



BFN Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome to Berkeley Food Network!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with us at Berkeley Food Network!

In Berkeley and Albany, 1 in every 5 individuals is experiencing food insecurity. BFN was founded in 2016 with the goal of ending hunger and poor nutrition in our community by using innovative, community-centered solutions to build a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system.

Volunteers play a key role in our operation's ability to meet our mission. As a volunteer, you may do anything from sorting recovered foods, cooking in our Hub Kitchen, assembling food boxes and bags for our partners, or interacting with community members at our food pantries. All of these shifts and opportunities align with the common goal of enhancing the nutritional security of our neighbors and keeping everyone healthy.

This handbook outlines our policies as an organization, our programs and volunteer opportunities, our volunteer agreement and waivers, and our key staff/board members. Please read through as you prepare to volunteer with us. We cannot wait to see you in our warehouse!

Thank you for your interest in supporting the Berkeley Food Network!

The BFN Team

BFN Key Programs

BFN Hub Kitchen

We believe our services should improve accessibility for our clients. By batch cooking, individually packaging, and freezing vegetarian meals, we are able to offer our clients prepared foods that are both healthy and ready to eat. With a dedicated team of volunteers, we prepare 3,000 meals per month for distribution to partners serving seniors and homebound individuals, as well as through our on-site and mobile pantries.

- Our Hub Kitchen uses recovered foods, thereby cutting down on waste.
- Our frozen meals are especially popular with clients who may not have the capacity, equipment, or ability to prepare their own meals.
- We prepare some hot meals for select partners to serve in group settings based on circumstances and kitchen capacity.

Volunteer opportunities:

Cooking at our Hub Kitchen

Assisting the Hub Kitchen Manager in packing, loading and unloading ingredients and meals

Food Recovery

By partnering with farms, retailers, restaurants, and other businesses, we recover over 50,000 pounds of surplus food every month, thereby diversifying our sourcing to offer a greater variety of high-quality foods to our clients.

- Gleaned fruits and vegetables add greater seasonality to our produce selections.
- Recovered foods that are less appropriate for individual consumers go to our Hub Kitchen program, which uses the ingredients to prepare nutritious frozen meals.

Volunteer opportunities:

Sorting Recovered Produce

Picking Up Produce from recovery sites (Trader Joe's, Berkeley Bowl, SF Market, etc.)

Sustainable Sourcing

We believe our food should be grown in a way that nourishes ecologies and people. By purchasing from farmers who use sustainable or regenerative practices, we source food for today while seeding tomorrow's harvest. And, by purchasing from smaller BIPOC farmers, we direct capital to historically disenfranchised communities to realize a more equitable future.

- We regularly procure fruits & vegetables from farmers associated with the Association for Land-Based Training (ALBA) and Dig Deep Farms, and purchase from local farms when we are able.
- Buying fresh, high-quality produce translates to a greater selection of nutrient-dense goods for our clients, thereby contributing to individual health.

Volunteer Opportunities:

General Warehouse (Receiving, Sorting, Inventory, etc)

Client Choice Pantries

We believe everyone should have access to healthy, high-quality, and culturally appropriate foods. By emphasizing client choice, we center dignity and agency for people who use our services.

- Mobile pantries are the primary vehicle through which we provide food. They are organized like farmers' markets so clients can browse and select only the items they desire, thereby increasing individual agency and reducing food waste.
- Our on-site pantry offers a range of high-quality produce and proteins to meet a range of dietary needs and preferences.
- During the pandemic, we have either moved our pantries outdoors or increased distribution of pre-packed bags according to the circumstances of our partner agencies.

Volunteer Opportunities:

On-site Pantry, On-site Pantry Lead & Floater

Mobile Pantry (HTT, SBSC, AHS, BAS, Redwood Gardens, etc)

Redistribution (RDO)

We believe frontline organizations are best positioned to serve their specific communities. By redistributing food from the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) to a network of local agencies, we foreground the trust and knowledge our partners have built with their clients.

- Our warehouse allows us to serve as a hub between larger suppliers and frontline organizations who may not have the space to receive or store large amounts of food.
- We are the first RDO with ACCFB, as well as the first urban RDO in the country.

Volunteer Opportunities:

ACCFB Processing

Homebound Delivery

We believe in serving clients with disabilities who may not have the ability to travel to a pantry. By working with both referral and delivery partners, we identify those who may not be able to access food or equipment and provide them supplemental nutrition options.

