



Connecticut Foodshare

Our Community, Our Food Bank

Volunteer Management

March 18, 2026



Welcome!

- Please enter your name, organization and town in chat
- Enter questions in the Q&A and we will answer at the end of the webinar
- To view captions for the presentation, click “show captions” in the meeting controls of your Zoom screen.
- Recording and slides will be sent out after the webinar



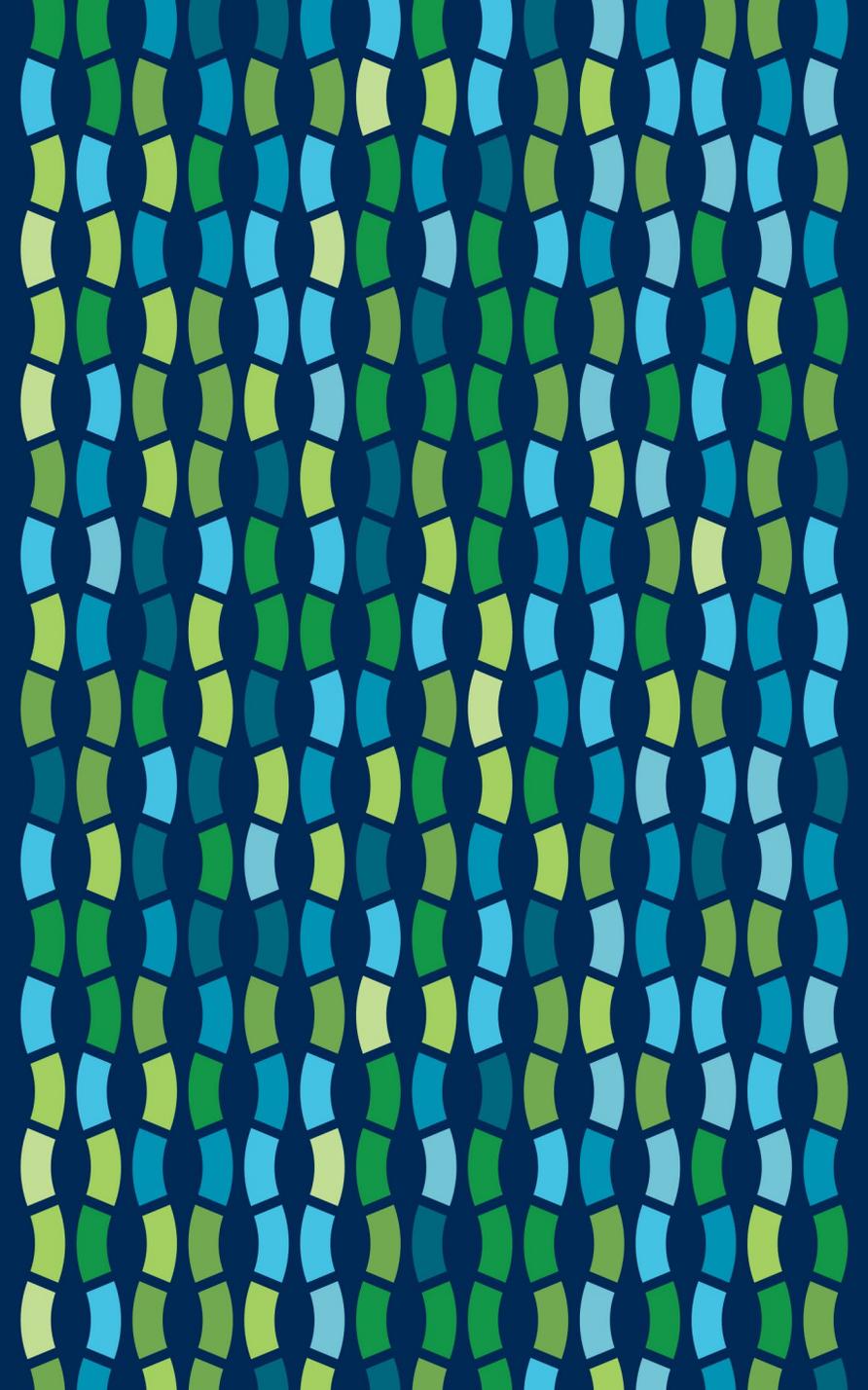
Connecticut Foodshare

Our Community, Our Food Bank

Leading Volunteers with Confidence: Navigating Challenges and Managing Engagement

