



Case Management at Food Pantries

450 Woodland Ave, Bloomfield, CT 06002-1342
Phone (860) 286-9999 / Fax (860) 286-7860

Although staffing may be a problem, helping your clients with needs in addition to food can provide big gains in terms of their self-sufficiency and well-being. Here are some points to consider when managing this process or, in other words, providing “case management” to your clients:

Relationships – Cultivating trusting and respectful bonds with clients is crucial to having the kind of open and direct discussions necessary for addressing challenges.

Documentation – Writing down the goals of clients and notes, action plans, etc. from your meetings with them will help ensure things are not forgotten and hold you and your clients accountable.

Motivational Interviewing – This approach focuses on **where clients are at** and explores their ambivalence or resistance to change. [Click here](#) for more information.

Tracking – Recording accomplishments of clients even, if possible, once they have left your program can help gauge your program’s effectiveness for your own improvement, other programs wanting to learn from you, and donors.

Privacy/Confidentiality – Clients need to know that they are safe discussing anything with you and it will not become known outside of your relationship.

Follow-Up – Say what you mean and mean what you say. Keep appointments and do the things you say you will do for clients and hold them to the same standards.

Groups – Recognize that whenever you can get clients together discussing their challenges, learning from each other, and feeling a sense of community, then you’re providing a real “oasis for possible change” in their lives.

Peer Mentoring – No one can better communicate the challenges of getting out of poverty than someone who has been there. “Graduates” of your program can be great resources for your clients and this also gives graduates a chance to “give back”.

Start Slow – Rome wasn’t built in a day, so take very small steps toward changing what are often long term problems in the lives of clients. Ask clients to write down what they would love to do, care about, worry about (see above under “Documentation”) and start from there over the next year or two to help change the energy and direction of their lives.

Cultural Competence – Try to understand where clients are coming from, whether from a different ethnic/racial background, economic class, state or neighborhood from you, and work from their points of view, not your own. Meet clients where they’re at.

Staffing and Resources – Some combination of staffing, volunteers and private space can help make case management successful at your food pantry. Case Management is time intensive and personally challenging yet a particularly effective way you can help make lasting changes in your clients’ lives. There are no shortcuts. It may also, by the way, change your life too.

Good Luck with your efforts. For more information, contact Kai Loundon, Agency Services Coordinator for Foodshare (kloundon@foodshare.org | 860-286-9999 x112).