

Volunteer Handbook

Updated 02/19

**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction 2
2. Handbook Purpose 2
3. Nourish History, Mission, Outreach 2
4. Volunteer Expectations 4
5. Volunteer Positions and Tasks 4
6. Volunteer Guidelines, Policies & Safety 5
7. Food Safety 9
8. Volunteer Agreement 13

Locations:

Smyrna Direct Service:

130 Richardson St.

Smyrna, TN 37167

615.355.0697

Murfreesboro Direct Service:

211 Bridge Ave

McFadden Community Center

Murfreesboro, TN 37129

615.624.7297

Murfreesboro HUB Distribution Center:

1809 Memorial Blvd. (next to True Value Hardware)

Murfreesboro, TN 37129

615.203.3963

Email: volunteer@nourishfoodbank.org

Hours of Operation:

Smyrna Direct Service: Monday-Friday 10am-2pm, 2nd/4th Saturday of the month 10am-2pm

Murfreesboro Direct Service: Monday-Friday 10am-2pm, closed weekends

Murfreesboro HUB Distribution Center: Monday-Friday 9am-4pm, closed weekends

Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

Nourish is closed Federal holidays (Saturdays that correspond to a Federal holiday).

Nourish follows the Rutherford County School closures for inclement/severe weather. If the schools are closed for temperature, Nourish is still open.

1. **Introduction**

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Nourish Food Bank! We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer your time with us. We understand that your time is precious, and we are honored that you are willing to spend some of it with us. Each and every day our agency depends on volunteers like you to ensure that we operate efficiently and successfully. In short, Nourish Food Bank couldn’t do it without you!

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about the volunteer opportunities we offer. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to Nourish Food Bank’s policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Volunteer Coordinator or Warehouse Manager.

Again, on behalf of our staff and everyone here at Nourish Food Bank, we welcome you to our volunteer program. Thank you for taking time to help us end the cycle of food insecurity, one household at a time.

Sincerely,

Ladawna Parham

Executive Director

1. **Handbook Purpose**

This handbook has been produced to help you feel prepared and a confident as a better Nourish Food Bank volunteer. This book will share with you a little of our history, philosophy, practices, and policies.

We hope this Handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with us. We depend on you – your success is our success. Please don’t hesitate to ask questions. Your Volunteer Coordinator will gladly answer them.

We ask that you read this Handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise.

1. **Nourish History, Mission, Outreach**

Nourish Food Bank exists to feed families and fuel hope across Rutherford County, and to nourish our families and communities through compassionate service, supportive programs, and partnerships that create a network of care and hope.

Our Work

The Nourish Food Bank has been working to end hunger and build up a community response to food insecurity for more than 35 years - first as the Smyrna-La Vergne Food Bank and now, as Nourish Food Bank, with additional locations in Murfreesboro.

Last year alone, we provided more than 200,000 meals worth of food to families in economic and food crisis across our service communities. On average we serve 500 families per month, totaling roughly 1,200 individuals a month.

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Hunger and food insecurity are often not the only challenges our clients face. Many of our clients lack the skills, or education necessary to gain or retain employment, and many of those employed work for wages far below sustainability levels for their families. We often refer our clients to GED, ESL, and adult reading classes, along with referrals to financial counseling, utilities, and rental assistance, insurance access, and other community-based resources. Our goal is to reduce the number of families needing emergency food by working together with other agencies to provide the education, skill sets, and supportive resources needed to help transition our clients out of the cycle of poverty and into independence and sustainability.

Nourish HUB Distribution Center

Our collaborative endeavors are an essential part of our organizational structure. The direct food distribution to hungry individuals and families is our backbone and at the root of everything we do. However, we also recognize that there are many ways that the hungry seek help and not all of those may be walking through our doors. Understanding this, we’ve sought out collaborations that allow us to share food and resources with like-minded entities to reach a broader base of need. Examples of this include our work with the Atlas Backpack Program of Rutherford County Schools, through which we distribute over 500 backpack kits monthly to homeless youth to provide weekend take-home food supplies; Motlow State Community College, where we’ve helped to establish food pantries onsite, worked with Smyrna to create a Motlow Market concept and now pack emergency boxes accessible to Motlow for students in crisis; Journey Home, with which we’ve both received and distributed food as needed; Endure Athletics, helping to immediately access food for families living in hotels and also to build a structure for onsite distribution at hotels for homeless children; and many others from veterans outreach groups to domestic violence centers providing in-shelter meals to women and children. Only by providing these kinds of collaborative approaches to community care can we truly move the needle on hunger.

