

Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry Nutrition Policy for Food Procurement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry (EYFP) is committed to providing nutritious foods that help our clients live healthy lives. We will use the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System¹.

Foods to Increase: EYFP will actively work to increase the following kinds of foods:

- fresh fruits and vegetables (including from local gardens)
- dry beans and canned beans low in sodium
- Canned vegetables low in sodium
- Canned fruits low in added sugar
- Whole Grains
- Low fat dairy
- Lean meats and tuna canned in water

Foods to Decrease: EYFP will work to decrease the following kinds of foods:

- Highly processed foods
- High sugar foods
- High sodium foods

EYFP will not purchase and will not actively source or seek these donations:

- Candy
- Soda and sugar sweetened beverages
- Energy Drinks

Using the HER guidelines which are summarized in the chart below, we will work to increase the “green” or “choose often” foods and reduce “red” or “choose rarely” foods. Full details are provided later in the policy.

Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugars**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables, frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤2 g	≤230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
					≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	1-11 g			
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
		≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g						
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	2.5-4.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Dairy	Milk, cheese, yogurt	≤3 g	≤230 mg	0 g	3.5-6 g	231-479 mg	1-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Non-Dairy Alternatives	All plant-based milks, yogurts and cheeses	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	≥2.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Beverages	Water, soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, non-100% juice products	0 g	0 mg	0 g	0 g	1-140 mg	1-11 g	≥1 g	≥141 mg	≥12 g
Mixed Dishes	Frozen meals, soups, stews, macaroni and cheese	≤3 g	≤480 mg	≤6 g	3.5-6 g	481-599 mg	7-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥600 mg	≥12 g
Processed and Packaged Snacks	Chips (including potato, corn, and other vegetable chips), crackers, granola and other bars, popcorn	None			If a grain is the first ingredient, it must be a whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g	≥141mg	≥7 g
					0-2 g	0-140 mg	0-6 g			
Desserts	Ice cream, frozen yogurt, chocolate, cookies, cakes, pastries, snack cakes, baked goods, cake mixes	None			None			All desserts		
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Spices, oil, butter, plant-based spreads, flour, salad dressing, jarred sauces (except tomato sauce), seasoning, salt, sugar	Not ranked								
Miscellaneous Products	Nutritional supplements, baby food	Not ranked								

* Definitions of food product categories are included in the text of the full report.

**Use the added sugars value when available on the Nutrition Facts Label. If it is not available, use the total sugars value. The thresholds are the same for all categories except fruits and vegetables and dairy. For both fruits and vegetables and dairy, total sugars thresholds are ≤12 grams for the “choose often” tier, 13 to 23 grams for the “choose sometimes tier,” and ≥24 grams for the “choose rarely” tier.

*** The threshold for saturated fat is the same for the “choose sometimes” and “choose rarely” categories. All saturated fat values ≥2.5 grams should be ranked as “choose sometimes.” The overall ranking is based on the lowest tier of any nutrient. Thus, a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat (“choose sometimes”), 300 milligrams of sodium (“choose sometimes”), and 13 grams of added sugar (“choose rarely”) would fall into the “choose rarely” tier, while a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat (“choose sometimes”), 300 milligrams of sodium (“choose sometimes”), and 10 grams of added sugar (“choose sometimes”) would fall into the “choose sometimes” tier.

Notes: Tiers can be communicated as “choose often,” “choose sometimes,” and “choose rarely,” or with green, yellow, and red visual cues, according to local preference. Overall food product rankings are determined by the lowest tier of any nutrient. For example, a product that is ranked green (“choose often”) for saturated fat, yellow (“choose sometimes”) for sodium, and red (“choose rarely”) for added sugar would receive a final ranking of red (“choose rarely”).

1. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this nutrition policy is to guide Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry's decisions about the foods to acquire and distribute that will contribute to more healthful diets of our clients.

Our nutrition policy communicates to clients, donors, government programs and the community-at-large that we are committed to providing healthful foods to clients. The policy provides clear information about the types of foods to acquire and distribute.

2. Policy Rationale and Benefits

Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry (EYFP) has a 40+ year history of service to the community, supplying foods to help families in hard times. In recent years, EYFP has become concerned about the increasing rates of diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and other serious diet-related diseases and conditions in the community.²

EYFP has a strong commitment to providing healthful foods to clients to help prevent these diet related conditions. We want our clients to know that their health concerns, food preferences and cultural connections are among our highest considerations in acquiring more healthful food. We recognize that the cost of healthier food items, the ability to access healthful, locally grown foods and many other considerations affect what our clients can put on their table.^{3 4}

We recognize the increasing role that food pantries play in providing healthful foods to community members in need. Our policy to procure and distribute foods of high nutritional quality demonstrates our commitment to our clients.

This policy ensures that our organizational commitment to distribute healthful foods is a part of our institutional memory and provides staff with a basis for clear and consistent decision-making about the types of foods and beverages they should procure, encourage and prioritize in their work. The policy also serves as a tool for management and accountability on moving toward the provision of more healthful foods.

3. Food Inventory Sources Covered by This Policy

This policy applies to all foods and beverages acquired by EYFP including those purchased by EYFP, donated to EYFP, or obtained from government programs.

