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# Meal provider volunteer group guidelines



*Thank you for providing meals to our adult residents and their children living at CHOICES!*

## MEALS AT CHOICES

CHOICES welcomes your contribution of a breakfast, lunch or dinner meal for our clients and their families! Volunteer groups may provide meals on a recurring schedule or as a one-time offering.

## MEAL COMPONENTS

CHOICES follows the MyPlate Model in providing healthy meals to our clients. Please see the attached information about MyPlate or visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov). There you will find information about healthy food options as well as appropriate portion sizes and meal prep practices.

- **How many servings should we plan for?** Many factors impact the number of individuals who join us for an evening meal, including the number of people temporarily living at CHOICES and their personal schedules. CHOICES house about 85 individuals, including up to 40-50 children, infants to teenagers. Menus should reflect options for children as well as options for meatless portions.
- **What is a serving size?** Serving sizes can be determined by looking at the nutrition information on the packaging of the foods you are preparing, as well as by referring to the MyPlate Model. Restaurant portions are typically much larger than recommended portion sizes, so please do not use restaurant portions as a reference.
- **Should we provide condiments and drinks?** We highly recommend that you provide condiments for your meals. The kitchen carries condiments, but we may not carry the condiment needed for your meal. Your group can include drinks as part of your meal, (juices, sodas, etc). You do not need to provide water as it is already provided to the residents.
- **Can we provide a partial meal?** If your group is not able to provide a full meal, we welcome your contribution of main dishes, salads, side dishes, fruit or desserts. Please refer to the MyPlate Model for healthy options.
- **Should we bring disposable plates, cups and utensils for residents to use?** The kitchen provides meal plates, bowls, cups and utensils for residents' use.
- **Are there any food items we should not bring?** Many of our residents have a pork-free diet. If you choose a menu that includes pork, please also bring an alternative item for our residents who do not eat pork.
- **What if we bring too much food?** Leftover food can be stored and served the following day.
- **What if we do not bring enough food?** Since our daily shelter census can change day to day, our kitchen staff is prepared to quickly supplement meals should there be a shortage of food.

## FOOD SAFETY

Please adhere to the following guidelines to ensure food safety. Please also refer to the [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) website for additional food safety guidelines.

- Please ask all members of your group who assist in preparation of meals off-site to wear hairnets and gloves to ensure food safety. Washing hands frequently will also help in keeping food safe while preparing, packing and transporting.
- Please keep cold food cold to ensure safety during the preparation, packing and transporting process. Cooked items can be cooled and safely reheated in our kitchens.

## GETTING YOUR GROUP INVOLVED

*Preparing a meal for CHOICES can be a fun and impactful group activity!*

- **How do we promote this event within our group?** Determine the ingredients and quantities that will be needed to prepare your meal and ask members of your group, congregation or business to contribute these items. Turn it into a contest among departments or smaller groups and challenge members to contribute the most items monthly. CHOICES can work with you to create materials to use internally to boost support.
- **How can we stretch a limited budget?** Preparing the same meal (or slight variations) each time that you provide will allow you to shop ahead of time or in bulk for ingredients that are on sale and carry unused ingredients over to the next meal that you provide. Shopping warehouse stores (Sam's Club, Costco, GFS) for larger quantities can also help to stretch your budget. The [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) website provides tools for eating healthy on a budget.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **When should we arrive?** Meals should arrive at CHOICES between 4:00 -4:30 p.m. If you are providing and serving, meal should arrive at 4:30p.m. and you will start serving at 5:30p.m.
- **Where do we drop off meals?** You will deliver the food to CHOICES. It is undisclosed location, and the Volunteer Manager will provide the address when you after your meal date is confirmed. Please do not share this address with anyone that is not involved in the meal drop off or volunteer event.
- **How do we record our volunteer hours?** The hours that you volunteer in the kitchen can be logged via VolunteerHub or sign in sheet at the kitchen sites. Additional hours will be entered for your group to account for meal preparation off site if applicable.
- **What if we have to cancel?** Please contact Samantha Branch at 614-517-7678 if you need to cancel your meal. Please provide at least 24 hours' notice when possible, and if cancelling within 24 hours of your scheduled meal please be sure to speak to staff directly rather than leaving a message
- **Can we bring donations of food to the kitchen to be used at a later date?** Donations of bulk sized shelf stable food are greatly appreciated. Left over prepared food from a party or buffet cannot be accepted for food safety and storage reasons.
- **Can we donate money to cover the cost of a meal?** Donations to CHOICES help to offset kitchen operating costs and control our food budgets. Donations can be made to CHOICES on our website at [www.lssnetworkofhope.org/choices/](http://www.lssnetworkofhope.org/choices/) or by mail to the address below made out to CHOICES:

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