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## Sample Conflict Resolution Policy

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### Our Commitment

The XXXXX Food Pantry and our community partners are committed to serving all people and promoting a safe and respectful environment. We appreciate everyone's support in keeping the pantry safe, fair and friendly so that it is a positive experience for participants, volunteers and staff alike.

Neighbors accessing the pantry can rely on the pantry staff to provide support for challenging situations and we ask our partners to be in close communication at any stage of conflict.

### Addressing Conflict at Your Pantry

Conflict is an inevitable part of working in the community. Some common instances where conflicts may arise include:

- Miscommunication
- Mistreatment or perception thereof
- Preferential treatment or perception thereof
- Any change in process or policy that may/may not have been communicated in advance

When a conflict occurs at a pantry, we promote restorative justice principles, which include opportunities for the participant to repair the harm that may have been done and a focus on rebuilding relationships.

By following our best practices, many conflicts can be prevented. However, in the event that a conflict or behavioral concern does arise, the pantry recommends a graduated approach to addressing it.

***Disclaimer:** This tool is not intended to replace or substitute for your agency-specific policies or protocols. It is intended to be used with respect to, and in conjunction with, your agency's best practices.*

### **Step 1: Warning / One-time Accommodation**

A warning/one-time accommodation may be warranted when a participant's behavior is disruptive or disrespectful but there is no immediate threat to the pantry staff, volunteers, or participants.

The priority is to attempt to de-escalate the conflict and continue the pantry distribution in a timely and safe manner. Pantry Coordinators are encouraged to give the participant(s) in

question a verbal warning and if possible, provide a one-time accommodation to the participant(s) so they may still receive groceries that week.

- a. **Verbal Warning:** Pantry Coordinator (PC) reminds participant(s) in question of the agency's participant/customer guidelines). PC reiterates that respectful behavior is expected from all participants and provides an informal, verbal warning that the behavior exhibited in this situation will not be tolerated and should not be repeated.
- b. **One-Time Accommodation:** If Pantry Coordinator determines participant should not continue through the distribution that day, they are encouraged to provide a one-time accommodation for the participant(s), for example a pre-made box/bag of food.
- c. **Notification:** Pantry Coordinator notifies their Regional Partnership Coordinator (RPC) at the food bank of the incident for documentation and to discuss possible follow-up procedures if needed. Including the HACAP Food Reservoir in these conversations is important in the event that a complaint is filed with the food bank or with the state. Should the behavior continue or escalate, together they will discuss taking further action such as Step 2 outlined below. Alternatively, certain situations may benefit from a mediation process, wherein the HACAP Food Reservoir staff can assist in resolving a challenging situation through facilitated communication and negotiation strategies.

## **Step 2: Formal Warning / Permanent Accommodation / Transfer**

More serious action may need to be taken by your pantry if the disruptive or disrespectful behavior persists despite the verbal warning.

The Pantry Coordinator informs the RPC at the HACAP Food Reservoir and if needed will discuss next steps together, at a minimum communicating that the warning is being issued in the event the person contacts the food bank.

- a. **Formal Warning:** The food pantry can issue a formal warning to the participant(s). This formal warning will outline the situation that occurred, the previous verbal warning and one-time accommodation provided to the participant as well as next steps and expectations going forward for the participant(s).

Following a verbal warning, a formal written warning/letter should be issued prior to jumping to Step 3 of this policy. This letter can be mailed directly to the participant, or provided to them in person. Through Step 2, participant(s) will be asked to acknowledge and take responsibility for their disruptive behavior and agree to follow food pantry guidelines moving forward. Should a permanent accommodation or transfer be made (see below), the participant(s) will also be asked to agree to these terms.

- b. **Permanent Accommodation:** Many individuals may face challenges that prevent them from standing in a line, being surrounded by crowds or loud noises, etc. Where

possible, the Pantry Coordinator is encouraged to make a permanent accommodation for the participant(s) in order that they may continue to receive weekly groceries. These accommodations should follow the ADA recommended procedures. Pantry Coordinators will discuss different types of permanent accommodation options that may be instituted.

- Examples of conditions that might qualify for permanent accommodations include, but are not limited to: PTSD, mental health issues, alcoholism or other addiction issues (intoxication).
- Examples of permanent accommodations include: having a proxy pick-up food for someone, having a separate timeslot, having someone come at the end of a timeslot or distribution window.

- c. **Transfer:** Depending on the situation, a participant may be transferred to another pantry if it has been determined that doing so is in the best interest of the participant(s) and the pantry/pantries in question. Pantry Coordinators should work with the RPC's to accommodate the transfer and to communicate the transfer to the new pantry partner.

### **Step 3: Suspension of Services**

If participant(s) fail to adhere to the expectations set out in Step 1 and 2 of this policy, or heed verbal and formal warnings, a suspension of services may be warranted. A suspension of services may also be warranted if there is an immediate threat to the safety of pantry staff, volunteers and/or other participants.

#### **Non-Compliance with Steps 1 and 2**

The Pantry Coordinator and director will work together to determine whether suspension from services is appropriate and the length of suspension based on the situation. Following a suspension, the situation may be re-assessed to determine whether it is possible to resume services.

#### **Immediate Threat to Safety**

Threats to the safety and wellbeing of pantry coordinators, staff, volunteers and participants may be grounds for immediate suspension, regardless of Steps 1 and 2. Examples of immediate threats to safety may include: threats of physical violence, threats with a deadly weapon, serious assault.

If the Pantry Coordinator determines a participant(s) is posing an immediate threat to the safety and wellbeing of pantry staff, volunteers and/or other participants, the Pantry Coordinator (or anyone on-site) can choose to call the Police Department. Should this happen, the Pantry Coordinator should notify their RPC at the HACAP Food Reservoir.