- Select groceries and meals from our Hub Kitchen offer convenience for seniors and disabled adults.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Homebound Bag Packing

(Remote) Calling Seniors to Update Food Preferences

Standard Volunteer Opportunities

BFN Warehouse

During these shifts you will work in the warehouse on a variety of tasks which might include assembling grocery bags for distribution, sorting produce, or working on a food recovery project. If you like working non-stop until the task is done and the warehouse is clean -- this is the shift for you!

On-site Pantry

During these shifts you will first set up, stock and organize our pantry, then assist clients to select and pack groceries. At closing, you will break down, restock, and clean up. If you like interacting with people in a sometimes-fast-paced environment, sign up here!

Mobile Pantry

These shifts take place at off-site pantries in the community. We ask that you work 5 shifts in our on-site pantry first in order to learn about our processes and clients. You will meet the BFN van, set up, run the pantry, then break down and reload the van. Lifting is required. This is a great chance to engage with our clients out in the community!

Food Recovery

BFN receives donations of excess food from local restaurants, farmers markets, grocery stores, and gardeners. Volunteers help with pick up, intake, weighing, sorting, and processing. If you want to be part of the solution to food waste, please join us!

Hub Kitchen

The excess food we receive from our food recovery program is repurposed to make our delicious Hub meals! Volunteers will help prep, cook, package, and transport these Hub meals so we can distribute them to our partners and pantry clients. If you like to cook, this is the spot for you!

Less common shifts include:

- Driving to pick up recovered foods
- Delivering food boxes
- Administrative Support
- And more!

Our calendar will be the most up-to-date place to locate upcoming volunteer opportunities. Please check it often to see if any shifts suit your interests!

Volunteer Policies

At Berkeley Food Network the safety and health of our clients, volunteers and staff is of the utmost importance. To keep everyone safe, healthy, and happy, we have established some rules and policies for volunteers to keep in mind as they operate throughout the day. The rules are crucial to maintaining the safety of our BFN Community. Volunteering at BFN is contingent upon one's ability to follow instructions & safety protocols to ensure tasks are completed in a correct, efficient, safe, and respectful manner.

Age Requirements:

- Children ages 16-17: may volunteer on their own with an adult/guardian signature [[waiver](#)]
- Children ages 12-15: may volunteer with an adult present on the same shift.
- Children under age 12: unfortunately BFN cannot accommodate volunteers under age 12.

Dress Code:

Please wear appropriate clothing while on site at our warehouse & pantry. While volunteering:

- Always wear sturdy, comfortable, closed-toe shoes
- Dress comfortably. You will be moving throughout the day and may even work up a sweat, so be prepared by wearing whatever will be most comfortable for you!
- For pantry volunteers:
 - Bring sunglasses, hats & sunscreen if desired. While our pantry has popup tents, you may be in the sunlight depending on the time of the day!

Volunteer Do's & Don'ts:

<p>Do:</p> <p>Arrive on time and stay for the duration of your shift.</p> <p>Give at least 24 hour notice if you need to miss your scheduled shift by notifying volunteer@berkeleyfoodnetwork.org.</p> <p>Check in when you arrive, fill out a name tag, and wait for instructions - even if you're a regular!</p> <p>Respect safety protocols (including food safety) outlined in this handbook and in your training. Report any problems or safety concerns to staff members, immediately.</p> <p>Treat others (staff, volunteers, & clients) with respect, fairness and dignity. We don't know what others are dealing with in their life, so it's best to approach each interaction with kindness and care. If conflict arises while working with a client, volunteer or staff member, please step away from the situation and find your supervisorial staff member.</p> <p>Seek authorization from appropriate staff before communicating externally on behalf of BFN.</p>

Don't...

Throw items; please gently pass or place items when moving them from one area to another.

Park in the parking lot on Ninth St.

Engage in any activity that may cause physical or mental harm to another person (such as verbal or physical abuse, physical abuse, assault, bullying or discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or race). This includes misgendering clients, staff, and volunteers.

Bring alcohol or drugs to the Berkeley Food Network site, or come to our site while intoxicated

Engage in activities that may damage property.

Health & Safety Protocol:

- Always wash hands at the start of every shift, and rewash them if they get dirty over the course of your shift.
- Always be mindful of your surroundings. We work with heavy items and heavy machinery, so please be careful as you move around the warehouse.
- Any injuries should be reported immediately to an employee of Berkeley Food Network.
- Use proper lifting techniques when lifting heavy objects. Always use your legs and not your back. Ask for help from another volunteer or staff member if something is too heavy!

More detailed safety protocol and procedures will be covered in the volunteer orientation and can be found in our training resource library.

