



Support the Feeding Iowa Taskforce

Food Banks and Food Pantries around Iowa are in need of volunteers to help provide food to children, at-risk families, and senior citizens. While experiencing four times the demand for food, volunteer resources have declined dramatically as the largest pool of volunteers – retirees – are at higher risk of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. The Lt. Governor and Feeding Iowa Taskforce is calling on FFA chapters across the state to step up to meet this need.

How to Help

Find your local pantry

- Start by checking <http://volunteeriowa.galaxydigital.com/> to see if a food pantry near you has posted needs. Click on “COVID-19 Food Distribution Opportunities” and then search by your zip code.
- Many small and local food pantries have not yet posted their needs. We know FFA leaders are very involved in your communities- if you know where your local pantry is, reach out. If not, check with school guidance staff or other local leaders.

What to ask

- First, ask if your local food pantries needs volunteers, and if so, get more information about the need (how many, how often, length of shifts, description of work)
 - Note: Some food pantries may not currently need volunteers, if their current volunteers are able to continue. If this is the case, offer to check back in a week or two.
- Next, ask if they accept high school volunteers
 - Note: Some food pantries may have minimum age policies for volunteers. You can see what their specific needs are and discuss if any of the roles are ones that students could do, or if modifications could be made to address concerns. If students cannot volunteer directly, they can be involved in helping to recruit other volunteers in the community by posting the need on our [Get Connected site](#), and spreading the word on social media. They may also be able to help by holding a donation drive, or plastic bag drive for distributing groceries. This depends on local needs and procedures.

How you can help

Once you’ve reached out to your local food pantries, there are a number of ways to support their work. You can offer to:

- Post food pantry volunteer needs on the statewide Get Connected site so community members can learn about needs without going out. Any organizations needing volunteers can post opportunities for statewide promotion by starting here: <http://volunteeriowa.galaxydigital.com/volunteer-connector-organizations/> Be sure to select *Food Prep* as an “interest”, and *COVID-19 Opportunities* as the “initiative” to ensure the food needs are easily searchable.
- Help coordinate FFA students volunteering at the pantry. Many food pantries may be overextended, you can provide extra support to the food pantry, and improve the experience of the students, by:
 - Developing a sign-up system for students



- Ensuring students don't exceed the max number of volunteers at one time (Less than 10, fewer at some pantries)
- Making it optional, so only most committed students are participating
- Training students on basic safety protocol. More information can be found at:
<https://www.volunteeriowa.org/document/iowa-volunteer-guidelines-covid-19>

Some highlights:

- Don't volunteer if you're not feeling well, in a high-risk category, have traveled recently, and/or have been around someone not feeling well
- Do not show up unless the pantry is expecting you
- Wear a homemade facemask
- Stay 6-10 ft apart at all times
- Don't touch your face
- Wash your hands frequently
- Volunteering activities could include sorting food, boxing or bagging food, cleaning facility, etc
- Each FFA leader and student should track their volunteer hours. In some circumstances, these tracked hours can save state and local governments approximately \$20 per hour volunteered, due to the disaster declaration. Information about tracking these hours can be found here:
<https://www.volunteeriowa.org/document/volunteer-management-and-data-tracking-during-covid-19> A sample form that can be used can be found here: <https://www.volunteeriowa.org/document/volunteer-sign-inout-form> State FFA leaders may also provide guidance on tracking and submitting hours.

Special Note: FFA leaders should be sensitive to the fact that some FFA members, or their classmates, may be accessing the pantry and may not feel comfortable with their peers knowing. Local FFA leaders and Food Pantries can make decisions about putting students in roles where they won't see recipients, or teaching students to respect confidentiality, and be sensitive to the fact that everyone needs assistance in some way at some time.

After volunteering

If possible, please follow-up with the students and the Food Pantry after students have begun to volunteer, to see if there are any questions or concerns that can be addressed. Having students provide a reflection of their experience will also help reinforce what they learned from the experience. Please share our thanks and appreciation with your students, we are grateful to you and them for the support provided!

Thank you for your leadership, and for supporting Iowans in need!