition Facts label and compare Saturated Fat, Sodium and Sugars values on the label to the SWAP Nutrition Guide.

STEP 3

Determine which color the 3 nutrients fall in, manually or with an Excel file.



STEP 4

- If all nutrient levels fall within one color, then the food is categorized by that color.
- If the nutrient levels fall within multiple colors, categorize this food by the least encouraged color, either yellow or red.

STEP 5 (varies for food banks and pantries)

Food Bank: enter the rank in your inventory system.

Food pantry: label the food by color and place the food items on the appropriately colored shelf.



CHOOSE OFTEN
ELIJA FRECUENTEMENTE



CHOOSE SOMETIMES
ELIJA VECES



CHOOSE RARELY
ELIJA CON POCAS FRECUENCIA

The SWAP Calculator

Another method for ranking food using SWAP

B17 Dairy - Total Sugars

Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP)TM

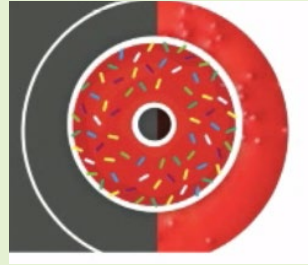
FOODSHARE

Please see Instruction tab below for a step-by-step guide for using this tool.

Rank foods using SWAPTM by entering the name, food group and nutrition information from the food label.
The system will automatically rank the food as green, yellow or red.

Food Name	Food Group	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Sugar (g)	Rank
ABC Creamy Peanut Butter	Protein	2.5	140	3	Yellow
Solid White Tuna (Bumblebee)	Protein	0	140	0	Green
Fruit, mixed in light syrup	Fruits and Veges - Added Sugars	0	15	11	Yellow
Spaghetti Sauce - Ragu mushroom	Fruits and Veges - Total Sugars	0	470	10	Yellow
Chunky Beef Stew (Castleberg's)	Mixed Dishes / Combo Meals	6	970	4	Red
Dairy pure 2% reduced fat milk	Dairy - Total Sugars	3	130	12	Green
Ground coffee	Beverages	0	0	0	Green
Rice - gulf pacific brown rice	Grains: Whole Grain	0	10	0	Green
Chocolate chip brownie oat bars	Snacks: Not Whole Grain	1.5	95	11	Red
Yogurt	Dairy - Total Sugars	0	55	16	Yellow

SWAP Ranking in Meals / Soups



High in salt

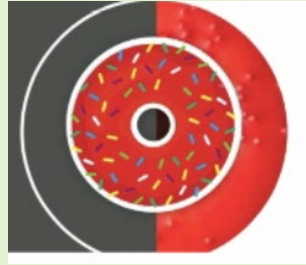


Medium salt



Low in salt

SWAP Ranking in Cereal



High in sugar



Medium sugar



Low in sugar

Most important Ingredient



Steps for using **SWAP** in your pantry

1. Pre-sort

- Food arrives into pantry
- Place in storage area

2. Sort by food category

- Organize food into bins by SWAP food category (e.g. grains, fruits/vegetables, snacks, etc.)

Steps for using SWAP in your pantry

3. Rank by color

- Rank foods by SWAP color
- Place similar color foods in bins or boxes. For example, a box for "Yellow Grains."
- Color code the boxes by Green, Yellow, and Red



Steps for using SWAP in your pantry

4. Shelve

- Organize food in your pantry by color



CHOOSE OFTEN
ELIJA FRECUENTEMENTE



CHOOSE SOMETIMES
ELIJA VECES



CHOOSE RARELY
ELIJA CON POCA FRECUENCIA



Time for a Quick Poll!

How much of your pantry's food comes from a food bank or community donations?

- Almost all from food bank
- Most from food bank, a little from community donations
- About half from food bank, half from donations
- Most from community donations, a little from food bank
- Almost all from community donations



Increasing the Supply of Healthy Food

HEALTHY FOOD DONATION LIST



Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) is a system for ranking foods by nutrition to stock a food pantry with healthier food items. Please help us support the health and well-being of our clients and community by increasing the amount of healthy food you donate. Please consider giving more of the following foods.

