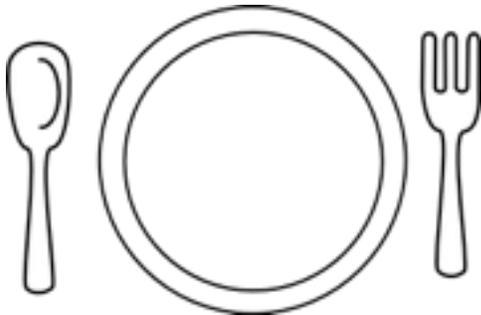


# Durham Congregations in Action

## FEED

## &

## READ



# INITIATIVE

## FEED COMPONENT HOW-TO GUIDE



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## Durham Congregations in Action Feed & Read Initiative

### **Introduction:**

Monday through Friday, our school systems do a wonderful job of providing breakfast and lunch to kids in need through the free and reduced lunch program. However, the schools are not able to ensure that each student will have access food on the weekends or during the summer. Instead, schools rely entirely on the community to fill this gap. This is a unique opportunity for your congregation to take action and build a partnership with a school in order to provide long-term, reliable access to weekend and summer food for these children.

DCIA and DPS invite you to consider what it would take for your congregation to ensure that no child in the immediate vicinity of your congregation, enrolled in a nearby school, goes hungry when away from the school building. This how-to guide is a step-by-step resource for you to consider building this kind of partnership.

1 in 4 children are at risk of hunger in NC.<sup>1</sup>

Eight schools in Durham saw over 90% of students apply for free and reduced lunch.<sup>2</sup>

34,180 children or 64% of all children in Durham applied for free or reduced price meals during the 2012-2013 school year.<sup>3</sup>

Literacy rates among chronically malnourished children are 20% lower than the average.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ncfoodbanks.org/hunger-in-north-carolina/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.dpsnc.net/pages/Durham Public Schools/Parent Resources/Child Nutrition Services/Free and Reduced Lunch Statist](http://www.dpsnc.net/pages/Durham_Public_Schools/Parent_Resources/Child_Nutrition_Services/Free_and_Reduced_Lunch_Statist)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/FOOD FOR THOUGHT.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/FOOD_FOR_THOUGHT.PDF)

## I. Contacting the School

Once DCIA and your organization have identified a specific school to partner with, your first contact should be the **school principal**. By reaching out to the principal first, you will establish a basis for future contacts with the staff who will be more involved in the week-to-week work involved in the partnership.

After reaching out to the principal, begin making program arrangements with a primary contact person. DCIA has coordinated with Durham Public Schools to create a list of primary contacts for each school. We are happy to assist in reaching out to the staff of your target school and scheduling initial meetings.

## II. Which Model Is Right for Your Context?

Whether you start a school pantry or weekend backpack should depend primarily on the needs of the school. They will have a good sense of which program will work better for the context.

Some issues to take into consideration in these discussions:

	<b>Weekend Backpacks</b>	<b>School Pantry</b>
<b>Storage Space</b>	Storage needs can be minimal at both congregation and school. Purchasing, packing and distribution can be arranged in the same 24 hour period.  However, some storage space will be required to reduce logistical issues and to store fresh produce if desired.	Both congregation and school will require some storage space. Because food will be collected over time, it will need to be stored for longer periods before packing and distribution. Schools will require storage space as well, less if housing pre-packed boxes of food, more if setting up a client choice pantry.
<b>Volunteering</b>	Backpack programs are generally more volunteer intensive. Packing and distribution must occur on a consistent, weekly basis.	The food can be restocked once or twice a month. Volunteers may be required less frequently for organizing donations, packing boxes, and transporting food.
<b>Food Procurement</b>	Congregation will need to do at least some fundraising and purchasing. The backpack menu requires certain items that cannot be obtained in sufficient quantity through donations.	Food can be supplied completely through donations and food drives. Menu requirements are much less restrictive.
<b>Distribution Times</b>	Backpacks need to be dropped off at the same time each week, usually on Thursday evening or Friday during the school day.	Pantries may have more flexible distribution times, especially if the school has space to store food for several days.

