

USDA

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Policies and Procedures Manual

For

Local TEFAP Distribution Agencies



FY2008

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INTRODUCTION

First of all, we wish to thank you for expressing an interest in being a TEFAP partner with Food Bank of Alaska to meet the food needs in your community. We hope to welcome you into our network of anti-hunger agencies across the state of Alaska.

Overview. TEFAP stands for The Emergency Food Assistance Program. Through this program, your agency can receive and distribute nutritious foods to low-income men, women and children in your community. TEFAP food is FREE to participating agencies and to clients who need food assistance.

History. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) began as the “Presidential Cheese Program” in 1982 to provide low-income households with food for home use. The Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 provided authorization to continue TEFAP for home use and added provisions for distribution of purchased commodities to congregate meal sites serving the homeless. As a mandatory spending program, the appropriation for food purchases is set each year by Congress in the federal budget process. The program has the dual role of providing price supports for select commodities and providing supplies for emergency food distribution agencies.

Organizational Structure. The State of Alaska is responsible for administering TEFAP through a contract with Food Bank of Alaska (FBA). Food Bank of Alaska, a private non-profit organization, coordinates distribution of TEFAP through a network of agencies. Food Bank of Alaska is responsible for ordering TEFAP commodities, coordinating delivery, ensuring that commodities are handled properly by partner agencies, and collecting and maintaining records and reports on all commodities distributed to eligible families and individuals. Agencies are responsible for distributing TEFAP commodities in emergency food boxes free of charge to individuals for home use, ordering commodities as needed from FBA, and completing program paperwork.

Program Information. This packet contains all the information needed to become a TEFAP agency and information on associated responsibilities and requirements, reporting procedures and samples of forms. Adhering to these standards demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a viable program and good service to clients. We commend all volunteers and agency personnel for their efforts in maintaining a high standard of performance in the midst of a burgeoning number of clients needing emergency food assistance. FBA will continue to support the work of our member agencies by advocating for adequate supplies of food, providing training and technical assistance, and educating the public about the causes of hunger. In partnership, we can create a system that ensures no one in Alaska will be hungry.

If at any time you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the following person at 272-3663:

Ruth E. Riley-Elvsaas, MBA – Program Director, rrileyelvsaa@foodbankofalaska.org

STEP 1: Becoming a TEFAP Agency

To become a TEFAP agency, you must complete the **Agreement for Distribution of USDA (TEFAP) Commodities** (see Appendix A). This agreement details the terms and conditions for distributing TEFAP commodities. Please read this carefully, sign it, and submit to FBA.

STEP 2: Signing Up Clients

Appendix B is the USDA Application and Registration Form, to be used to sign up clients. Clients are eligible for TEFAP commodities based on household income. The income guideline for eligible households is 185% of the current federal poverty guidelines.

Income Eligibility. The chart below shows current income guidelines; please note that these guidelines change annually. FBA will distribute new guidelines as they become available.

Effective October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	GROSS INCOME	
	MONTHLY	ANNUAL
1	\$1,384	\$22,663
2	\$1,855	\$30,525
3	\$2,326	\$38,388
4	\$2,798	\$46,250
5	\$3,269	\$54,113
6	\$3,740	\$61,975
7	\$4,211	\$69,838
8	\$4,683	\$77,700
9	\$5,155	\$85,563
10	\$5,627	\$93,426
11	\$6,099	\$101,289
12	\$6,571	\$109,152
13	\$9,755	\$117,015
For each additional member add:	\$472	\$5,655

For the purposes of TEFAP, a household or family is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are living as one economic unit.

Income is the money received by any member of the household before such deductions as taxes and Social Security. It includes the following: salary or wages; earnings from self-employment, including fishing and farming; welfare and unemployment; child support and alimony; strike

benefits; Social Security, pensions, retirement and disability payments; and other cash income received or withdrawn from any source which would be available for payment of a child's meal. Each household member's Permanent Fund Dividend must be prorated as contributing to the total monthly household income. Food Stamp benefits are not included.

Current income is determined by the income received by all members of the household during the month prior to application. But if this income was much higher or lower than usual, the expected income for the year (12 months starting from the month prior to application) should be used.

Clients are also automatically eligible for this program if they are enrolled in the following:

- Food Stamp Program
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)
- State General Assistance

Documentation. TEFAP does not require clients to provide any documentation, such as pay stubs, to verify eligibility. Individuals and families establish their eligibility through a self-declaration of income: 'By signing below, I declare that my household income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level...' ”

Social Security Numbers. Social Security numbers may not be collected as part of the TEFAP eligibility screening, in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974.

Residency. Clients are required to reside in Alaska at the time of applying for assistance. Having an address is not a condition for receiving service if providing an address is not practicable. Homeless clients may not be able to provide address verification. Agencies may mark an "H" in the address line on the distribution record for homeless clients. Client should not be denied service because of inability to provide identification or because they are in transit from one locality to another.