FRUIT



- **Fresh fruit**
- **Canned fruit,** with 0g of added sugar or less than 12g of total sugar
- **100% fruit juice**

VEGETABLES

- **Fresh vegetables**
- **Canned vegetables,** with less than 230mg of sodium and less than 0g of added sugar or less than 12g of total sugar
- **100% vegetable juice**



PROTEIN



- **Canned beans,** low-salt (less than 230mg of sodium)
- **Peanut / nut butter**
- **Dried beans**
- **Canned tuna or chicken in water**

WHOLE GRAINS

- **100% whole wheat or whole grain bread, tortillas, and pasta**
- **Brown rice**
- **Oatmeal**
- **Cereal with first ingredient whole-grain** and with less than 6g of added sugar



DAIRY

- **Low-fat or non-fat shelf stable milk**
- **Low-fat or non-fat yogurt,** with 0g of added sugar or less than 12g of total sugar



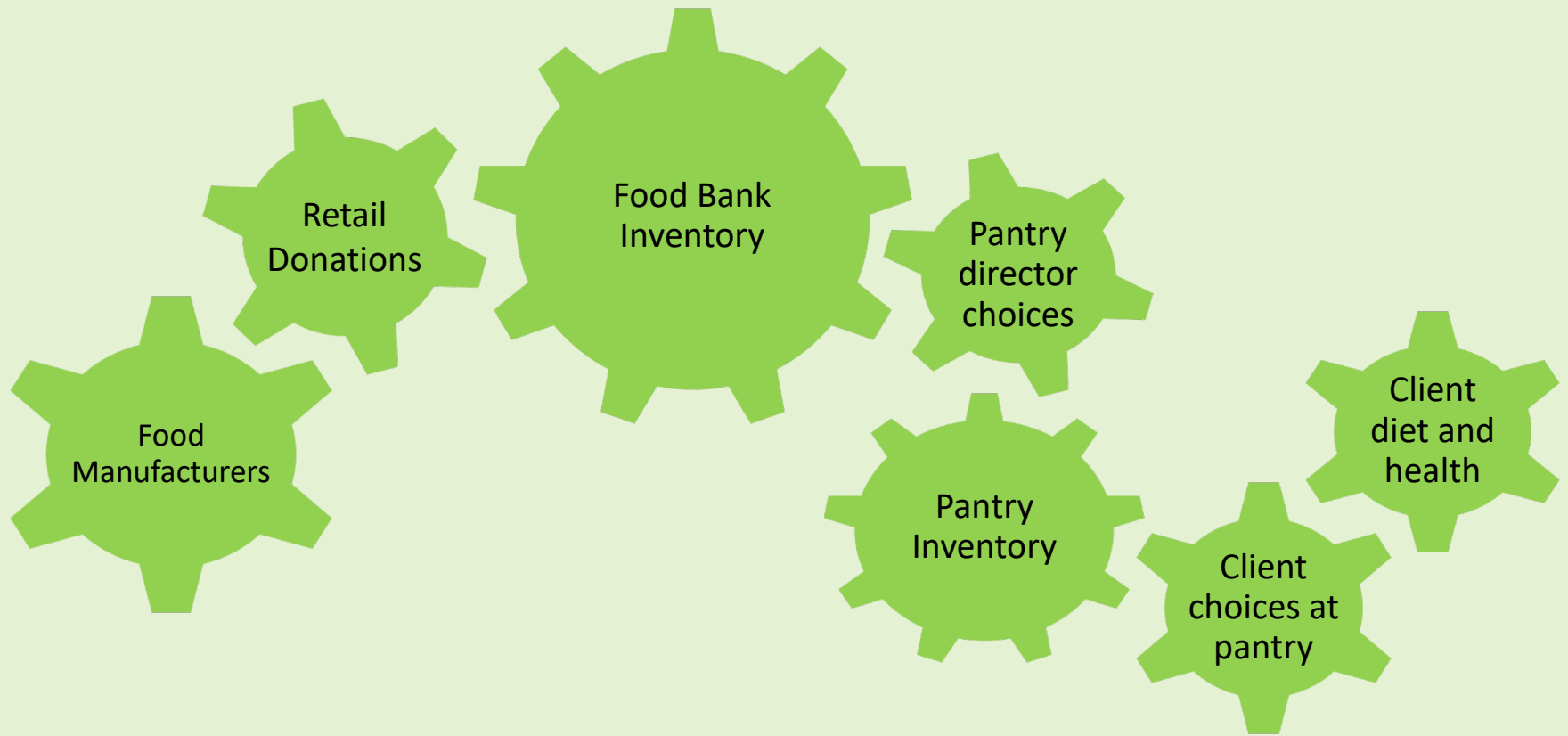
OTHER FOODS

- **Canned soup or broth,** low- or no salt-added (less than 480mg of sodium and less than 3g of saturated fat)
- **Spices and dried herbs**