Parking:

At this time we **do not have access to the parking lot on Ninth street**. Please utilize available street parking on the adjacent streets while volunteering at BFN. When parking, be sure to take all valuables with you or leave them in a secure space in your vehicle. Also note, street sweeping is the first & second Monday & Tuesday of the month, so check the signs to avoid tickets!

We have lockers on site for you to store any important items during your shift. Berkeley Food Network is not responsible for any lost or stolen personal items. If you ride your bike to our site, we have bike racks available inside the warehouse. Please ask a staff member when you arrive to show you to the bike rack for parking.

Cancellation Policy:

Please give us at least 24-48 hour notice when canceling a shift. Our operations are heavily impacted by last minute cancellations and can lead to unnecessary stress for volunteers and staff. The more time we have to find a replacement, the better. We understand that emergencies

happen, and in those cases, please be sure to communicate this to the Volunteer Coordinator. If a volunteer cancels more than 5 times with less than 24 hour notice, they will be asked not to volunteer for at least 2 weeks.

Code of Conduct:

BFN works closely with our volunteers to help them follow all Warehouse, Pantry, and Safety policies (please see above), and Behavioral and Equity & Inclusion policies (please see below).

Equity & Inclusion

Policy Against Harassment and Discrimination

The Berkeley Food Network believes in respecting the dignity of every person who interacts with BFN and expects every representative of BFN to show respect for all of our colleagues, customers, and vendors. Respectful and professional conduct furthers BFN's mission, promotes productivity, minimizes disputes, and enhances our reputation.

Accordingly, this policy prohibits any discrimination or harassment that is based on an individual's protected status. "Protected status" means race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, military or veteran status, genetic information or any other protected classification of an individual, or that individual's associates or relatives.

This policy applies to any employee, supervisor, partner, officer, director, volunteer, vendor, client, contractor, applicant, or agent of BFN. BFN will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment that violates this policy.

Prohibited Conduct

Among the types of verbal, physical, or visual conduct prohibited by this policy are epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, intimidating acts, and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility toward individuals because of their protected status. Even where the conduct is not sufficiently severe or pervasive to constitute legally actionable harassment, BFN prohibits any such conduct in the workplace.

Incident Reporting

If you feel you have experienced or witnessed any conduct that is inconsistent with this policy, direct your complaint to the Volunteer Coordinator in order to document the complaint with you, confirm it is accurate to your experience, and escalate if necessary with the assistance of the Director of Operations and the Warehouse Manager. All incidents and accidents will be reported to the Warehouse Manager or Director of Operations. [Incident Form](#)

Company Response

If an investigation reveals that a violation of this policy or other inappropriate conduct has occurred, BFN will take corrective action, including discipline up to and including dismissal, as is appropriate under the circumstances, regardless of the positions of the parties involved. BFN may discipline an employee or volunteer for any inappropriate conduct discovered in investigating reports made under this policy, regardless of whether the conduct amounts to a violation of law or even a violation of this policy.

Corrective Action

Any individual who engages in discrimination or harassment is subject to corrective action including, but not limited to, verbal or written warning, suspension, or discharge. BFN will decide what corrective action will be taken based on the specific facts of each situation.

If a volunteer has been found to have violated any BFN rule or policy, we will implement the following measures:

- **Training measures:** BFN will provide a comprehensive orientation and ongoing updates.
- **Supportive measures:** BFN will provide resources to improve volunteers' ability to follow our Code of Conduct.
 - A list of resources, handbooks, and training will be provided to you.
- **Corrective measures:** progressive model of correction.
 - **First occurrence:** BFN staff will provide guidance in the moment with verbal and written acknowledgement of the incident. Staff will work with you on how to prevent recurrence.
 - **Second occurrence: May result in removal from the situation.** Volunteer will meet with Operations Team Leaders to develop a plan for improvement. Utilize training resources.
 - **Third occurrence: May result in dismissal from our volunteer program.** Depending on the severity of the incident, volunteers may be asked to leave immediately.

Retaliation

BFN forbids that any employee or volunteer treat any other employee, former employee or volunteer adversely for reporting discrimination or harassment, for assisting another employee or volunteer making a report, for cooperating in a discrimination or harassment investigation, or for filing an administrative claim with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or a state governmental agency. All employees who experience or witness any conduct they believe to be retaliatory should immediately follow the reporting procedures stated above.

Confidentiality

In investigating and in imposing any discipline, BFN will attempt to preserve confidentiality of the reporter to the extent possible.

Directory



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