### **III. General How-to**

#### **A. Confidentiality**

Because of confidentiality issues, your congregation and volunteers will likely never meet the children and families who benefit from this program. Your contact person in the school will maintain a list of children with the greatest need and all you will see is the number of backpacks or the amount of food required.

#### **B. Food Procurement**

Food is typically procured in a combination of three ways.

##### **1. Food Drives and Ongoing Donations**

- Much or all of the food you need can be obtained through food drives and ongoing donations from your congregation.
- Consider asking members of the congregation to commit to regular donations that your program can count on.
- Consider carrying out regular food drives that reach out to both the congregation and those within your congregation's social network.
- Include a list of needed items as well as items that are not needed in all food drive publicity materials. See page 10 for a sample flier that includes this list.

##### **2. Shopping at the Food Bank**

- If you need to purchase food, consider becoming a Food Bank member agency. See page 7 for a link to the Food Bank's instructions for becoming a member agency, including contact information.
- By becoming a member agency, your program will be able to regularly shop for a large selection of low-cost foods at the Food Bank's warehouse.
- However, the availability of items for purchase varies throughout the year and you will need to plan your purchasing accordingly. Generally, the Food Bank is better stocked during holidays and around the time of large food drives. Food Bank staff will have more detailed information about this.
- Depending on your budget, this can be used to supplement ongoing donations with needed items or as your primary source of food.

##### **3. Purchasing Specialty Items**

- If implementing a backpack program, you will be expected to procure single servings of shelf-stable milk. These items are virtually impossible to obtain through donations.
- Many congregation-based initiatives have established relationships with either the Food Bank or the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle to obtain these items at lower-cost, direct from supplier. See page 7 for contact information regarding this possibility.

### C. Storage Logistics

Several congregational programs noted that storage is one of their biggest ongoing challenges. Plan carefully with regard to storage at both your congregation and on site at the school.

- Depending on your volunteer schedule, you may need space to store food throughout the week at your congregation. If donations are collected and food is purchased ahead of time, make a plan for longer term storage in your building.
- You will also need to make arrangements with your primary contact at the school for storage in the school building.
  - These arrangements will depend on your distribution plan. When will backpacks be dropped off? Will the pantry be a client choice pantry that is always opened or it will it consist of boxes that are dropped off close to distribution time?
  - Some programs have purchased additional storage for the school, the size of which will depend on the number of packs you provide. This can be kept on site at the school to store backpacks or pantry food. Although this is an extra expense for you, it can significantly ease any burden that is placed on the school with respect to storage.
- The Food Bank has a set of expectations for member agencies with regards to storage. The list they provide is a good rule of thumb in general. Food must be:
  - Secured from theft
  - Secured from tampering
  - Secured from contamination from chemicals and water.
  - Stored in a clean, dry, and cool space
  - Stored at least 6 inches off the ground.

## **IV. Program Specific How-to**

### Implementing a Backpack Program

**Coordinators:** Who will communicate with the school? Who will do the purchasing? Who will coordinate donations, and volunteers? Who will drop the food off each week?

**Volunteers:** You should also consider how you will coordinate groups of volunteers for packing the food. Some congregations have several groups of volunteers that rotate and each do the packing once a month, while others rely on a core group who volunteers every week.

**Plan for Distribution:** Consult with your contact person at the school regarding drop-off times and distribution. Plan to deliver the backpacks when it is most conducive to the schools needs.

- Many programs drop the bags off on Friday mornings for distribution that afternoon.
- Others have found Thursdays to work better because regular volunteer times don't have to be moved on Friday Teacher's Work Days or early releases.
- Remember to keep an eye on inclement weather. Snow days and other cancellations are particularly difficult for food insecure households and you will want to be sure to get the backpacks distributed prior to any cancellations.

**Plan for Packing:** Set a weekly time for a volunteer group to pack the food into individual grocery bags. Most groups find that this can be streamlined and often takes only an hour or two.

- Some groups pack on the morning of distribution and take the food to the school immediately, while others pack on the evening prior, then store the bags in the church and have someone transport them to the school on distribution day.

**Notify Parents/Guardians:** Before starting your program, you will need to provide a parent/guardian form to the school. School staff will then handle distribution and collection of these forms after they are completed in order to maintain confidentiality. See page pages 8-9 for sample forms. The form should be provided in both Spanish and English, provide space for dietary restrictions and food allergies, and request permission from the parents.