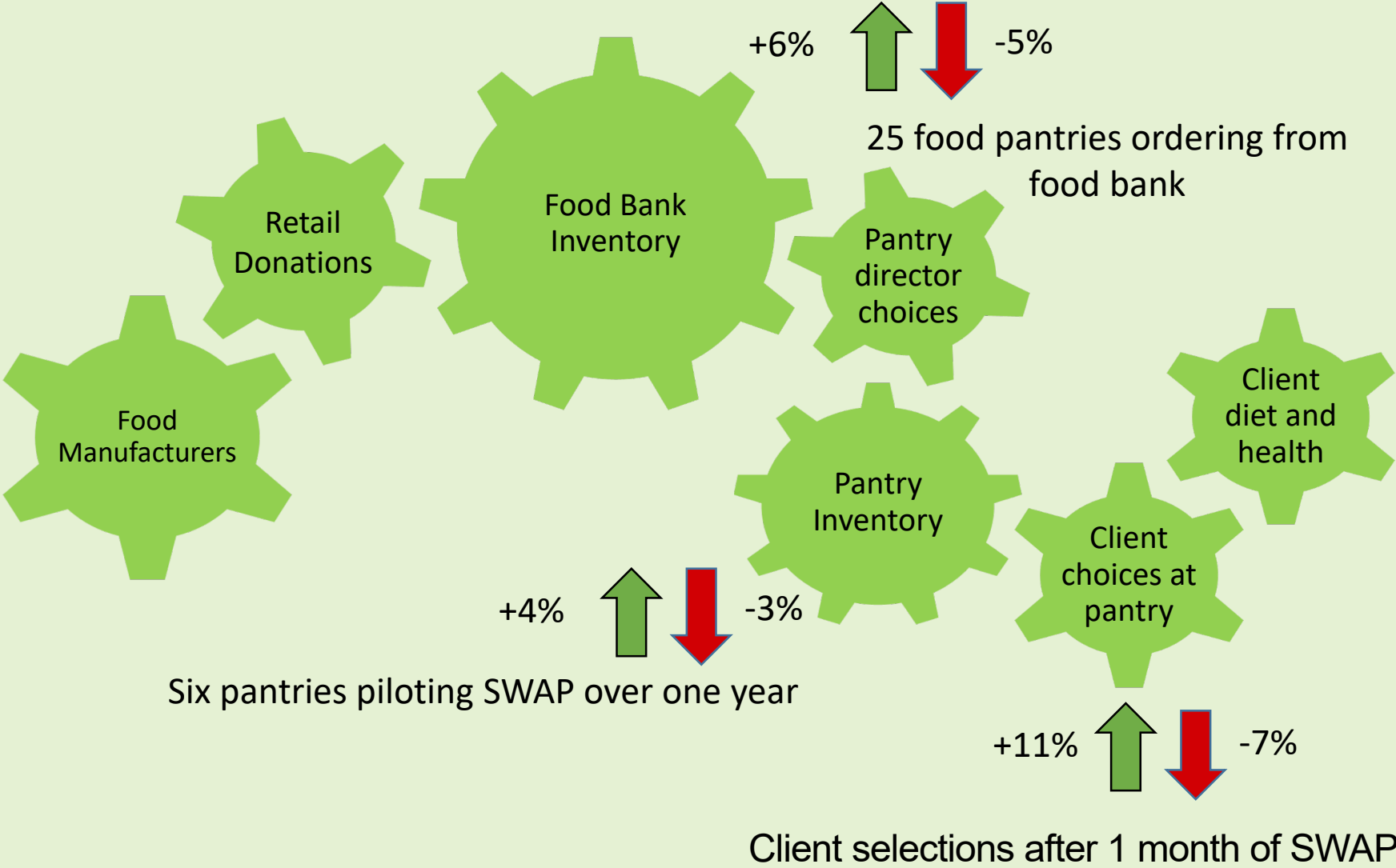
Can insert Food Bank Logo

How can we improve the availability of nutritious foods across the system?



