Food Pantry Coordinator ISC Job Description

The ISC member will coordinate all aspects of the Food Pantry program, coordinating its systems, managing its volunteers, increasing its donations of food, marketing its availability, and converting its operations to a “client choice” model (if that hasn’t already happened by the summer of 2015).

**Duties include:**

1. Oversee all aspects of the Food Pantry, which operates on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, from 9 am to 4 pm. Approximately 1,000 poverty-level households receive groceries each month; about 500 sack lunches are distributed each month to homeless persons; and about 200 poverty-level seniors pick up extra food one day per month. Train, place and direct volunteers. Order food, coordinate pick-ups, and manage inventory.
2. Educate clients, and train volunteers to educate clients about the CalFresh (food stamps) program if they are eligible, and help them to apply on-site.
3. Coordinate work and activities with the NEOP (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention) team on-site.
4. Manage all aspects of the conversion to a “client choice” model, including researching existing programs, “best practice” programs at other centers, figuring out the logistics in regards to inventory, staffing, process, policies and procedures.
5. Develop an operations manual for the Food Pantry, incorporating the “client choice” model.
6. Identify new in-kind donors and coordinate pick-up and delivery of food.
7. Market program to eligible participants and community organizations.

**Impact:** The implementation of a Food Pantry Coordinator position will directly impact the quality and effectiveness of the food outreach programs for indigent families. The areas include:

- Increasing the amount and quality of food available for distribution by forging relationships with business, institutional and individual in-kind donors.
- Creating a more effective system for recruiting and managing volunteers, and coordinating volunteer drivers for additional food pick-ups.
- Transitioning the program to a best-practices “client choice” model, whereby participants are more fully engaged in choosing appropriate foods for their families.
- Converting the program to an environment-friendly one through the use of recyclable bags in place of plastic or paper bags.
- Coordinating the pantry in a more systematic fashion in terms of inventory, distribution and staffing. Creating a more efficient system for managing the details.
- Integrating the program with CalFresh participation for eligible households.
- Integrating the program with the new NEOP nutrition education efforts.
- Marketing the program’s availability to hard-to-reach populations. Increasing access for people in need of services.
Need to be addressed: For most of its history there hasn’t been a single person who oversees the Food Pantry within the multiple services provided by the community center, and as a result, improvements and growth are haphazard. For example:

- Center staff receives reports of food availability in the community, but doesn’t have the time to research sources, solicit donations, forge relationships with prospective donors, and arrange for pick-up of donations. Instead of the “beggars can’t be choosers” philosophy in accepting any donations, even if unhealthy, a more efficient approach would be to seek out quality foods for our participants.
- Participants sometimes complain about the food selections, and give back or throw away foods that they do not need. With a client choice model, they would only choose foods that they will eat, increasing their active participation in the process and respecting their dignity.
- The city and county of Los Angeles have banned plastic bags and are charging for paper bags, which results in far fewer donations of these items for food pantries. Pantries need to be positioned to provide recyclable bags to participants, and require that they use them as a condition for receiving donations of food. Ultimately, this will have a positive impact on the environment, but will require a change in thinking and practice for all involved.
- The other food programs at the Center are not always utilized by eligible participants. There needs to be a more systematic approach for participants to be aware of all the programs for which they are eligible. Most importantly the CalFresh (food stamps) program is underutilized in California, and many low-income households are eligible but not receiving this significant support for their monthly budgets. Outreach and on-site application, while currently offered, need to be bolstered.
- There are many more volunteers interested in offering their time than are utilized, since there isn’t a volunteer coordinator on site. The majority of the volunteers participate in the food programs, so that with proper coordination, more volunteers can work more efficiently.
- Since the Center has operated for 27 years and is well-known in the local community, not much effort has gone into marketing the food program. There are always new participants, though, who tell us that they hadn’t known about the program, although they’ve lived locally for years. How many others aren’t we reaching who truly need our help?