

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 an evening 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. 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 houses about 75 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?** It is not necessary to provide condiments for your meals. Salad dressings, ketchup, mustard, BBQ sauce, etc. can be provided by the kitchen in bulk. Your group can include drinks as part of your meal, but please provide large sized drink mixes that can be prepared at the kitchen rather than individual sized drinks or grocery store prepared beverages (juices, sodas, etc).
- **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 clients to use?** The kitchen provides meal plates, bowls, cups and utensils for residents' use. Desserts are plated separately and dessert sized disposable plates are appreciated.
- **Are there any food items we should not bring?** Please do not bring individually packaged items (drinks, granola bars, condiments) as these items increase the amount waste that the kitchen staff needs to manage.
- **What if we bring too much food?** Leftover food can be stored and served later in the week.
- **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 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 as well to ensure food safety.
- Washing hands frequently will also help in keeping food safe, as your group is preparing, packing and delivering it.
- Please keep cold food cold to ensure safety during the preparation, packing and delivery 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 (GFS requires no membership). The www.choosemyplate.gov website provides tools for eating healthy on a budget.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **When should we arrive?** Meals should arrive at the Community Kitchen (245 N. Grant Ave.) between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m. and will be delivered to the CHOICES shelter by LSS staff.
- **Where do we drop off meals?** The Community Kitchen (245 N. Grant Ave.) has a loading dock located at the rear of the building. You can pull up to the dock and drop off your meal.
- **How do we record our volunteer hours?** The hours that you volunteer for meal preparation off site will be logged into our Volunteer Hub scheduling system by CHOICES staff.
- **What if we have to cancel?** Please contact CHOICES at 614-224-4663 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
- **Who can we contact with additional meal questions before we provide?** Roberta Baioni, director of volunteer engagement, can answer your questions about meal planning for CHOICES. She can be reached at rbaioni@lssco.org or 614-228-5200.
- **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. Please do not bring prepared food from a party or buffet 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.choicescolumbus.org or by mail to the address below made out to CHOICES:

Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio

Development Department
500 W. Wilson Bridge Road, Suite 245
Worthington, OH 43085