Developed by Marlene Schwartz, Uconn Rudd Center

Evidence for Supporting Wellness at Pantries



SWAP Materials for Display



CHOOSE OFTEN
ELIJA FRECUENTEMENTE



CHOOSE SOMETIMES
ELIJA VECES




CHOOSE RARELY
ELIJA CON Poca FRECUENCIA



DIABETES FRIENDLY
AMIGABLES PARA DIABÉTICOS



HEART HEALTHY
CORAZÓN SALUDABLE



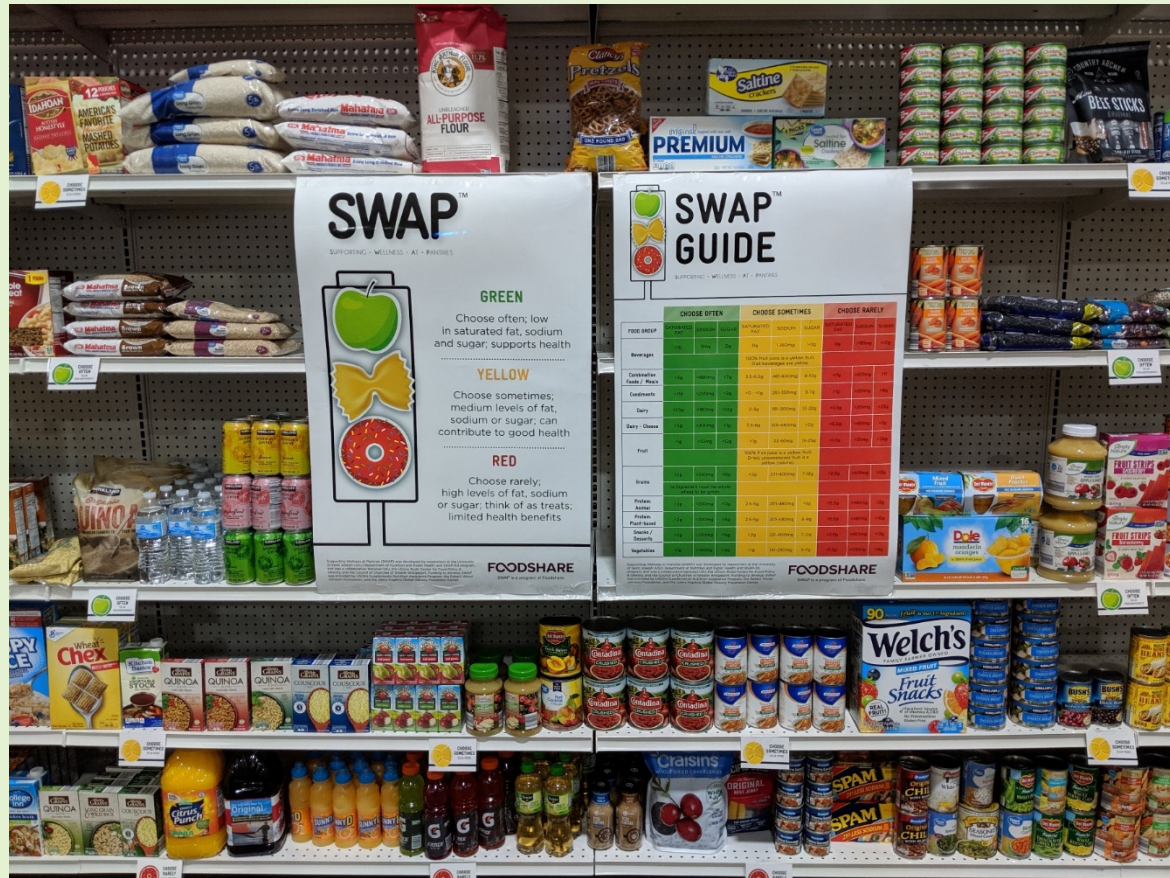
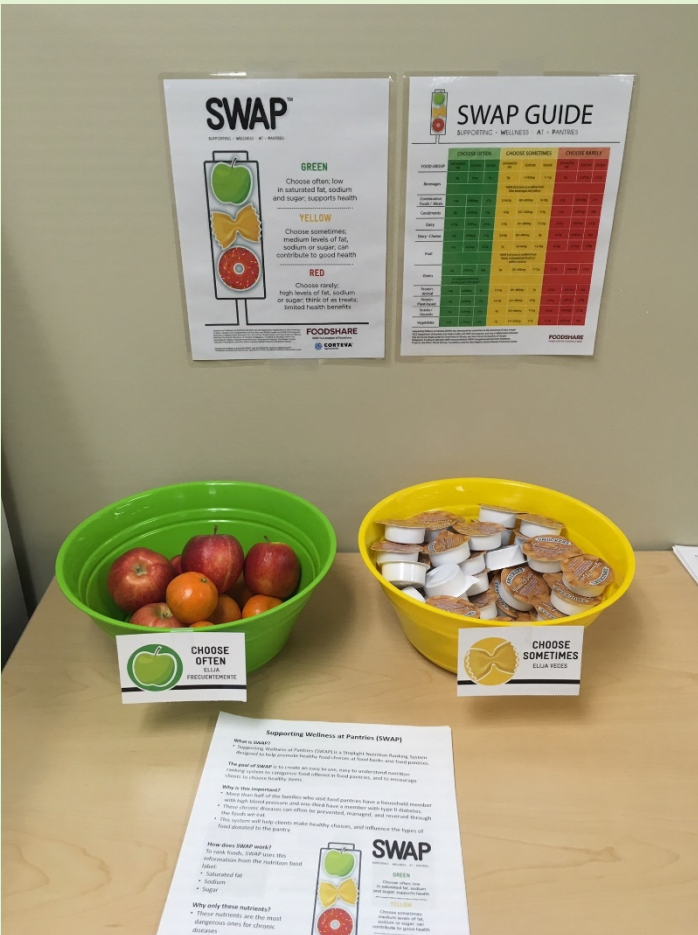
SWAP
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GREEN
Choose often; low in saturated fat, sodium and sugar; supports health

YELLOW
Choose sometimes; medium levels of fat, sodium or sugar; can contribute to good health

RED
Choose rarely; high levels of fat, sodium or sugar; think of as treats; limited health benefits

Healthy pantries can take many forms!



Healthy pantries can take many forms!



Snack Display

Before



After



Healthy pantries can take many forms!

