

Feeding Our Kids

Program Manual

2024-2025 Academic Year



Our mission is to provide nourishing food to food-insecure school children in Champaign County on weekends and school holidays throughout the school year. Our vision is that by helping food insecure children in Champaign County break down one barrier toward success, we will help enable them to learn and accomplish great things as they grow up.

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Program and Guide Overview

Feeding Our Kids (FOK) BackPack program provides nourishing food to support school children facing food insecurity in Champaign County on weekends and school holidays throughout the school year. Our vision is that by helping children who are food insecure in Champaign County we can break down one barrier to success, which will help enable them to learn and accomplish great things as they grow up.

Feeding Our Kids was started in 2013 with 18 children participating in 2 Champaign County schools and has since grown to providing food bags to more than 1200 children in 42 schools and programs in Champaign County and Tuscola.

This guide defines the roles, responsibilities, and processes of the program. The information is summarized in an outline format at the beginning, but schools are expected to understand all the information contained in this guide.

2024-25 Calendar

| Month | Activity |
|-----------|--|
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Solicit parental consent ● First deliveries will be coordinated as school begins |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update numbers as needed |
| October | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Submit first Quarterly Report ● Coordinate fall break deliveries-Champaign/Urbana |
| November | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bags for Thanksgiving break |
| December | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bags for Winter break |
| January | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quarterly Reports |
| February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan for spring break schedules |
| March | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate Spring Break delivery plans |
| April | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quarterly Reports |
| May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Renewal Application, School Survey with End of Year Distribution-scheduled as needed |
| | |

Delivery Schedule

FOK will be packing out of Eastern Illinois Foodbank in 2024-2025. School deliveries will occur on a staggered two-week cycle. You will be contacted with your school delivery schedule as the semester gets underway. All efforts will be made to have bins at each school no later than Wednesday. Most deliveries will take place on Tuesday and Wednesdays. Changes to this schedule could be impacted by weather and you will be contacted if that is the case. *There may be occasional deviations from the schedule to account for first deliveries of each semester as well as some breaks and holidays.* Specifics will be coordinated between FOK and the school program coordinator.

Program Guide Summary

1. Important dates are listed in the calendar. Any conflicts with or changes to school calendars need to be coordinated with FOK as far in advance as possible.
2. There shall be one School Program Coordinator who is the main Point of Contact for FOK and oversees the implementation of the program at the school site. ***We strongly recommend identifying a second person to help with coordination on an as needed basis.***
3. Student participation
 - a. Student selection for the program is at the discretion of the School Program Coordinator, who should utilize the provided guidelines. Students should be selected based on demonstrating signs of chronic hunger and food insecurity. This may be independent of receiving free/reduced lunches.
 - b. Parental consent can be verbal or written, but it is required for participation and must be recorded by the School Program Coordinator.
 - c. Confidentiality of the student and their family is paramount.
4. Logistical information of food bin deliveries
 - a. Food bins will be delivered every other week. Empty bins should go back with the delivery driver.
 - b. School personnel may need to help delivery volunteers unload food bins and bring them into school.
 - c. Food bins need to be stored in a location that is ventilated, secure, clean, and pest-free.
 - i. Food is shelf-stable and does not need refrigeration.
 - d. Upon receipt, confirm that all food bins have arrived and seem to be in good condition.
 - i. Per FDA guidance, dates on food packaging are “Best if Used by” and do not impact food safety. FOK will make every effort to deliver food prior to listed dates; however, some food items may be past the listed date. Such food will still be safe, and this will be determined in concert with the Eastern Illinois Foodbank and FDA guidelines.
5. The food bag distribution process is to be determined by the School Program Coordinator in whatever manner works best for the school site, so long as confidentiality and anonymity are maintained.
6. After distribution, empty bins should be ready for pick-up the week of the next delivery.
7. School Program Coordinators are expected to keep all records related to the program readily available, especially up-to-date student numbers and parental consent.
8. Updated numbers, including general demographic data, needs to be reported quarterly.
9. To assist with outreach, FOK would appreciate the following from participating schools:
 - a. Providing FOK an opportunity to speak to parent groups.
 - b. Sending a school representative to donor and volunteer recognition events.
 - c. Providing testimonials as to the impact of the program.
 - d. Displaying a small poster that acknowledges the school’s participation in the FOK program.
 - e. Potentially allowing donors to visit the school. This would be coordinated between the school and FOK.

School Program Coordinator

The school program coordinator is the individual at your school who will act as the main contact between the school and FOK. This position includes multiple responsibilities, which are described below. **A committed and enthusiastic school program coordinator is crucial to the success of the program.**

School Program Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. *Student Selection & Continual Eligibility Assessment*

- ✓ Submit initial student numbers for school year
- ✓ Inform FOK of any student withdraws or additions

2. *Record Keeping*

- ✓ Maintain all necessary parental consent records
- ✓ Submit and maintain all required program materials (school calendars, student numbers & quarterly updates, etc.)