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Connecticut Foodshare

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Connecticut Foodshare



Opening Story: The Power of Volunteers

- A simple volunteer shift can create real **impact**.
- Volunteers sorting food
- Community members helping neighbors
- Small actions = big impact



Why Volunteer Retention Matters

- Recruitment gets attention – Retention builds impact
- Saves time and training
- Builds leadership among volunteers
- Strengthens community
- Volunteers become ambassadors



The Volunteer Journey

Volunteers move through stages:

- Discovery
- First Experience
- Connection
- Ownership
- Advocacy



Make the First Shift Count

- First impressions matter
- Warm welcome
- Clear instructions
- Explain the mission
- Organized workflow
- Thank them before they leave



Building Volunteer Community

- People return for people
- Learn names
- Encourage teamwork
- Icebreakers or fun activities
- Celebrate milestones
- Share impact stories



Handling Difficult Conversations

- Challenges happen
- Address issues early
- Focus on behavior, not the person
- Reinforce safety and expectations
- Be respectful and direct
- Offer alternative roles when possible



Types of Volunteers You'll Meet

Common volunteer personalities:

- The Super Helper
- **The Social Butterfly**
- The Question Asker
- The Quiet Worker
- The Future Leader



Recognition is Retention

- Volunteers want to feel **valued**
- Thank you messages
- Social media recognition
- Appreciation events
- Milestone celebrations
- Leadership opportunities



Key Takeaways

1. Create a strong first experience
2. Build community among volunteers
3. **Communicate clearly** and appreciate contributions



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Connecticut Foodshare

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Welcome and Mission

Connecticut Foodshare

We are creating a thriving community, free of hunger.

Our mission is to deliver an informed and equitable response to hunger by mobilizing community partners, volunteers, and supporters. Founded in 1982, Connecticut Foodshare is a member of the Feeding America nationwide network of food banks.



6,000

Our 6,000 volunteers make our work possible. Providing 46,000+ hours of their time.



650+

We partner with a network of 650 food pantries, meal programs, and mobile distribution sites.



44 Million

Last year, 44 million meals of healthy food was provided to our neighbors across Connecticut.



25,260

Households served monthly at mobile food pantries.



Impact



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What to Expect When You Arrive

- Enter through the main entrance.
- Check in at the volunteer kiosk.
- Volunteer Services staff will greet you and assist with registration.
- A staff member or team lead will review tasks for the day.
- Bring a positive attitude—we'll take care of the rest!



Volunteer Tasks Overview

- Sorting donated food.
- Packing produce bags.
- Supporting mobile pantry sites.
- Tasks may change daily—clear instructions will always be provided.
- Accuracy and teamwork ensure food reaches those who need it most.



Safety First

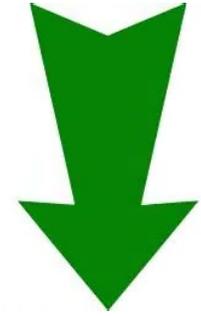
- Wear closed-toe shoes (no sandals or flip-flops).
- Wash or sanitize hands before and after handling food.
- No eating, drinking, or chewing gum in sorting areas.
- Lift with your legs, not your back—ask for help if needed.
- Know where exits and first aid kits are located.
- Report emergencies or accidents to staff immediately.



