## **Frequently Asked Questions: Nutrition Program**

## From the desk of the Nutrition Team

**Fresh Produce Donation & Usage Guidelines**

**Question: *Can we accept fresh produce for use in the nutrition program?***

**Answer:** *Yes, fresh produce which is unprocessed, i.e. in its whole, natural state- uncut with no signs of mold, spoilage or severe bruising. The skin should be intact. It should not be peeled, washed or processed in anyway.*

**Handling Produce**: Follow these steps when selecting, handling, storing and transporting the produce you plan to donate:

Offer only good quality, freshly picked produce to food pantries and aging units.

* Handle fresh fruits and vegetables safely to minimize the risk of foodborne illness.
* Don’t mix produce types. Keep each type in separate, clean, food-grade containers or bags.
* Clean as much mud and dirt as possible off of the produce you plan to donate. Please do not wash the produce, this helps to maintain its freshness. The produce will be thoroughly washed before use at our facilities.
* Choose produce that has no signs of mold, spoilage, bruising or insects.

We recommend that you harvest produce early in the morning. If it’s covered with dew, dry it with paper towels. Inspect each item for serious bruising, insect damage and over-ripeness. Don’t donate produce that you wouldn’t buy or use for your own family. This includes produce that is overripe, has mushy spots or is seriously blemished.

If you use pesticides in your garden, always read and follow the label recommendations for use of the pesticide. Pay particular attention to the time to harvest after last use before you harvest. If you are not absolutely sure that you followed the label when using pesticides, the food should be landfilled and not composted, eaten or donated.

For more information about choosing and handling fresh produce safely, visit the Fresh Fruits, Vegetables and Juices page of Foodsafety.gov at [www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/fruits/index.html#.Ug51eG2zLms](http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/fruits/index.html#.Ug51eG2zLms)

If you have a large amount of produce to donate, call at least one day ahead of time to find out their preferred delivery days and times. You may eventually want to talk with the agency about a weekly delivery schedule.

**The Policy and Procedure Manual states:**

*8.5.12 Use of Donated or Discounted Food*

*Using donated or discounted food from a food bank can significantly reduce food costs. Nutrition programs may use contributed and discounted foods only if they meet the same standards of quality, sanitation, and safety as apply to foods purchased from commercial sources.*

*Acceptable items include:*

* *Fresh fruits and vegetables received clean and in good condition.*
* *Game from a licensed farm processed within two hours of killing by a licensed processor.*
* *Food collected from a food bank which can be prepared and served before the expiration of the freshness date.*

*A local nutrition program may determine, and specify with a local policy, that they do not wish to incorporate "acceptable" donated or discounted foods into their menus.*

<http://www.gwaar.org/images/stories/Nutrition/FormsCommonlyUsed/Chapter8-PolicyManual2011update.pdf.pdf>