**Set a Budget:** How much money will your congregation be able to spend? Remember that it is okay to start small. Your contact person will be able to determine those most in need and you can start there. Make sure to account for food costs, delivery charges, administrative time, and any other miscellaneous costs. You can expect to spend between \$7 and \$10 per child per week. However, this will depend on your ability to secure donated food. How will you raise this money? Consider offering church members the opportunity to "sponsor a child" for a set amount each week. Would your church be willing to have a special offering once a year?

**The Menu:** Backpacks should follow the fixed menu as provided by the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle. The menu is designed to provide adequate food for all mealtimes through each weekend:

- 3 Boxes of shelf stable milk (some provide a 4th box of chocolate milk)
- 1 Can of Fruit
- 2 Breakfast items (e.g. low sugar cereal, oatmeal packets, granola bars)
- 2 Snack items (e.g. gold fish, raisins)
- 2 Cans of a protein source (e.g. tuna, beef stew, chili, beans, peanut butter)
- 2 Cans of vegetables
- 2 Noodle items (e.g. Ramen packets or individual mac & cheese cups)
- 2 Juice Boxes or Bottles (100% fruit juice)

## Implementing a School Pantry

**Coordinators:** Designate coordinators for your program. Who will be responsible for gathering donations and/or shopping at the Food Bank, ensuring safe storage of food, and delivering food to the school?

**Food Procurement:** How often will you hold food drives? Some congregations ask members to drop off one or two non-perishable items during the worship service each week. In addition, you may hold larger drives that reach out to the community a few times a year. Ask your school contact person whether it may be an option to extend this food drive to the school community as well. If you will purchase some items from the Food Bank, register to become a member agency.

Next, in conversation with your contacts at the school, plan out the following items:

**Storage:** Does the school have a secure location for non-perishable foods? You may consider offering to buy a locking storage cabinet for foods to provide extra storage for the school.

**Determine a Distribution System:** Depending on the availability of storage, you may have to opt for a “box of food” model rather than a “client choice” model. Boxes can be dropped off on the morning of distribution and stacked in an office, closet, or storage cabinet.

- **Client Choice** is the more traditional model: the food is displayed on shelves and counter-tops for individuals to “shop,” selecting the food they’d like to take. This model may be less volunteer intensive (no box-packing) and ensure greater usage since clients will choose the specific items they need rather than receiving a pre-arranged box.
- **Box of Food** is similar to backpack buddies: food is packed into individual boxes that students or families pick up from the pantry. However, menu requirements are less strict as the food selections can be oriented toward supplementing household nutrition over a longer period (two weeks or a month) rather than providing food for one child for a weekend. Boxes can include more preparation intensive items such as bags of rice or boxed pasta.

**Plan and Schedule Distribution:** What days and times work best for the school? With elementary schools, consider scheduling pick-up at the end of the school day or during a regular after school event that will make it convenient for parents to do the pick-up. You will need a school staff-person willing to oversee box pick-up or shopping time, so will this be your primary contact person or someone else?

**Notify Students and the School Community:** Your contact at the school should have good ideas for how to notify families and children of the pantry. Is there a regular newsletter in which an article can be included? Does the school counselor or social worker have a list of families that she/he can contact individually to notify?

## V. Contacts and Resources

### Suggested Sites to Visit:

DCIA strongly recommends visiting several programs before starting yours. We have consulted with a number of groups who engage in this work in Durham who would be happy to have someone from your congregation visit and shadow for a day.

**Epworth United Methodist Church:** Epworth UMC provides both weekend backpacks and one-on-one literacy support for students at Hope Valley Elementary School.

- Contact: John Lott - [JohnBBSL@aol.com](mailto:JohnBBSL@aol.com) ; (919) 489-6098

**Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church:** Mt. Sylvan UMC maintains a partnership with Eno Valley Elementary School and provides 105 weekend backpacks to the school each week.

