CLIENT CHOICE MODELS

The Central Texas Food Bank encourages all food pantries to incorporate a client choice food pantry model, which both empowers clients and reduces waste. It is important to take clients' needs into account before preselecting the amount and type of food given to them during a distribution. Please review the client choice model examples below and customize a model that works best for your agency:

1. **Open Distribution Model**
   - Pantry permits clients to choose food items freely. Food can be limited by:
       - Food per household
       - Food by household size
       - Food by pyramid system (Categorize all food items into food groups and then provide each client with poundage allotments for each food group)

   Benefits: Clients get to choose their own food firsthand (preferences, lifestyle, and dietary restrictions)

   Barriers: Slower distribution process, inefficient for pantries with limited space

2. **Item List Model**
   - Provide each client with a current list of available food items and allow them to "check" which items they would like
   - A staff member or volunteer takes the list and uses it to prepare a bag containing the selected items for the client

   Benefits: Clients get to choose their own food (preferences, lifestyle, and dietary restrictions), efficient for pantries with limited space

   Barriers: Requires staff/volunteers to prepare individual bags, requires more time due to the client selection process and bag assembly

3. **Choice/Pre-assembled Combination Model**
   - Permits clients to choose an allocated or unlimited amount of miscellaneous items that are not included in the pre-assembled bag
   - Pre-assembled bags could contain staple items while choices could include options like produce, meat, and non-food items

   Benefits: Quick and efficient for pantries with limited space, pantry is prepared for emergency situations

   Barriers: Clients don't want/consume pre-assembled food due to dietary restrictions or preparatory limitations (items thrown away/wasted)

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