3. *Monitoring*

- ✓ Distribution: make certain food bags are only given out to students with permission to be in the program and handled by staff/volunteers.
- ✓ Food: count food when delivered to assure nothing is missing and that the food bags are properly stored.

4. *Student Protection*

- ✓ Develop distribution process to ensure the confidentiality of students is protected
- ✓ Distribute allergen free bags to identified students

5. *Communication/Coordination*

- ✓ Communicate FOK Backpack Program information to the participants
- ✓ Be the primary communication link with Feeding Our Kids
- ✓ Notify FOK of any problems with food, delivery or service.
- ✓ Provide feedback to FOK on suggestions, issues, etc.

Student Participation

What is food insecurity? A child who does not get enough food outside of school is considered “food insecure.” The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as households that are uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs of all their members because of insufficient money or other resources. Examples of food insecurity:

- A chronically hungry child is anxious for a meal to be served, sometimes showing up early for meals
- Extreme hunger on Monday mornings
- Eating all the food served and /or not being picky about the food served
- Lingering around for second helpings or frequently asking for more

While Feeding Our Kids provides the above guidelines, it is ultimately up to the school program coordinator’s discretion as to whether a child should receive food bags and obtain parental consent for program participation.

Parental Consent Policy

FOK requires schools to inform parents and acquire parental consent. Protecting the identity of each student is important to Feeding Our Kids. For this to be effective, the program relies on each school’s program coordinator to maintain parental consent by keeping documentation of communication with parents / guardians of each participating student. This ensures the responsible adult acknowledges participation in the program.

Parental Consent can be accepted in the following manner:

1. Obtain a completed and signed permission form. A copy has been attached in Section 9. One form is accepted for the entire academic school calendar. However, if a student withdraws and re-enrolls, a new signed permission form is required. These forms are available in English and Spanish.
2. Verbal consent is acceptable if a signed permission form is not possible. If verbal consent is received, the program coordinator must document the guardian’s name who provided consent and the consent date.

Only parents whose children have been referred by a teacher or staff member should be contacted. **We would prefer that you do not send home information to every family at your school if possible. If you must do so in order to reach families, please remember that this program is only for children truly struggling with food insecurity. We want to make sure help goes to those most in need.**

Food Allergies

When communicating with parents, be sure to inquire about any food allergies. Our program can accommodate 6 different food allergies that are noted on the parental consent form. Additionally, you can use school records to identify children with food allergies (peanuts, milk, etc.).

Inform FOK of any dietary restrictions. The following process will be used throughout the school year.

- Allergen free bags will be marked with a label. If a school receives multiple bins the bin with allergy bags will have a yellow label.
- It is the responsibility of the program coordinator to make sure allergy bags are distributed to the identified students.

Student Roster Policy: Adding or Removing Children from the Program

This policy will help FOK balance being flexible to meet changing school populations, while maintaining high confidence in the student rosters, and to inform timely decision making and budget feasibility for both existing school changes and new school additions.

Student roster submissions: An *estimated* student count will be submitted by each school as part of the application and renewal process in May. At the start of the school year, a **second** submission is requested to finalize the count for the school year.

The school program coordinator may use his/her discretion to add or withdraw a student from the program as needed (pending approval by Feeding Our Kids if numbers increase). If a student's situation changes or if the student misuses the program, such as only taking a few items and throwing away the rest of their bag, please remove the child from the program and inform the parent and child.

Whenever the number of participating children changes, the school program coordinator must fill out the *online Bag Number Change Request Form* at the Feeding Our Kids website or in the link received in your bi weekly emails. Additionally, he/she should email the Feeding Our Kids Executive Director to ensure that the change request was received.

If the change is an increase of more than 20% of the current number, the Feeding Our Kids Board of Directors may need to review the request before approval.

Additionally, Feeding Our Kids budgets for a certain number of kids who can be supported by the organization. When the current total number of food bags being packed reaches that number, no more children can be added to the program until (1) other schools reduce their number or (2) the Board of Directors votes to increase the total number of children who can be supported.

Program Logistics

Quantity Received: Quantity received is based on the number of students in the program and the total number of weeks the program is in session. Typically, schools will receive the first distribution during the 2nd week of school starting, and the program will run until the school year ends.