- Contact: Katy MacDonald - [krazmacd@nc.rr.com](mailto:krazmacd@nc.rr.com) ; (919) 479-3031

### Community Resources:

**The Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina:** The Food Bank is a valuable resource both as a location to purchase low-cost food for your program and as an agency with expertise and experience in weekend backpack and school food pantry programs. They will be happy to consult with you as you design your program and plan for food procurement:

- Contact: Patrick Spencer - [pspencer@foodbankcenc.org](mailto:pspencer@foodbankcenc.org) ; (919) 956-2513 x2103
- To apply to become a member agency so you can purchase food from the Food Bank, go to: [http://www.foodbankcenc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=getinvolved\\_partner](http://www.foodbankcenc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=getinvolved_partner)

**Inter-Faith Food Shuttle:** The Food Shuttle provides weekend backpacks through its Backpack Buddies programs at a significant number of schools throughout Durham and the Triangle. Because they purchase certain items direct from suppliers, the staff at the Food Shuttle have offered to purchase specialty items like shelf-stable milk or individual cereals at wholesale on behalf of congregations. They will be happy to discuss this possibility with you as well as other options for obtaining the food you need for our program:

- Contact: Kyle Abrams - [kyle@foodshuttle.org](mailto:kyle@foodshuttle.org) ; (919) 390-1957

**Parent Notification Letter (Sample Adapted from Inter-Faith Food Shuttle)**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your child is being invited to participate in **(a weekend backpack program provide program name if any)**. This program provides a backpack filled with 6 balanced meals for the weekend almost every week of the school year. The **(primary contact at school)** will deliver the bags to the children at the end of the week. This program is free of charge and you should expect to see the following each week:

- 2 noodles
- 3 shelf stable milk
- 2 100% juice boxes
- 1 fruit
- 2 snacks
- 2 vegetables
- 2 breakfast items.
- 2 protein items (such as canned tuna, meat stew, beans or peanut butter)

We hope that you will find this program useful to your family. Please provide any information about dietary restrictions or food allergies below. We welcome feedback and survey participants each spring. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

**Name**

**Title**

**Contact Information**

Parent/Guardian Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Food Allergies/Dietary Restrictions:

## Parent Notification Letter - Spanish (Sample Adapted from Inter-Faith Food Shuttle)

Estimados Padres y Guardianes,

Su niño ha sido invitado a participar en el programa (**a weekend backpack program provide program name if any**). Este programa provee una mochila llena con 6 comidas balanceadas para el fin de semana casi todas las semanas del año escolar. (**primary contact at school**) entregará las bolsas a los niños(a) al final de la semana. Este programa es libre de cargos y usted debe esperar lo siguiente cada semana:

- 2 fideos(noodles)
- 3 leche no percedera
- 2 cajas de jugo 100% (100% juice boxes)
- 1 frutas
- 2 meriendas(snacks)
- 2 vegetales
- 2 artículos para el desayuno.
- 2 articulos con proteinas (como atún enlatado, carnes (meat stew), frijoles o mantequilla de maní)

Esperamos que encuentres este programa útil para su familia. Por favor notificanos si su niño tiene algún alergia o otra restricción dietetica a bajo. Agradeceremos su opinión y encuesta cada primavera. Por favor dejenos saber si usted tiene alguna pregunta o preocupación.

Sinceramente,

**Name**

**Title**

**Contact Information**

Firma del Padre/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre Completo del Padre/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Alergias o Otra Restricción Dietetica:

**Sample Food Drive Flier (Provided by Inter-Faith Food Shuttle):**

# What to Bring for a Healthy Food Drive

- Nutritious, child-friendly foods for Backpack Buddies and School Pantries.
- Healthy staples for Grocery Bags for Seniors



## Types of Items Needed:

\*Please bring only shelf stable items\*



Meats and Stews



Breakfast Items



Packaged Noodles



Canned Vegetables and Fruit



100% Juice Boxes and Milk



Healthy Snacks

**The following items, while too large for backpacks, can be used to pack Grocery Bags for Seniors and for School Pantries:**

- whole grain pastas
- canned poultry or fish
- dry beans
- brown and white rice
- oatmeal and low/no sugar cold cereals
- canned fruits and vegetables soups
- dried fruits and nuts



## Do NOT bring:

- Snacks such as Pop-tarts and cookies
- Spam and Vienna Sausage
- Soft-top applesauce, fruit, and Jello
- Candy
- Juice pouches
- Sugary cereals



**Inter-Faith Food Shuttle**  
We feed. We teach. We grow.

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