

**FOOD  
FOR KIDS**



## **School Resource Guide | 2019-2020**

Passionately pursuing a hunger-free community.

## Introduction

The ***Food for Kids: School Backpack Program*** is a concept that is accepted in school districts all over the United States for being a proactive, direct way to address the very present issue of childhood hunger. Over 450,000 backpacks are distributed every week in the U.S.

In our own community, 1 in 4 children are classified as living in poverty. Community Storehouse began the evolution of this concept, locally, in 2008. Last year we provided thousands of weekend meals to children in Martinsville and Henry County.

Teachers who make an effort to identify and get help for hungry students are often rewarded with a more manageable classroom environment. Hunger in children is linked to a long list of physical and behavioral problems, from tardiness and absenteeism to anxiety, aggression, and poor social interaction.

This handbook will serve as your guide to operate a successful distribution site within your school. *Thank you* for your efforts in assuring that no child goes hungry this year.

## What is food insecurity?

If a child does not get enough food outside of school he/she is considered “food insecure.” The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as households that are uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs of all their members because of insufficient money or other resources.

### **Examples of food insecurity:**

- A chronically hungry child will be anxious for a meal to be served
- Rushing food lines
- Extreme hunger on Monday morning
- Eating all of the food served
- Not being picky about food served
- Linger around for second helpings or constantly asks for more

### **Addressing a Child's Need**

A child who complains about being hungry is not necessarily a child who automatically qualifies for the backpack program. Growing children have an appetite and will say they are hungry at periods throughout the day. However, in the case of a chronically hungry child, certain questions can be asked to assess need.

In the morning, a child may say they are hungry. Ask them if they ate breakfast. If they say they skipped breakfast, find out why. Ask if they had enough food in their house or if they simply woke up late and did not have time for breakfast. If they did eat breakfast, ask what they ate and if it was enough to make them full. You may also ask if they ate dinner the previous night. Once again, ask what they had for dinner and if it was enough to fill them up.

By asking a few questions you should be able to assess whether or not this is just a case of normal hunger (where your stomach growls in anticipation for food – not because of a series of involuntarily missed meals) or whether this seems to be a frequent incident that results because of food insecurity (the inability to afford enough food).

A child who says there is never enough food in the house or that all they had for dinner was some potato chips is the child who is considered chronically hungry. Even if a child worries that there will not be enough food at home, this is a cause for concern. Food insecurity is the main reason for the backpack program. Any child who exhibits this behavior should be considered a candidate for receiving a backpack.

## **Physical Appearance**

Certain physical features are indicators of vitamin and/or food deficiencies. If the skin of a child appears to be puffy and swollen, it can be due to a protein deficiency. A child who is very thin and whose bones are starting to protrude may have a lack of protein and calories. Another thing to watch for is redness around the lips and/or cracked lips.

Finally, dry and itchy eyes can be a sign of a vitamin A deficiency. Please keep in mind that the weight of a child is not always a sure indication of food insecurity. Some obesity is caused from poor nutrition in the diet of the child. Any of these physical signs should bring a concern and prompt further questions.

## **School Performance**

Sometimes the behavior of a child indicates problems at home, with food insufficiency being one of the problems. Observing some of the following may help to identify chronic hunger:

- Excessive or unexcused absences

- Hyperactive, aggressive, irritable, anxious, withdrawn, distressed, passive/aggressive – any display of these mentioned which leads to disciplinary action
- Repetition of a grade
- Difficulty in forming friendships, getting along with others
- Sickness – sore throat, common cold, stomach ache, ear infection, fatigue
- Short attention span, inability to concentrate

### **How do I know a child is not chronically hungry?**

Children who are chronically hungry are typically very careful to follow the rules of the program – they want to make sure they receive their food each week. With that in mind, children who are *not* chronically hungry will:

- Forget to pick up the backpack Friday afternoon
- Leave food at school
- Eat food before leaving school or on the bus ride home
- Complain about the flavor or variety of food

If you see a child displaying these behaviors, they may no longer need the backpack program. Talk to the child to find out more about their situation at home before making a decision. *You may use your discretion and withdraw a student from the program at any time if their situation changes or if they misuse the program.*

**Possible exceptions:**

- Very young students
- Special needs students
- Children who switch between multiple homes on weekends
- Children who are embarrassed about receiving the food

**Home Environment**

Sometimes children will be very open about what is going on at home. For example, a child may say that his/her dad has lost a job and that the mother does not work. By listening to your students and by being in contact with parents, the needs of the family can be assessed, which in turn can help determine whether the child needs to be receiving a backpack weekly.