4. Healthful Foods to Increase by EYFP Covered by This Policy

This policy is based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System and research about client-food preferences. We aim to actively seek, procure and distribute the following foods when appropriate and possible:

Fruit and Vegetables, including:

- a. Fresh produce, including more colorful varieties, because they are rich in nutrients and low in calories.
- b. Frozen fruits and vegetables with no added sugar or sodium
- c. Fruits canned in water

- d. Vegetables canned with no added salt or reduced sodium
- e. Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - i. Saturated fat ≤ 2 g
 - ii. Sodium ≤ 230 mg
 - iii. Total sugar ≤ 12 g
 - iv. Added sugar 0 g

Whole Grain and Whole Grain-Rich Foods, particularly:

- a. 100% whole grains
- b. Whole wheat pasta
- c. Whole grain breads
- d. Whole grain cereals
- e. Plain oatmeal
- f. Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - i. Saturated fat ≤ 2 g
 - ii. Sodium ≤ 230 mg
 - iii. Total sugar ≤ 6 g
 - iv. Added sugar ≤ 6 g

Protein Foods, including:

- a. Dried beans
- b. Low-sodium canned beans
- c. Nut butters
- d. Nuts
- e. Poultry
- f. Fish
- g. Eggs
- h. Canned tuna in water
- i. Canned Salmon
- j. Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - i. Saturated fat ≤ 2 g
 - ii. Sodium ≤ 230 mg
 - iii. Total sugar ≤ 6 g

Dairy Foods, including:

- a. Fat-free or low-fat unsweetened yogurt
- b. 1% or 2% milk
- c. Reduced-fat cheeses
- d. Light sour cream
- e. Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - i. Saturated fat ≤ 3 g
 - ii. Sodium ≤ 230 mg
 - iii. Total sugar ≤ 12 g
 - iv. Added sugar 0 g

Non-Dairy Alternatives, including:

- a. Unsweetened soy, almond, rice, cashew, and oat milk and yogurts
- b. Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - i. Saturated fat ≤ 2 g
 - ii. Sodium ≤ 230 mg

- iii. Total sugar ≤ 6 g
- v. Added sugar ≤ 6 g

5. Foods to Decrease at EYFP

The HER Nutrition Guidelines recommend “Choose Rarely” foods and beverages that contribute mainly saturated fat, sodium and added sugar. Such foods tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients. Our goal is to decrease the following:

Processed/package snacks, including, but not limited to:

- a. Chips (corn, potato, puffed cheese, tortilla; not including lower/reduced fat or baked)
- b. Crackers (not including lower/reduced fat or baked)
- c. French fries
- d. Onion rings
- e. Pork rinds
- f. Bars (including granola, cereal, energy, snack bars)

Desserts - including, but not limited to:

- a. Candy
- b. Cookies
- c. Donuts
- d. Fruit snacks
- e. Pastries
- f. Pudding

Sugar-sweetened beverages ⁵, including but not limited to:

- a. Energy drinks
- b. Fruit drinks
- c. Soda
- d. Sports drinks
- e. Sweetened coffees and teas
- f. Sweetened shakes and smoothies
- g. Vitamin-enhanced waters

6. Foods Not Covered by this Policy

Condiments and cooking staples have not been ranked by the HER Nutrition Guidelines and are not the focus of this policy, as they enable clients to prepare meals from staple foods received from the food pantry.

When purchasing food items that are not clearly referenced in the HER guidelines, the EYFP staff member should make their best effort to purchase the healthiest items possible and use the Yuka app (or a similar alternative) as a guide to determine the healthiness of the food item. The Yuka app is a free, mobile application that scans barcodes of food and cosmetic products and provides users with information about their health impact. It evaluates products based on

nutritional value, additives, and organic status, assigning them a score and a color code to indicate their overall healthiness. The app also offers recommendations for healthier alternatives and provides detailed product information, including ingredient lists and explanations of why certain ingredients may be harmful.

7. Brief Overview of Policy Implementation and Review

- This policy has been approved by the Elmhurst Yorkfield Food Pantry Board of Directors, June 10, 2025 for immediate implementation. The policy will be integrated into Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry's official Policies and Procedures Manual as an addendum. The policy will be published on EYFP's website.
- The Executive Director is responsible for the oversight of initial communications and training of the policy for the staff involved in the implementation.
- Questions and comments about the policy should be directed to the Executive Director.
- The policy will be reviewed annually by the Nutrition Policy committee, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

¹ HER Nutrition Guidelines shown where they are based on detailed criteria for nutrients or other food components. See the full report at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>.

² Seligman, HK, Laraia, BA, Kushel MB. Food insecurity is associated with chronic disease among low-income NHANES participants. The Journal of Nutrition, 2010; 140.2: 304-310.

³ Campbell E, Hudson H, Webb K, Crawford PB. Food preferences of users of the emergency food system. J Hunger Environ Nutr. 2011;6(2):179–187.,3

⁴ 3 Webb K, Campbell E, Ross M, Crawford P. Improving the Nutritional Quality of Foods Distributed to Lower-Income Families Through Emergency Food Services: A Study of Nutrition-Related Policies and Practices of Food Banks and Food Pantries. Available at: http://cwh.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/primary_pdfs/Improving_the_Nutritional_Quality_of_Foods_Distributed_to_Lower-Income_Families_through_Emergency_Food_Services_6.12_0.pdf. Accessed January 26, 2015

⁵ Miller, P. E., McKinnon, R. A., Krebs-Smith, S. M., Subar, A. F., Chiqui, J., Kahle, L., & Reedy, J.. Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption in the US: Novel Assessment Methodology. American journal of preventive medicine, 2013;45(4): 416-421.