Food Safety

General Food Safety Rules

- Wash hands with warm water and soap before starting, after breaks, after using the restroom, and whenever hands may be contaminated.
- If you are feeling ill, please do not report for your volunteer shift.
- Wear gloves when handling unpackaged food. Change gloves if they become torn, dirty, or after touching your face, hair, or phone.
- Keep personal items, food, and drinks away from sorting areas.
- Report any spills, damaged packaging, or unsafe conditions immediately to staff.
- Never distribute food that is spoiled, unsafe, or damaged beyond use.
- If any product leaks onto a work surface or onto another food item, please let a staff member know immediately and do not proceed until you are cleared to do so.
- Please refer to the Food Sorting Guidance and Model Consumer Commodity Salvage Code for further information on best sorting practices.
- ***Recall Notices are posted for reference. Please remove any donated item that may have been subject to recall.***
- ***Allergen Control: Watch for these 9 allergens and ensure that there is no cross-contact with other foods:***



- Milk, Dairy
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts)
- Fish example: Bass, cod, flounder, salmon....)
- Soy products
- Wheat
- Sesame

Food Safety

Sorting Dry Salvage (Shelf-Stable Foods)

Examples: Canned goods, boxed pasta, rice, cereal, shelf-stable milk.

Check for:

- Expiration dates: Do not keep food that is past its code date or more than 1 year past “best by” unless guidelines allow.
- Packaging integrity: No bulging, leaking, or rusty cans; no boxes with signs of pests, moisture, or tears exposing food.
- Labeling: Discard items with missing or unreadable labels.

Handling:

- Keep items off the floor and store in a cool, dry place.
- Sort the items that are provided to you for sortation.



Food Safety

Sorting Frozen Meat

Examples: Chicken, beef, fish, turkey.



Check for:

- Packaging: No tears, holes, or leaks.
- Temperature: Should remain frozen solid (0° F or below). If thawed, alert staff — do not refreeze.
- Color & condition: No unusual odor, excessive ice crystals, or freezer burn that makes food unsafe.

Handling:

- Wear gloves when handling frozen meat.
- Keep meat separate from produce and dry goods to prevent cross-contamination.
- Wash and sanitize any surfaces or bins that touch meat immediately after use.

Sorting Perishables (Refrigerated Items)

Examples: Dairy, deli meat, eggs, ready-to-eat refrigerated foods.

Check for:

- Packaging: No leaks, broken seals, or damaged containers.
- Dates: Do not keep items past the “use by” or “sell by” date (follow food bank policy).



Food Safety

Sorting Produce (Fruits & Vegetables)

Check for:

- Freshness: Discard items with mold, slime, rot, or strong odors.
- Condition: Keep produce that is slightly bruised if it can be safely consumed, but discard heavily damaged items.
- Pests: Remove produce with insect damage or contamination.

Handling:

- Wash hands before and after handling.
- Do not wash produce before storage (excess moisture can cause spoilage).
- Keep produce in clean bins; do not mix with raw meat or chemicals.



Working Together: Teamwork & Attitude

- Volunteers of all backgrounds and abilities are welcome.
- Be respectful, kind, and encouraging to everyone.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions—we're here to support you.
- Collaboration and positivity make volunteering impactful and fun!



Policies & Expectations

- Be on time for your shift; let us know if you can't make it.
- No phone use while sorting or handling food.
- Photos/videos only with staff permission.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Zero-tolerance policy for harassment or discrimination.
- This is a safe, welcoming space for everyone.



Our Community, Our Food Bank

Volunteer Agreement

In consideration for being allowed to participate as a Connecticut Foodshare volunteer, I agree to abide by the rules set forth below.

Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers must:

- Be 12 years of age or older.
- Arrive promptly for their volunteer assignment or cancel their shift online if they are unable to attend.
- Sign-in and out each time they volunteer, using the available computer kiosks.
- Wear sensible clothing and closed-toe shoes (no sandals).
- Reschedule their volunteer service if they are ill or have recently been ill as many of our volunteer opportunities involve handling food.
- Listen to and follow Connecticut Foodshare's instructions, including, but not limited to, safety and food handling instructions.



How to Stay Involved

- Sign up for more shifts through Volunteer Hub.
- Individual and group opportunities available.
- Participate in our volunteer recognition program (milestones, hours, and years of service).
- Join our community of recurring volunteers and make an even bigger impact!



Thank You!

- Thank you for making a difference in our community.
- Your time and heart help us feed neighbors across Connecticut.
- Welcome to the Connecticut Foodshare volunteer family!
- Stay connected: www.ctfoodshare.org
- Email: Volunteersurvey@ctfoodshare.org.