Civil Rights Requirements. TEFAP commodities must be available to all clients without discrimination. USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

All forms of communication to the public publicizing TEFAP program benefits and eligibility requirements must show the following nondiscrimination statement in bold print located in a prominent place: *Rules for acceptance and participation in the program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.*

In addition, each partner agency must display the "And Justice For All" poster prominently at the distribution location. If your site does not have the poster, please request one from the FBA.

STEP 3: Ordering Commodities

Once you have become a TEFAP agency and collected applications from clients, you will need to order commodities from FBA.

Initial Order. For your initial order, please tell FBA staff how many clients have applied for the program and we will send you an appropriate amount of commodities.

Orders. For all orders after your initial order, you can order online or you can or email FBA to request a current 'TEFAP picklist'. The picklist is the list of TEFAP commodities currently in stock. Mark the commodities you wish to order and fax it back to FBA. Please order enough commodities for a 2-3 month supply if your agency is located outside of Anchorage or the Mat-Su Valley. Make sure to include your agency number, agency name and contact name on your order.

Orders are sent to the physical address of the agency via by-pass mail or by freight. FBA will notify you when your order is shipped. You will receive your commodities usually within 14 days.

Commodity Availability. The types of commodities change frequently, so please ask for a current picklist when placing your order. At times, FBA staff may reduce your order based on supplies available.

Product Hold. FBA staff may not allow you to order commodities, a condition called 'product hold', if you have not submitted your current monthly report or if your agency is otherwise out of compliance with the regulations of the program.

STEP 4: Distributing Commodities

Frequency of Distribution. *Clients are eligible to receive only one distribution of TEFAP commodities each month.* However, your agency can choose how often it wants to be open for distribution – daily, weekly or once a month – as convenient.

Packing TEFAP Boxes. TEFAP commodities may only be distributed as part of an emergency food box. TEFAP commodities are distributed based on the size of the household – a larger household gets more food. Appendix C shows how many cans or boxes are to be distributed for different size households.

Please note that efforts should be made to educate clients about how to use the food so waste is avoided. Efforts should also be made to include items in the food box that, in combination, create meals. When possible, client choice should be incorporated in the distribution process to ensure the client will be able to use the food.

Tracking Distribution. Your agency must maintain accurate records of TEFAP distribution. For this purpose, use the TEFAP Certification of Eligibility & Receipt of USDA Commodities form in Appendix D. The Distribution Record must show, at minimum, the date, name, and the client's self-declaration signature. The client signs the form at the time the food box is received as a declaration they are within the income guidelines and to document receipt of the commodities. (Appendix D)

In order to ensure that clients only receive TEFAP commodities once a month, you may also use the TEFAP Commodity Identification Card, shown in Appendix E. If you prefer, your agency can use a different, equivalent system track frequency of service.

Throughout this process, the confidentiality of client information must be strictly observed.

Food Storage and Handling Requirements. Food storage areas should afford protection from the elements, fire, insects, rodents, birds, and from theft. The areas must be clean and dry, all food should be stored a minimum of four (4) inches off the floor and a minimum of six (6) inches away from walls. Toxic non-food items are to be stored in a separate area away from the commodities.

Thermometers must be kept in the freezer, refrigerator and dry storage areas. Temperatures are to be checked each day the agency is open and recorded in a temperature log. Temperatures should be: Dry Storage 50-70° F; Cooler 36-45° F; Freezer -10-0° F. This practice protects the agency from liability for lost product due to improper temperature conditions going unnoticed.

All agencies must have a rodent control policy indicating that thorough cleaning and inspections of the area will be done to prevent rodent infestations. Rodent control measures such as snap traps, glue boards, or trap door devices are recommended in areas where there is access from outside.

A system of food rotation (first in, first out) should be established. No more than a three-month supply of commodities is recommended to avoid unintentional stockpiling of resources. FBA may make adjustments to the amount of commodities allocated to each agency according to the number of persons served or number of food boxes distributed.

Commodities must be stored in a secure area. One person should be assigned responsibility for release of the commodities. Loss of product due to theft, fire, flooding, etc. must be immediately reported to the local authority and FBA. If the theft occurs at the storage area, report it immediately to the police and file a report. Record losses on the Inventory Report form. General liability insurance should be carried by the agency to cover losses related to storage and handling.

Agencies are liable for loss of product due to mishandling or negligence, i.e., improper storage, product going out of condition because too much was kept on hand, and unexplained inventory loss which may include theft. USDA may require restitution for losses in excess of \$100 in value.

Commodity Complaints. If you have a complaint regarding commodities, please submit the Commodity Complaint Form (Appendix G) to FBA. If you are concerned that the quality of the TEFAP commodity poses an immediate health danger, follow these procedures:

1. Collect the name of commodity, the lot number, the package date, the date shipped to your agency, and the condition of the product.
2. Call FBA staff and report.
3. Arrange to ship the questionable commodity to FBA as soon as possible. Notify FBA of shipping arrangements. FBA will pay shipping costs.
4. Remain in contact with FBA staff during the investigation.

