

Welcoming Line Management

Enfield Food Shelf



We created six laminated cards in six different colors for a total of 36 cards. We shuffle the cards and pass out 30 cards randomly 30 minutes prior to opening. We retain one of each color in a bag. We do not allow people to choose their own color allowing the randomness to break up a few groups of people who tend to create issues when they come in together. Cards are available for distribution until we open. Cards are distributed only to people who are present. You cannot take a card for a friend arriving soon.

Upon opening at 9 a.m., from the retained color cards, we allow someone in line to pick the first color. Anyone with that color is welcomed in. We tend to modulate our line in groups of five shoppers to create adequate space and to ensure we have enough carriages available. If the color group called has fewer than 5 cards distributed, we just have fewer shoppers in that group. As soon as the first group has checked in, we repeat the process until all the colors have been called. People who arrived after we open at 9 a.m. join the end of the line.

We have tried many processes over the last 10 years and this is the first where people feel it is random enough to be fair to everyone. Virtually all "jockeying for position" has stopped and the atmosphere much lighter. With the larger size of the cards, we find people are not walking off with them as well.