



FOOD PANTRY, HUNGER MINISTRY

Adapted from His Heart, Our Hands



FOOD PANTRY, HUNGER MINISTRY

Each year 10 million people in the United States experience hunger; up to 36 million face the threat of hunger.¹ Even families with a full-time wage earner are not exempt, because full-time work at minimum wage does not guarantee an escape from poverty.

A hunger ministry is any ministry that addresses physical hunger. One of the most effective community hunger ministries is a food pantry or emergency food source within a church, Baptist center, or associational office. There are many other options, however. Sack lunches for homeless people, after-school snacks for children, hot meals for the homebound, soup kitchens, and vouchers for grocery stores are all hunger ministries.

HOW DO WE PLAN AN ESL MINISTRY?

- 1. FIND YOUR PLACE OF SERVICE.** What gaps exist in your community that your church could fill? Base your ministry on this information.
- 2. FIND RESOURCES.** Your resources will be people, facilities, and food supplies.
- 3. PLAN WITNESSING.** Decide how witnessing will be handled.
- 4. PLAN YOUR FOLLOW-UP MINISTRY.** Will clients be referred to churches or will volunteers make home visits?
- 5. DECIDE HOW YOU WILL KEEP RECORDS.** This will be vital for your evaluation, especially if you are using hunger funds.
- 6. APPLY FOR FUNDS.** Decide the dollar amount you will need to start the project. Request that amount from your local association or contact your state convention church and community ministries staff for information on availability of hunger funds.

Consider connecting with a regional food bank to help get food for your ministry. Feeding Louisiana is made up of the five Feeding America member food banks serving all of Louisiana's 64 parishes. You can find information on your regions food bank at www.feedinglouisiana.org/our-members.

HOW DO WE BEGIN OUR MINISTRY?

The following plans are for a food pantry or emergency food ministry.

- 1. BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE.** For example, some ethno-cultural groups would prefer rice instead of potatoes. Do not offer Muslims canned pork.
- 2. LIST NEEDED ITEMS.** Divide the list among mission education groups, Sunday School classes, and others who want to help. Ask each group to supply the items listed. After the pantry has been stocked, ask the groups to take turns restocking it monthly. Provide groups with a list of special items needed. Emphasize that with some items, several small packages would be more helpful than one warehouse-sized package.

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- 3. PURCHASE ADDITIONAL FOOD AS NEEDED.** In addition to joining the local food bank, develop a contact with a wholesale food distributor or grocery store.
- 4. LABEL STORAGE SHELVES.** Arrange food items in an orderly manner. Stock only basic items that are in good condition.
- 5. PLAN TO DISCARD OUTDATED ITEMS.** Write dates on labels. Discard unused items on a regular basis. This is particularly important for items like baby food.
- 6. DIVIDE LARGE BAGS AND BOXES OF FOOD INTO SMALLER CONTAINERS.** Macaroni, rice, grits, meal, and dried beans can be frozen for 24 hours, then placed in plastic milk cartons or other containers. These items will then keep for quite awhile on the shelf.

HOW DO WE EVALUATE OUR MINISTRY?

Evaluating your ministry serves as a progress report which will inspire and encourage your church's continuing participation. If your ministry receives hunger funds from NAMB, there will need to be a quarterly report about use of those funds.

Also, include witnessing information such as professions of faith, baptisms, and Bible study groups started. You will find that creating a simple form to list data will help the evaluation process. It will also be a valuable record of the ministry's growth.

WHAT SOURCES OF HELP ARE AVAILABLE?

NAMB's Church and Community Ministries Evangelism Unit administers the Domestic Hunger Funds program. This program represents 20 percent of monies contributed by Southern Baptists to the World Hunger offerings. Every dollar given to this fund is used to feed the hungry. No hunger funds are used to cover any administrative costs.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention also has educational and promotional material on world hunger and domestic hunger.