Food Assistance for Volunteers

Partnership Agreement Standards:

- Product from Connecticut Foodshare is for people in need without requiring to pay, pray, or work
- All individuals receiving food assistance must meet the same eligibility criteria
- Staff, volunteers, or others associated with the program who need assistance may not receive priority or different access



Food Assistance for Volunteers

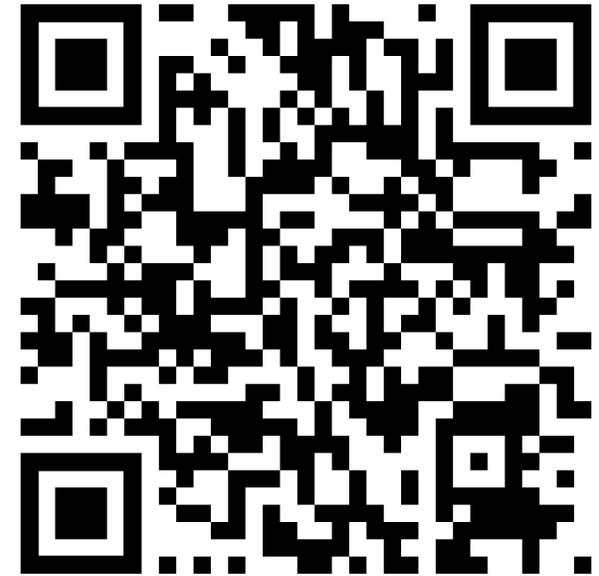
Best Practices:

- Set expectations early
 - *If at any point you need help with food, let us know*
 - *You don't need to volunteer to get food*
 - *Volunteering will not give you better access*
- Fairness matters – establish a clear procedure that you follow consistently
 - *For example, volunteers wait until the end*
- Perception matters – be transparent



Pantry Input Needed – Home Delivery Survey

- Help Connecticut Foodshare create resources for food pantries interested in providing home delivery
- Your input is needed even if your pantry doesn't offer home delivery
- Respond by Friday, March 20th for the chance to win a \$150 Visa gift card!



Upcoming Learning Opportunities

Register at ctfoodshare.org/webinars

Partner Peer Connect Sessions

Topic: Volunteer Management

Join virtual small group conversations hosted by your colleagues that are currently serving on the Network Advisory Council (NAC). Discuss volunteer management challenges you're facing at your program and exchange solutions and best practices.

Tuesday, **March 24** from 3PM to 4PM

Wednesday, **March 25** from 8:30AM to 9:30AM

Welcoming Line Management and Intake

Learn strategies to reduce tension and create a welcoming culture for all neighbors receiving food.

Wednesday, **April 15** from 1PM to 2PM

Recordings and slides are always available at ctfoodshare.org/webinars



Connecticut Foodshare Network Connection

**Connect, chat, and share
with your network partners.**

Connecticut Foodshare Network Connection is a free online discussion tool that helps connect at your convenience. Share an appliance repair company, discuss fundraising challenges and successes, ask how others manage volunteers, and more.



Scan to register and
start chatting!

Or visit
ctfoodshare.discourse.group/



Today's Presenters

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Jackie Riberdy, Resource & Engagement Coordinator

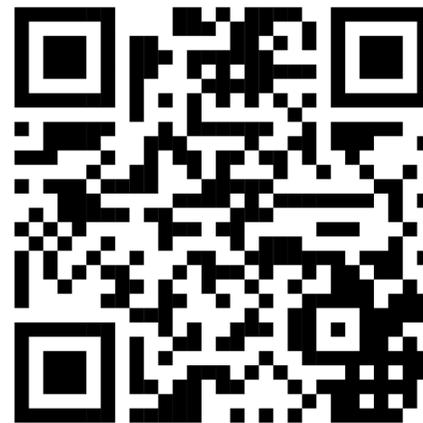
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Thank You!



Provide feedback on this webinar at
www.ctfoodshare.org/WebinarSurvey