1. **Volunteer Expectations**

What you can expect from Nourish Food Bank:

* Respect for your commitment, time and confidentiality
* To be part of a team
* Ongoing support from everyone on the Nourish Food Bank Staff
* An inclusive, welcoming culture
* A respectful, fun, and understanding atmosphere
* The right to say no to projects and tasks that make you uncomfortable

Nourish Food Bank is an inclusive, supportive organization where volunteers can expect to be treated with respect. We respect your valuable time and commitment to our program, as well as your right to confidentiality as a volunteer.

What Nourish Food Bank expects from you:

* Honor your commitment to our program
* Cooperate with the Nourish Food Bank staff and fellow volunteers
* Be prompt and reliable
* Notify us of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
* Keep all communications with or regarding our clients confidential
* Maintain a respectful relationship with everyone

1. **Volunteer Positions and Tasks**

Direct Service Volunteer:

In this role you will be packing carts with items specified for the client. Each client receives a grocery cart of food consisting of perishable and non-perishable items such as milk, eggs, bread, meat, cheese, baby food and diapers, frozen meat, canned and fresh fruits and vegetables, and even pastries and snacks. We also provide personal care items like shampoo, toothpaste, adult sanitary products and more. We partner to address community emergencies and partner needs. You will work with our Client Intake Representative to cater the cart to the client’s individual needs. Be courteous and understanding of dietary restrictions and requirements. If you have questions about adjustments or substitutions, please ask the Client Intake Representative. Clients are not allowed in the warehouse and cannot choose, or dictate what items go in their cart.

Nourish HUB Volunteer:

At this location volunteers will assist with donations and bulk deliveries. Volunteers will check expiration date, sort, stock, organize and transport items throughout the distribution site.

Transfer Volunteer:

Daily we need volunteers to help transfer goods between sites and throughout Middle Tennessee. We often need volunteers to pick up food drives, donations, grocery excess, or bulk items from locations around our sites. Some of these pick-ups are scheduled some come up last minute.

1. **Volunteer Guidelines, Policies & Safety**

As a new volunteer, it will take time to adjust to your new surroundings and the way things operate here at Nourish Food Bank.

Limitations

1. Volunteers under the age of 16 need to have a parent or guardian with them at all times. Volunteers aged 16 and 17 need a guardian to sign their volunteer application but do not need a guardian present during their volunteer duty. Anyone over the age of 18 can sign their own volunteer application and work on their own.
2. Volunteers cannot have been a client of Nourish Food Bank in the last year.
3. Nourish Food Bank does not accept any COURT-ORDERED COMMUNITY SERVICE.

Absences & Lateness

Volunteers are critical to Nourish Food Bank’s mission. If you cannot make your volunteer shift for whatever reason, please notify our staff as soon as possible. Please arrive 15 minutes prior to scheduled shift.

Attendance

Sign-in time sheets help us track your volunteer hours for reports and formal purposes. Each volunteer MUST SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OUT DURING EACH SHIFT.

Closures

Nourish Food Bank strives to ensure the safety of all volunteers. In the event of inclement weather, volunteers will be responsible for contacting their volunteer site to inform their supervisor that they will not be performing their scheduled service. Nourish follows the Rutherford County School closures for inclement/severe weather. If the schools are closed for temperature, Nourish is still open. Nourish is closed Federal holidays (plus Saturdays that correspond to a Federal holiday). For example, a holiday falls on the Monday after the 4th Saturday of the month, Nourish will be closed that Saturday and Monday.

Confidential Information

We have an obligation to our clients to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. Every client served by Nourish Food Bank has the right to confidentiality. As you work with the staff, information of a confidential matter may be shared with you. You must not share this information with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know it. Release of any confidential information to unauthorized persons can result in dismissal from your service.

Dress Code

Volunteers should dress casually and wear comfortable, closed-toe shoes such as sneakers, work shoes, or boots. During the warm months, all volunteers must wear sleeved shirts (no tank tops); absolutely, no sandals/flip flops allowed. All clothing should be neat, clean, in good condition. It will not bear writing or pictures that are obscene or offensive.