- **Delivery Day:** A schedule is provided to each school.
- **Assisting the Delivery Volunteer:** Please ensure that your school has sufficient help from volunteers, staff, or custodians to help unload the food bags and place them in their designated location. Empty bins should be sent back with the delivery driver.
- **Check the Delivery:** The School Program Coordinator (or designee/volunteers) should do a quick check of the food bags upon receipt. Notify FOK within 1 day of receipt if anything is incorrect; for example: not the correct number of bags, damage, etc.
- **Bad Weather/Unforeseen Circumstances:** In the case of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstance, FOK will coordinate with School Program Coordinators. The safety of participants and volunteer drivers will be the primary concern in decision-making. Coordination may include early deliveries to avoid forecasted events if possible, or delayed or postponed deliveries. In such cases, the coordinator can distribute the food bags immediately upon receipt.
- **No School on Delivery Day:** It is the school coordinator's responsibility to check the delivery schedule and ensure that their school is open on that delivery day. If your school is closed for any delivery dates, please contact Feeding Our Kids to coordinate.
- **Bags for School Breaks:** For certain breaks FOK will provide extra items in each food bag.

Food Safety & Storage Guidelines

Although the Backpack Program food is shelf-stable and does not need to be refrigerated, the food should be stored in a place that is ventilated, secure, clean, and pest free.

- **Secure:** food should be stored in a secure location. It should be in a place where it cannot be used or compromised by children, faculty, staff, or other people who use the building.
- **Clean:** the storage area should be clean, dry and organized.
- **Pest-free:** food must be stored at least 6" off the ground for pest control purposes.

Dates on Food

It is important to note that dates on packaged food, except for infant formula, do not refer to food safety, but rather peak quality of the food. On May 23, 2019, the FDA sent a letter to the Food Industry asking for all parties to adopt the phrase "Best if Used by" to clarify that the dates refer to peak quality rather than safety.

The food that Feeding Our Kids receives from the Eastern Illinois Foodbank may often be near the dates listed on the packaging. Feeding Our Kids tries to rotate inventory to ensure food is delivered prior to the listed dates, however this is not always possible.

If you receive comments or complaints about foods being past the printed date, please inform that person that the food is still safe to eat, and that Feeding Our Kids works under the guidelines of the Eastern Illinois Foodbank to ensure food safety for all participants.

Record Keeping

It is the responsibility of the school program coordinator to become familiar with required documentation and complete relevant paperwork. Documents required during program participation include:

Documentation Submitted to Feeding Our Kids:

- **Annual Application:** All schools must annually formalize participation in the program through an application, including agreement to FOK policies. Failure to turn in an application may impact program participation.
- **Quarterly Numbers Report:** Aside from the number update form, school program coordinators must submit updated numbers and demographic data quarterly via the form on the FOK website or through email communication. This data is required for us to receive funding from granting agencies.
- **School Calendar:** FOK must receive a copy of each school’s calendar for the school year. It must include any days the facility will be closed or inaccessible and any weeks the school will not distribute food bags.
- **Program Surveys:** FOK may distribute surveys periodically to evaluate program performance and opportunities.
- **Testimonials / Thank You’s:** FOK may request testimonials & thank you’s (including anonymous ones from families) from time to time throughout the program to provide to sponsors.

Documentation Retained for Record Keeping:

- **Parental Consent:** The signed parental consent forms are to be kept at the school for the entire school year. New parental consent forms must be signed each school year.
 - NOTE: These are NOT to be sent to Feeding Our Kids.
- **Year End Close Out:** Submit next school year’s program application; notify FOK of any staffing changes for next school year

All surveys/forms will be provided. The school may make additional copies if needed.

Annual Site Visit

A Feeding Our Kids representative will reach out to each participating school at least once a year, ideally early in the year. This could be in person, a virtual meeting , or phone call between FOK staff and program coordinator.

Site Visit Expectations

- A review of the storage area to ensure that the location’s safety and sanitation standards are maintained.
- An opportunity to brainstorm, answer questions and address concerns regarding the FOK BackPack Program.
- Review of receiving inventory and distribution process and related record-keeping system.

Food Menu

Food items will vary depending on what FOK is able to purchase. We try our best to include a variety of nutritious and kid-friendly meals and snacks. For more information on how foods are chosen [click here](#). Food bags **may** include:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Breakfast Item | Fruit and/or Vegetable |
| Milk or Other Dairy Item | Minimal Preparation Items (soup, spaghetti, etc.) |
| Snacks (granola bar, crackers, etc.) | Protein (canned meat, beans, peanut butter, etc.) |

Food Bag Distribution

The BackPack Program is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of ways of distributing food bags. Each school is free to develop its own plan.

Develop a clear plan that will cut down on the time spent distributing the food bags and reduce the likelihood of mistakes and confusion. An example of what we have seen successfully work in the past is for staff to put food bags directly into students’ backpacks during recess in order to preserve confidentiality.