FBA staff will open the questionable product and inspect it. If warranted, FBA may submit the product to the State Department of Environmental Health for inspection and alert the State Project Coordinator. If necessary, FBA will inform other TEFAP agencies not to distribute the questionable product.

Commodity Loss. Occasionally, products may arrive damaged or become damaged at your facility. In these instances, please follow these procedures:

1. Complete a Commodity Loss Form (Appendix H) immediately and submit to FBA.
2. Isolate the affected food if it poses a hazard to other food in good condition. Do not dispose of product until you have received instructions from FBA.
3. When FBA provides your agency with instructions to dispose of the product, remove labels from cartons/containers and dispose of food properly so that no one from the public can access the contaminated food.

STEP 5: Submitting Monthly Reports

Monthly inventory and client reports are to be submitted to FBA no later than the 5th of each month, summarizing the inventory and distribution of the prior month. Appendix F shows the monthly report format.

Please note that it is vital that FBA receive these reports each month in order to meet our obligations to the State. Failure to submit reports in a timely manner will result in suspension of access to USDA and donated foods (if applicable).

STEP 6: Maintaining Records

TEFAP agencies must retain TEFAP records on site for three years. USDA distribution records and inventory reports shall be made available to federal, state, and FBA staff on request.

The bottom line in record keeping is accountability. Required record keeping should prevent serious discrepancies in inventory and the need for intervention by FBA.

STEP 7: Monitoring Visits

FBA is required to conduct monitoring visits of local TEFAP agencies, every three to four years depending on location. FBA staff will provide agencies reasonable notice of the visit and information on the scope of the on-site evaluation. The purpose of the on-site visit is to ensure your agency complies with all food storage, record keeping and program operations requirements. FBA will offer recommendations for program improvement where necessary to support smooth operation, ensure proper record keeping practices, and protect the integrity of TEFAP and TEFAP commodity products.

Monitoring visits are also opportunities for your agency to provide FBA feedback on TEFAP product acceptability, FBA distribution procedures and suggestions for improvement.

If FBA finds deficiencies or areas of concern, FBA will send a letter summarizing the findings of the site review within 30 days of the visit detailing corrective action that needs to be taken by the agency and setting a time period for achieving compliance. The agency must respond to FBA within 30 days stating actions taken to correct deficiencies.

Summary of TEFAP Forms and Instructions for Use

Appendix A

TF-07: Permanent Agreement for Distribution of USDA (TEFAP) Commodities

This form is to be used to sign up as a TEFAP distribution agency. Please submit a signed Agreement to the FBA.

Appendix B

TF-02: USDA Application & Registration

This provides for the registration of commodity recipients into the program. The interviewer is responsible for verifying that the client is eligible each month.

The original application is kept on file by your agency. This provides for verification of eligibility and enables monitoring of the program for potential abuse. For this reason, it is imperative that the form be filled out legibly and completely by your authorized agent and signed by the applicant. When your interviewer prints his/her name at the bottom of the form they are attesting to their belief in the validity of the information listed. The original retained by your agency as part of your program documentation. All TEFAP records, including this form, must be retained for three (3) years.

Appendix C

TF-04: Monthly Distribution per Household

This is the commodity distribution guidelines for participating agencies and is subject to revision based upon product availability. Please ensure these guidelines are not exceeded so that we may maintain an adequate inventory to serve those who may need the products.

Appendix D

TF-10: TEFAP Certification of Eligibility & Receipt for USDA Commodities

This documents the distribution of commodities by unit of issue. In addition, the client signature attests to continuing eligibility to participate in the program each month. The member agency may make additional copies of this form as needed.

Appendix E

USDA Commodity Identification Card

This is the identification card signed by the client at the time of registration. You may number or name the card as long as it matches the application. This card tracks TEFAP access on a monthly basis. This card should normally be retained at the distribution site.

Appendix F

TF-01: Monthly TEFAP Report

This is a *mandatory* monthly inventory report that is due on the fifth (5th) day of the month following distribution and must be submitted even if no distribution took place. Please ensure that it is prepared in a timely manner as the data is used to generate a subsequent report to the State of Alaska. This inventory report is used to ensure good inventory practices, thus avoiding excess and waste. All of the required data for this report is taken from Form 10 above. Included is an instruction sheet for filling out the Monthly TEFAP Report and a sheet listing the pack configuration per case for each commodity.

Appendix G

USDA Food Complaint Form

This form may be used to report defective packaging or commodities of inferior quality. The original should be mailed directly to Food Bank of Alaska. A copy of the report should be kept on file at your location.

Appendix H

USDA Commodity Loss Report

This form must be submitted any time commodities are damaged, spoiled, or stolen while in an agency's possession. In addition, this report should be submitted any time there is a discrepancy between the calculated balance and the actual inventory of commodities. The original is sent to FBA and a copy should be on file at your location.