Equal Volunteering Opportunity

Nourish Food Bank provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability.

Electronics

Volunteers are requested to not use cell phones while in the warehouse. There should always be tasks to keep volunteers busy.

Receiving Donations

If you receive a donation when on duty, be sure to have the contact fill out our donation log. All donations need to be COUNTED AND DATE-CHECKED. If there are any expired items, set them aside and alert the Client Intake Representative, they still need to be counted towards the total of the donation. If there are items that expire within six (6) months those need to be placed in carts immediately. Properly title (indicating where the donation came from) and consolidate the donation items if you are unable to go through them during your shift. Once they are counted and date-checked please add the items to their proper place on the shelves.

If you receive a monetary donation have the contact fill out the donation log and immediately provide the donation to the Warehouse Manager or Volunteer Coordinator.

Resignation

While we hope both you and Nourish Food Bank will mutually benefit from your continued volunteering, we realize that it may become necessary for you to leave your volunteer position with Nourish Food Bank. If you anticipate having to resign your position with Nourish Food Bank, you are expected to notify your Volunteer Coordinator as far in advance as possible.

Safety & Liability

Nourish Food Bank aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers. If a volunteer is injured in the course of the volunteer’s service, it is important that the volunteer notify his or her supervisor immediately. Volunteers should also complete an incident report and submit the report to the Volunteer Coordinator or Warehouse Manager. Volunteers must sign a release absolving Nourish Food bank of liability (Volunteer Application). Keep your workspace a safe place by always keeping the warehouse area clear of debris and clean.

Security

Maintaining the security of Nourish Food Bank offices is every volunteer’s responsibility.

* Always keep cash properly stored. If you are aware that cash is insecurely stored, immediately inform the person responsible.
* Be aware of all exits, and proper exit strategies.
* Be cautious and aware of who is in our office. Notify a staff member if you have concern over an individual.
* Please leave purses, jewelry and other valuables at home or locked in your car. Necklaces and long earrings pose a safety concern; please remove if necessary. Nourish Food Bank will not be responsible for any missing personal belongings.

Sexual Harassment

Nourish Food Bank is committed to providing volunteers with an environment that is free from discrimination and unlawful harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual’s sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Nourish Food Bank encourages volunteers to bring any incidents of sexual harassment to the immediate attention of a Nourish Food Bank Employee.

Smoking

Nourish Food Bank intends to provide a safe and healthy environment. Smoking in the workplace is prohibited except in outside locations specifically designated as smoking areas.

Substance Abuse

No one under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be permitted to volunteer. Volunteers who show signs or evidence of having consumed alcohol and/or drugs will not be permitted entrance to Nourish Food Bank. Violators will be dismissed from all volunteer programs.

Tennessee Promise/Volunteers Needing Documentation for Hours

Nourish Food Bank follows the Volunteer Sign-in/Sign-out sheets for documentation of hours. Be sure to fill this out during each visit. Attain the Volunteer Coordinators information once your volunteer duty is completed, as the school will submit us your community service time sheets for approval.

Termination Policy

Nourish Food Bank is an at-will agency and has the right to terminate a volunteer without cause but will always consider the cause leading to the termination. In general, failure to adhere to policies of Nourish Food Bank is cause for immediate release.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

* Gross misconduct or insubordination
* Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs
* Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials
* Falsifying statements on the volunteer application or during the interview process
* Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
* Abuse or mistreatment of clients, volunteers or staff
* Releasing confidential information
* Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization

Unacceptable Activities

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any possible confusion, some of the more obvious unacceptable activities are noted below. Your avoidance of these activities will be to your benefit as well as the benefit of Nourish Food Bank. If you have questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see the Volunteer Coordinator or Warehouse Manager for an explanation.

If a volunteer violates any rules established by Nourish Food Bank, including the following rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to, and including, immediate discharge.

