



Conflict Resolution Policy

Our Commitment

The HACAP NW Neighborhood Food Pantry, in partnership with our community allies, is dedicated to creating a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for all. We value the support of everyone involved in maintaining a pantry experience that is positive, fair, and friendly for participants, volunteers, and staff alike.

We are committed to addressing conflicts with care and transparency, ensuring that everyone involved has access to support and guidance at every stage of the process.

Addressing Conflict at the Pantry

Conflict can arise in any community setting. Common situations that may lead to conflicts include:

- Violation of pantry guidelines
- Miscommunication
- Perceived or actual mistreatment
- Perceived or actual preferential treatment
- Changes in process or policy that were not clearly communicated

When conflicts occur, our approach is guided by restorative justice principles, which focus on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships. By following established best practices, many conflicts can be avoided. However, when conflicts or behavioral concerns do arise, the following graduated approach is recommended:

Step 1: Warning / One-Time Accommodation

When to Apply:

This step is appropriate when a participant's behavior is disruptive or disrespectful but does not pose an immediate threat to staff, volunteers, or other participants.

Actions:

- **Verbal Warning:** The Pantry Staff should calmly remind the participant(s) of the pantry's guidelines and expectations for respectful behavior. A verbal warning should clearly state that the behavior in question is not acceptable and should not be repeated.
- **One-Time Accommodation:** If necessary, and to prevent further disruption, the Pantry Staff may offer a one-time accommodation, such as providing a pre-packed box or bag of groceries to the participant(s) for that week.

- **Notification:** The Pantry Staff should inform their Regional Partnership Coordinator (RPC) at the HACAP Food Reservoir of the incident for documentation and to discuss possible follow-up actions. Including the HACAP Food Reservoir in these discussions is important in case a formal complaint is filed with the food bank or the state.

Optional Mediation:

In some cases, mediation may be beneficial. The HACAP Food Reservoir staff can assist in facilitating communication and negotiation to resolve the situation peacefully.

Step 2: Formal Warning / Permanent Accommodation / Transfer

When to Apply:

This step is necessary if the disruptive or disrespectful behavior continues despite a verbal warning or if the behavior warrants more serious intervention.

Actions:

- **Formal Warning:** A formal warning should be issued to the participant(s), outlining the incident, the previous verbal warning, and the one-time accommodation provided. The formal warning should include clear expectations for future behavior and consequences if those expectations are not met. This warning can be delivered in person or via mail.
- **Permanent Accommodation:** If a participant faces ongoing challenges that impact their ability to follow the standard pantry process (e.g., PTSD, mental health issues, physical disabilities), the Pantry Staff should explore permanent accommodations. Examples include allowing a proxy to pick up food, scheduling a separate timeslot, or offering alternative distribution methods. All accommodations should adhere to ADA guidelines.
- **Transfer:** In some cases, it may be in the best interest of the participant and the pantry to transfer the participant to another pantry. The Pantry Staff should work with the RPC to coordinate the transfer and ensure clear communication with the new pantry partner.

Step 3: Suspension of Services

When to Apply:

Suspension of services may be necessary if the participant(s) fail to comply with the expectations set forth in Steps 1 and 2 or if there is an immediate threat to the safety of Pantry Staff, volunteers, or other participants.

Actions:

- **Non-Compliance with Steps 1 and 2:** The Pantry Staff and director will jointly decide whether suspension is appropriate and determine the duration of the

suspension based on the specific circumstances. After the suspension, the situation will be reassessed to determine whether services can be resumed.

- **Immediate Threat to Safety:** If a participant poses an immediate threat, such as physical violence, threats with a deadly weapon, or serious assault, an immediate suspension may be warranted. In such cases, the Pantry Staff (or any on-site personnel) has the authority to contact law enforcement. The RPC at the HACAP Food Reservoir should be notified immediately following any such incident.
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