

**HIV Health Services Planning Council
Sacramento TGA
Policy and Procedure Manual**

Subject: Food Bank and Home Delivered Meals **No.:** SSC 12

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Consistent with funded Service Priorities established by the Sacramento TGA HIV Health Services Council the following Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals Service Standard will apply to all Ryan White contracted vendors that provide Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals services.

1. Ryan White CARE Act funding is to be used for any service designed to significantly improve client access and adherence to HIV/AIDS medical resources. Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals services that are provided by agencies and paid for through Ryan White CARE Act funding is part of a comprehensive medical care plan that promotes an optimal state of health for the client. Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals services must meet criteria as noted below: be:

- Medically appropriate
- Nutritionally sound
- Consistent with any restrictions otherwise noted by an individualized client medically prescribed diet

These expectations shall apply whether such services are provided directly by a Ryan White Agency (RW Agency), or by a non-RW Agency to which the client is referred by a RW Agency.

2. Ryan White funding is to be expended in an equitable manner which is based upon verification of a client's budget and need that serves the contractually obligated number of unduplicated clients. Payment for Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals services through Ryan White funding is authorized only in circumstances where client eligibility is validated, and any other payment guarantor is insufficient.

3. Ryan White funded Food Bank and Home Delivered Meals assistance is to supplement what is available through food banks and other local food resources. It is not intended to be the sole source of assistance.

4. Established Standards:

A. Screening:

- i. Each new client enrolled in Food Bank/Home Delivered Meals must receive an orientation to the services, document this orientation in the client file.
- ii. Refer ineligible clients for Food Bank/Home-Delivered Meals services to another community-based organization or link them to another safety net provider as appropriate. Documentation of that referral must be in the client file and available upon request.

B. Food Bank/Home-Delivered Meals refers to the provision of actual food items, hot meals, or vouchers to purchase food. This also includes the provision of essential non-food items. Nutritional services and nutritional supplements provided by a registered dietitian are considered a core medical service, covered under the Medical Nutrition Therapy standard.

Allowable costs under the Food Bank/Home-Delivered Meals standard include:

- Food items
- Hot meals
- Vouchers used to purchase food
- Nutritional supplements, such as Ensure, may only be used in addition to food and not as the only offering to a client.

Allowable essential non-food items are limited to the following:

- Personal hygiene products
- Household cleaning supplies

Unallowable costs under the Food Bank/Home-Delivered Meals standard include:

- Household appliances
- Pet food
- Alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis products
- Clothing
- Other non-essential products
- Cash payments to clients
- The provision of food is essential to wellbeing and must be based on need. It should not be used as an incentive to motivate clients to attend on-going appointments or take medication

- C. Food distributed by food banks and others shall be fresh (for packaged food, not beyond recommended expiration dates), free from filth or vermin, and until distributed to consumers, properly stored and handled to maximize shelf life and minimize spoilage. Referrals shall only be made to food providers which have valid, current permits issued by the appropriate county health department or otherwise meet accepted community standards. It is recommended and preferred that food packages contain items which can be used together to create nutritionally complete meals for a minimum of **three days** per person or family. Referrals by service providers to food banks and other services which are not themselves recipients of Ryan White funding, shall be based in part on client feedback on their satisfaction with the quality of such services.
- D. Expenditures for food shall be controlled to minimize opportunities for inappropriate use. Vouchers or debit cards shall be issued only to qualified clients and, if possible, for reasonable cost. Vouchers or cards must be labeled or coded to prevent purchase of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or games of chance. The following criteria must be met for voucher/card issuance:
- i. Eligible clients must work with the client's care team to have an assessment to provide proof of need with each request and such proof must be documented and added to the case file.
 - ii. Client produces a grocery receipt displaying that the Ryan White food voucher was used consistent with the established nutrition standards herein.
 - iii. Fiscal Management
There are additional requirements when utilizing vouchers or store gift cards.
 1. Providers must ensure that vouchers or store gift cards cannot be exchanged for cash or used for anything other than the allowable goods or services. Some stores may require program vouchers to exclude certain products such as tobacco and alcohol.
 2. General-use prepaid cards are considered "cash equivalent" and therefore unallowable. Such cards generally bear the logo of a payment network (e.g., Visa, MasterCard, or American Express) and are accepted by any merchant that accepts those credit or debit cards as payment. Gift cards that are co-branded with the logo of a payment network and the logo of a

merchant or affiliated group of merchants are general-use prepaid cards, not store gift cards, and therefore not allowed.

3. Providers must have systems in place to account for disbursed vouchers. The systems must track the client's name, the staff person who distributed the voucher, the date of the disbursement, and serial number, and the voucher dollar amount.
4. Providers should only buy vouchers in amounts that are reasonable for use in the contract year. In no case should use of vouchers lead to large amounts of Ryan White monies being held over to new contract years.

E. Providers of Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals Services shall not use their professional status as a means to promoting products in which they may have a financial interest in.

5. Ryan White Agencies which provide Non-Medical and/or Medical Case Management services shall develop and adhere to budgets for Food Bank and Home-Delivered Meals Services which reflect the principles referred to above. In addition, if available funding levels are anticipated to be less than the total need, agencies shall ensure that funds are distributed equitably to achieve assistance to the greatest number of clients who are most at risk for nutrition related health problems. Agencies will assure that no client receives any RW funded services unless such client is found to be eligible for services under such Eligibility Standards as may be adopted by the Planning Council.

6. Non-Medical and/or Medical Case Managers at RW Agencies may at any time submit to the Recipient, requests for interpretation of these or any other Services Standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council, based on the unique medical or other healthcare needs of a client or on unique barriers to accessing healthcare services which may be experienced by a client.

7. Ryan White Agencies must provide a means by which Non-Medical and/or Medical Case Managers can obtain in-servicing and on-call advice related to interpreting client medical and other healthcare needs.

Education/Experience/Supervision

There are no minimum educational standards. Staff preparing food must be familiar with safe food handling practices and meet any federal, state, or local requirements around food preparation.

Staff Orientation and Training

Initial: All Food Bank/Home Delivered Meals staff must complete an initial training session related to their job description and serving those with HIV. Training should be completed within 60 days of hire. Topics must include:

- Safe food handling procedures
- Confidentiality
- Knowledge of key points of entry for other Ryan White services

Ongoing: Staff must also receive ongoing annual HIV training as appropriate for their position. Training may be any combination of (1) in-person, (2) articles, (3) home studies, or (4) webinars, and must be clearly documented and tracked for monitoring purposes.

Agency

Any agency providing Food Bank/Home-Delivered Meals must comply with federal, state, and local regulations, including any required licensure or certification for the provision of food bank services and/or home-delivered meals. Where applicable, this also includes adherence to any necessary food handling standards or inspection requirements.

8. Clients shall have the right to request a review of any service denials under this or any other Services Standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council. The most recent review/grievance policies procedures for the RW Agency shall be made available to each client upon intake. Such policies and procedures shall include an explanation of the criteria and process for accessing any available advocacy or ombudsman services.



Adopted:

Richard Benavidez, Chair

Date: 12/11/2024