* Willful violation of any agency rule; any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and is obviously detrimental to Nourish Food Bank.
* Willful violation of security or safety rules or failure to observe safety rules or Nourish Food Bank safety practices; failure to wear required safety equipment; tampering with Nourish Food Bank or safety equipment.
* The food is for our low-income clients, do not remove any of the food from the warehouse.
* Negligence or any careless action that endangers the life or safety of another person.
* Possession or use of alcohol, and all illegal drugs or other illegal substances is prohibited.
* Excessive tardiness or absenteeism.
* Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons or explosives on agency property or while on duty.
* Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence or making threats of violence towards anyone on agency premises or when representing Nourish Food Bank; fighting, or horseplay, or provoking a fight on agency property, or negligent damage of property.
* Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your Volunteer Coordinator, Warehouse Manager or Nourish Food Bank Employee.
* Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers or clients; unauthorized possession or removal of any agency property, including documents, from the premises without prior permission from management; unauthorized use of agency equipment or property for personal reasons; using agency equipment for profit.
* Dishonest, willful falsification or misrepresentation of your application for volunteering or other volunteer records; alteration of agency records or other agency documents.
* Breach of confidentiality of employee or client information.
* Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony; interfering with another volunteer on the job; willfully restricting volunteer output or engaging others to do the same.
* Immoral conduct or indecency on agency property.

1. **Food Safety**

Evaluating product fitness – code dates:

Dates are printed on many food items, but product dating is not required by Federal regulations except on infant formula and baby foods

* **Closed dates,** packing numbers, or julian codes appear as a series of letters and/or numbers and are created by the manufacturer:
* Usually appear on shelf-stable products such as cans or boxes
* Refer to the date or time of manufacture, not product expiration
* Enable manufacturers to rotate their stock
* Enable manufacturers to locate product in the event of a recall
* **Calendar dates** help stores determine how long to display product for sale:
* Relate to the peak quality of food, not product safety
* Found primarily on perishable foods, such as dairy, eggs, meat and poultry

Four common types of code dates:

1. “best if used by”: Recommended for best flavor or quality; not a purchase or safety date
2. “sell-by” date: Tells the store how long to display the product for sale; receive the product before this date expires
3. “use by”: The last date recommended for use of the product while at peak quality; the manufacturer of the product has determined this date
4. Expiration: When the safety and quality is past due, the date is elapsed all code dates

Shelf-stable or frozen product that is past code date is generally safe to distribute; however, product color, taste, or nutritional content may be affected.

Refrigerated items should be distributed on or shortly after code date. For example:

* Eggs can be distributed 3-4 weeks after the sell-by date
* Yogurt can be distributed up to 7 days past the sell-by date (longer if frozen)

Distribution Examples

Based on product type, available code dates, or when the product was received, you should determine a safe last date for distribution:

* It is assumed that most pantry consumers will use the product within a few days
* Baby food and infant formula cannot be distributed past the use-by date
* Non-frozen perishables must be distributed within or soon after code date
* Retail meats frozen on or before the sell-by date should be distributed within 6 months
* Canned goods can be distributed at least a year past code date
  + Low-acid canned goods can be distributed longer past code date than high-acid canned goods (e.g., potatoes vs. tomatoes)
* Boxed pastas, rice, and beans can be distributed at least a year past code date

How food becomes unsafe:

* Biological hazards such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi can’t be seen, tasted, or smelled and can contaminate food (these are called pathogens)
* Chemical hazards such as cleaning products, sanitizers, pest control poisons, etc. can contaminate food
* Physical hazards such as dirt or rust on top of cans, metal shavings, glass fragments, animal droppings, insect casings, etc. can contaminate food

Meats are generally safe even if they have:

* A darker red or even brown color this is due to oxygenation of blood
* “Puffy packaging” due to modified atmosphere packaging, where nitrogen or co2 is injected into the interior to prevent oxygenation and maintain the color of the meat
* Ice crystals are a sign that meat has partially thawed and refrozen; generally, meat is still safe to consume

Distributing product:

* ALWAYS give out older product before newer product
* Do not distribute frozen food from a table unless it is insulated
* Do not thaw frozen meat to give to consumers as they may refreeze it at home; however, it is safe to refreeze bread

Temperature danger zones:

* Temperature danger zone (41°F - 135°F) is the range in which pathogens grow fastest on meat, poultry, fish, shellfish and dairy products, whether cooked or uncooked, should not be left in the temperature danger zone for more than 1 hour
* Any cooked vegetable, starch or grain products including rice, pasta and potatoes should not be left in the temperature danger zone for more than 1 hour
* Frozen product should not remain in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours over the course of the product’s lifetime

Proper storage environment:

* Dry storage areas should be clean, dry, and pest-free
* Clean storage areas regularly
* Storage areas should be well ventilated
* Keep the dry-storage environment between 50° and 70° F with humidity less than 60%
* Keep all refrigerators and freezers sealed
* Store cereals, grains, sugar and flour in air-tight containers or sealed bags
* Food should be stored at least six (6) inches above the ground and (ideally) two (2) inches away from the walls
* To maximize storage, put non-food items on the floor or lowest shelf
* Store cleaning products and other chemicals in a separate room from food storage
* Never store cleaning products or chemicals above food items

1. Evaluating product fitness – cans:

Throw out cans with:

* Dented or pinched top or bottom rim
* Dents on the side seam or an incorrectly welded seam
* Deep dents that do not allow stacking
* Swollen or bulging end, or an end that gives when pushed
* Rust or soil that does not wipe off
* Dents around the score lines under a pull-tab; openings
* Leaks
* Dirt under a pull-tab top, mold or watermarks
* Evidence of exposure to temperature extremes (such as scorch marks or frost)
* Signs of insects, including egg cases, body parts, webs, and droppings
* Signs of rodents, including gnaw marks, droppings, or urine o dating past the acceptable safe date
* Missing labels or labels you cannot read

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

1. Evaluating product fitness – boxes & bags:

Throw out boxes that have:

* Open tops or bottoms
* Contaminants inside the boxes
* Torn, leaking or contaminated inner bags
* Inner bags with open seams or holes
* Mold or watermarks
* Signs of insects, including bugs in seams, holes, egg cases, webs, body parts, or droppings
* Signs of rodents, including gnaw marks, droppings, or urine
* Dating past the acceptable safe date
* Missing labels or labels you cannot read

Throw out bags or sacks with:

* Rips, tears, punctures or holes
* Mold or watermarks
* Incomplete or incorrectly formed seals or seams
* Signs of insects, including bugs in seams, holes, egg cases, webs, body parts, or droppings
* Signs of rodents, including gnaw marks, droppings, or urine
* Dating past the acceptable safe date
* Missing labels or labels you cannot read

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

1. Evaluating product fitness – bottles, jars & pouches:

Throw out glass or plastic bottles or jars with:

* Loose or broken caps
* Leaking screw tops
* Broken tamper-evident seals
* Other signs the cap was opened
* Foreign objects inside the container
* Unusual product separation
* Mold inside the container
* Dirt or other particles under the rim
* Signs of insects
* Signs of rodents, including gnaw marks, droppings or

Throw out pouches with:

* Leaks, open seals, holes or punctures
* Cuts, cracks, or scratches deep enough to leak
* Mold or signs the package was wet
* Incomplete or incorrectly formed seals
* Folds or wrinkles (caused by one side longer than another)
* Foreign objects trapped inside pouch or interrupting the seal or seam
* Bulges on the seams
* Inflation
* Signs of insects or rodents
* Dating past the acceptable safe date
* Missing labels or labels you cannot read

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

1. Evaluating product fitness – frozen meats:

Throw out meats that have:

* Strong odor of spoilage
* Blood pooled on the underside of packaging
* Punctured or torn packaging
* A green tinge to the meat
* A sell-by date past 6 months

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

1. **Volunteer Agreement**

Nourish Food Bank strives to create a nurturing space where our clients can receive vital supplies and referrals to help them progress. In pursuit of this goal, volunteers are expected to keep all information regarding our clients confidential and to treat everyone with respect.

Failure to comply with these policies may result in dismissal from volunteer staff and/or civil or criminal prosecution in accordance with applicable statutes.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I been given a copy of the Nourish Food Bank Volunteer Handbook. I understand that it summarizes Nourish Food Bank’s volunteer guidelines and expectations of me as a volunteer. I understand that volunteering with Nourish Food Bank is not for a specified term and is at the mutual consent of Nourish Food Bank and myself. I agree to abide by the Policies and Procedures laid out in the Volunteer Handbook.

By signing this form, I agree to:

* Honor my commitment to the program
* Cooperate with Nourish Food Bank staff and fellow volunteers
* Be prompt and reliable
* Notify the Volunteer Coordinator and/or Warehouse Manager of any changes to my commitment as a volunteer
* Keep all communications with or concerning the clients confidential
* Maintain a respectful relationship with volunteers and employees
* Model professional behavior, through both dress and decorum
* Discuss any and all issues with Nourish Food Bank staff
* Promote the safety of the clients, staff and volunteers by adhering to all rules and guidelines

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Print Name Signature Date

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