Super Shelf - Minnesota

<https://www.supershelfmn.org/>

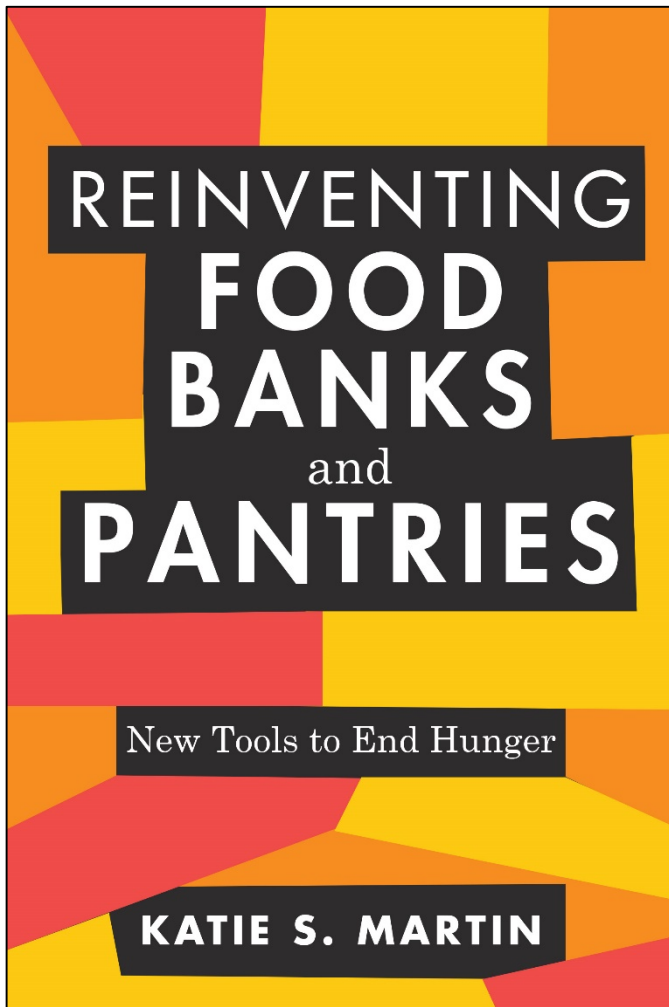


Healthy pantries can take many forms!

VT Fresh – Vermont Food Bank

<https://www.vtfoodbank.org/nurture-people/vt-fresh/about-vt-fresh>





New Book available

"The book educates as it inspires." – Food Bank News

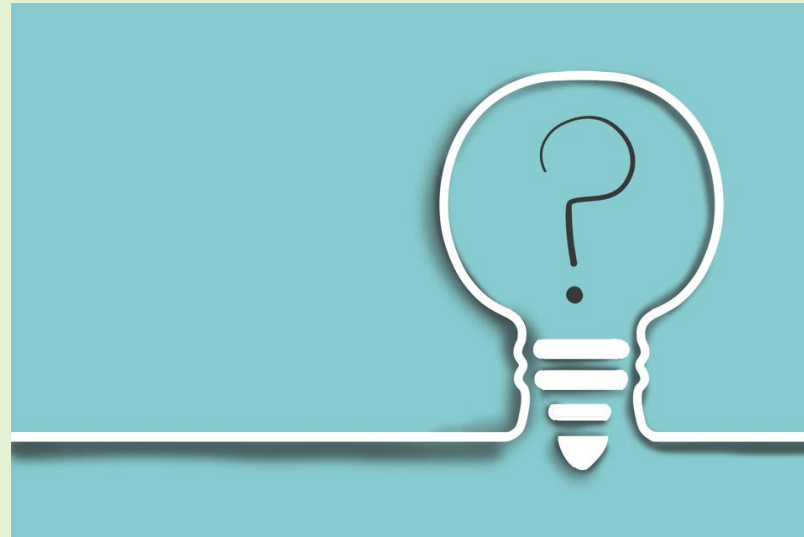
"My first choice for food bank volunteers, staff, board members, and students."

– Mark Winne

20% off with code MARTIN

www.islandpress.org/books/reinventing-food-banks-and-pantries

Questions?



Visit foodshare.org/Institute to sign up for our updates!

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