- **Absences**
 - ✓ In the event a student is absent for any reason on the primary distribution day, they should receive the food from the program on their first day back to school.
- **Snow days**
 - ✓ If food bins have been delivered, but a snow day prevents distribution to the students, food bags should be distributed the next day school is in session.
- **Confidentiality:** Food bags should be given out as confidentially and discreetly as possible. In order to achieve this:
 - ✓ Avoid making public announcements that refer to children receiving the food

- ✓ Do not hand food to children in the midst of their peers who are not receiving the food

Program Support

FOK BackPack Program is supported by private foundations, individual donors, civic groups, the community, and local businesses. Each year, Feeding Our Kids solicits multiple donors for funds to keep the program going. With the Adopt-a-School fundraising campaign, some of these donations may be specific to a school. Additionally, many parents are unaware of the problem of food insecurity in their children's schools and the work that Feeding Our Kids does.

As such, Feeding Our Kids requests that participating schools assist with awareness and donor networking in the following manner as they are able:

- If the school has a Parent Teacher Association (or similar), invite Feeding Our Kids to present to this group, ideally early in the school year.
- Display a small poster, provided by Feeding Our Kids, in a location where it will be easily seen by school visitors (i.e., the main entrance or front office). (pending school approval)
- Provide testimonials that can be passed along to current and potential donors. These testimonials may be anonymously submitted from children or families; or they may be about the impact witnessed by school staff and / or volunteers.
- Send at least one school representative to donor and volunteer recognition to meet with donors/sponsors and volunteers.
- Potentially allow Adopt-a-School sponsors to visit the school site for a photo opportunity.

Marketing & Media

Schools and community partners should notify FOK of all media requests and media coverage for the Feeding Our Kids Program.

Forms and Documentation

This section includes:

- Parental Consent Form
 - o English
 - o Spanish

Other forms and documents will likely be requested throughout the year and will be sent separately.

Feeding Our Kids

Parental Consent Form



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Feeding Our Kids, in partnership with local businesses and volunteers, is pleased to inform you that we will be offering a weekly Friday food program. The *Feeding Our Kids* program provides a small bag of easily prepared, nutritious foods for your child to enjoy throughout the weekend at no cost to you. Your child will receive a small bag of food in his/her backpack at the end of each school week. This food is to remain in the backpack until your child arrives home. Please complete the form below if you are interested in having your child participate in the *Feeding Our Kids* program. If your child has allergies that limit his/her ability to eat a variety of foods, there may be some restrictions. If you have any questions, please contact the social worker at your child's school.

My child _____ has my permission to participate in the *Feeding Our Kids* program.

The program has the following dietary alternative options. Please circle if your child requires the following:

Pork free Dairy Free Vegetarian Fish free Wheat Free Nut Free

Other allergies: _____

By signing this form, I agree to

- speak with my child regarding the requirements of all food remaining in his/her backpack until arriving home
- assume any and all risks regarding the consumption of food including adverse reactions and release *Feeding Our Kids*, the school district, and district personnel from any liability associated with participation in the program including any and all adverse reactions my child may have to foods consumed

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Feeding Our Kids

Consentimiento de Padres de Familia



Queridos Padres/Tutores,

Feeding Our Kids, en asociación con grupos locales y voluntarios, se complace en informarle que ofreceremos un programa semanal de alimentos los viernes. El programa de *Feeding Our Kids* provee una pequeña bolsa de bocadillos nutritivos y fáciles de preparar para que su hijo disfrute durante todo el fin de semana sin costo alguno para usted. Su hijo recibirá una pequeña bolsa de comida en su mochila al final de cada semana escolar. Esta comida debe permanecer en la mochila hasta que su hijo llegue a casa. Por favor, complete el siguiente formulario si usted está interesado en que su hijo participe en el programa de *Feeding Our Kids*. Si su hijo tiene alergias que limitan su capacidad de comer algunos alimentos, puede haber algunas restricciones. Si tiene alguna pregunta, comuníquese con el trabajador social de la escuela de su hijo.

.....
.....
Mi hijo _____ tiene mi permiso para participar en el programa de *Feeding Our Kids*.

El programa tiene las siguientes opciones alternativas dietéticas. Por favor dibuje un círculo si su hijo requiere lo siguiente:

No cerdo No nueces No pescado No trigo No lácteos No carne

Otras alergias: _____

Al firmar este formulario, acepto que:

- Hablaré con mi hijo sobre los requisitos de todos los alimentos que quedan en su mochila hasta llegar a casa.
- Asumo todos los riesgos relacionados con el consumo de alimentos, incluidas las reacciones adversas, y libero a *Feeding Our Kids*, el distrito escolar y el personal del distrito de cualquier responsabilidad asociada con la participación en el programa, incluidas todas y cada una de las reacciones adversas que mi hijo pueda tener a los alimentos consumidos.

Firma del Padre/Tutor

Fecha