A single parent family where the parent works on the weekend is probably a situation in which backpack can help a child who may be responsible for fixing their own meals. If the parent is able to fix meals for the child, but may be limited on the amount of food available, it may be more beneficial to refer the family to a food pantry.

**Backpacks are designed for children who are not able to get sufficient food at home due to neglect or other circumstances that prevent them from having regular access to food.**

## School Responsibilities

- Comply with guidelines and requirements set by Community Storehouse to ensure the agency's resources are documented, protected, and distributed to make the biggest impact possible;
- Select a distribution plan that is time effective and sufficient for the program's participants;
- Inform your peers – *anyone who works directly with students* – of the program and how to refer a child; supply any necessary documentation;
- Participating schools agree to hold at least one food *or* awareness drive to benefit Community Storehouse, specifically the Food for Kids program in an effort to help 'give back' and assist in benefiting the program's impact.

## The Referral Process

It is imperative that the participating school provide the necessary documentation required for each program participant. The referral form must be filled out completely before it is submitted.

When documenting why you are referring a child, please be precise.

**Generic answers do not constitute that you have identified a real need.**

Our funds are limited, and acceptance is based on need rather than number.

The nature of this program is children referred due to needs identified by *teachers, counselors, nurses*. **Should a parent initiate a request wanting their child to be signed up for the backpack program, please refer them to contact our agency directly so that we may refer them to our family grocery program.**

Once you have identified a need, fill out the forms and send the parental permission form home (*the referral form is for internal hunger statistic tracking and should never be sent home with a student*), and upon receiving it back, **mail both** the original forms to:

**Backpack Program  
4201 Greensboro Road  
Ridgeway, VA 24148**

Upon receiving and reviewing your package, you will receive an email or telephone call, indicating that said child(ren) should be informed to expect a weekly backpack.

## **The Distribution Process**

By default, the backpacks are delivered on Friday's. This ensures that children receive their backpacks for use during the weekend, and schools don't have the burden of storing the food during the week.

Location of the drop-off (and pickup of crates) should be centrally located so that our staff can easily move from school to school. Schools regularly requiring staff to wait causes a strain on the overall route.

## Food Allergies

When communicating with parents, be sure to discuss any food allergies. Use school records to identify children with food allergies (peanuts, milk, etc.). Due to the differing types and severity levels of food allergies, we are unable to provide an allergen-free backpack.

## Non-Compliance Procedure

In order to ensure that *Food for Kids* is successful in its mission, we must work together to identify, discuss, and solve problems. If you encounter a problem within the program, contacting us will help resolve the program in a time effective manner, benefiting everyone involved.

Continuation of any noncompliance issue will be met with a meeting between the administration of the agency and the administration of the school. We request that school coordinators be present to discuss what further action should be taken to solve the problem.

## Program Contact

**Travis J. Adkins**

Executive Director

**Phone:** 632-9002

**Email:** [tadkins.aed@gmail.com](mailto:tadkins.aed@gmail.com)

School's Request to Receive Services  
**FOOD FOR KIDS: SCHOOL BACKPACK PROGRAM**

<i><b>School Information</b></i>
School Name:
Number of Children Currently Enrolled in your School for the 2019-2020 School Year:
Did your school receive services from the Backpack Program last school year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If so</i> , did your school conduct a food/awareness drive to benefit the Storehouse last school year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If so</i> , what was the outcome?
<i>Estimated</i> Number of Children Being Considered as Candidates for this Program:
Does your school participate in any other "backpack programs" or food delivery services through area agencies, groups, or churches? <i>If so</i> , please list them here:

<i><b>Staff Information</b></i>	
<b>Primary Backpack Program Contact</b>	<b>Secondary Backpack Program Contact</b>
1. Name	1. Name
2. Title	2. Title
3. Phone Number	3. Phone Number ( <i>if different</i> )
5. Email Address	5. Email Address
6. Best way to be contacted	6. Best way to be contacted

Do you request an initial meeting to discuss the program with our Director?     Yes  No