

Feeding Our Kids

Program Manual

2025-2026 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.

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 47 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.

2025-2026 Calendar

Month	Activity
August	• Solicit parental consent • First deliveries will be coordinated as school begins
September	• Update numbers as needed
October	• Submit first Quarterly Report • Coordinate fall break deliveries-Champaign/Urbana
November	• Thanksgiving break
December	• Winter Break
January	• Quarterly Reports
February	
March	• Coordinate Spring Break delivery plans
April	• Quarterly Reports
May	• Renewal Application, School Survey with End of Year Distribution-scheduled as needed

Delivery Schedule

FOK will be packing out of Eastern Illinois Foodbank in 2025-2026. School deliveries will occur on a staggered two-week cycle. You will be contacted with your school delivery schedule as the semester gets underway. 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. School Program Coordinators are expected to keep all records related to the program readily available, especially up-to-date student numbers and parental consent.
7. Updated numbers, including general demographic data, needs to be reported quarterly.
8. 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. Ways to identify food insecurity:

1. Screen for students that are homeless or use other services such as SNAP or WIC.
2. Look for behaviors such as food hoarding, increased fatigue, behavioral issues, irritability, aggression, or frequent complaints of stomach pains or hunger.
3. Directly ask:
 - "Do you ever worry about running out of food at home?"
 - "How often do you skip meals because you don't have food to eat at home?"

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. **We would prefer that you do not send home information to every family at your school, if possible, as this tends to over-enroll students beyond the capacity of what Feeding Our Kids can supply.**

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. **Please read important information about food allergies and Best By Dates to guardians when obtaining verbal consent.**

Food Allergies

When communicating with parents, be sure to inquire about any food allergies. Additionally, you can use school records to identify children with food allergies (peanuts, milk, etc.).

Inform FOK of any dietary restrictions by completing the *School Numbers Update Form*. This form can be found on the FOK website or in the biweekly email. The following process will be used throughout the school year.

- Allergen-free bags will be marked with a yellow label. If a school receives multiple bins, there will also be a yellow label on the bin containing the allergy bags.
- It is the responsibility of the program coordinator to make sure allergy bags are distributed to the identified students.
- It is the responsibility of the student/family to double check all food items for potential allergens.

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.

The first deliveries of the school year will be estimated based off of numbers and data submitted at the end of the prior school year. Changes to your student count can be made as soon as you know them and as often as you'd like by completing the *School Numbers Update Form*.

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 can email the Feeding Our Kids Executive Director to ensure that the change request is processed prior to the next delivery.

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.

Food Safety

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: Keep all bags in the sealed bins until they are distributed to students. Recommend storing food at least 6" off the ground.
- ☐ Ventilation: Choose a place with consistent temperatures and humidity levels and good ventilation
- ☐ Separate: Keep food storage areas separate from chemicals or cleaning supplies.
- ☐ FIFO: Use the "first in, first out" (FIFO) method to ensure older stock is used before newer stock when you have leftover bags.
- ☐ A site visit may be requested by FOK to review and confirm food safety practices.

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. Encourage participants to eat food shortly after it is received and do not store or save it for long periods of time.

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.

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 / School cancellations**
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ **Please do not return any unused food bags to FOK.** Provide double food bags to students in the program or take one home to try yourself to familiarize yourself with the foods served!
- **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
 - English
 - 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 organizations 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 in your child's backpack at the end of each school week at no cost to you. 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 program. Please contact the social worker at your child's school with any questions.

.....

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

Please list any food allergies or dietary restrictions your child has:

By signing this form, I understand

- 1) That all food should remain in my child's backpack until arriving home
- 2) Food bags should be checked by an adult for any allergens affecting my child
- 3) Foods received may be near or past their "Best By" date *(Per FDA guidance, dates on food packaging are "Best if Used by" and do not impact food safety. Feeding Our Kids 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.)*
- 4) That I 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

Alimentando a Nuestros Niños

Formulario de Consentimiento de Padres



Estimados Padres/Tutores,

Alimentando a Nuestros Niños, en colaboración con organizaciones locales y voluntarios, se complace en informarles que estaremos ofreciendo un programa semanal de alimentos los días viernes. El programa Alimentando a Nuestros Niños proporciona una pequeña bolsa con alimentos nutritivos y fáciles de preparar en la mochila de su hijo(a) al final de cada semana escolar sin ningún costo para usted. Estos alimentos deben permanecer en la mochila hasta que su hijo(a) llegue a casa. Por favor complete el formulario a continuación si desea que su hijo(a) participe en el programa. Si tiene alguna pregunta, comuníquese con el trabajador(a) social en la escuela de su hijo(a).

.....
Mi hijo(a) _____ tiene mi permiso para participar en el programa Alimentando a Nuestros Niños.

Por favor indique cualquier alergia o restricción alimentaria que tenga su hijo(a):

Al firmar este formulario, entiendo que:

1. Todos los alimentos deben permanecer en la mochila de mi hijo(a) hasta que llegue a casa.
2. Un adulto debe revisar las bolsas de alimentos para identificar cualquier alérgeno que pueda afectar a mi hijo(a).
3. Algunos alimentos recibidos pueden estar cerca o haber pasado su fecha de "Consumir de Preferencia Antes de" (Según la guía de la FDA, las fechas en los envases indican "Mejor si se consume antes de" y no afectan la seguridad del alimento. Alimentando a Nuestros Niños hará todo lo posible para entregar los alimentos antes de la fecha indicada; sin embargo, algunos productos pueden estar pasados de la fecha indicada. Dichos alimentos seguirán siendo seguros, y esto se determinará en conjunto con el Banco de Alimentos del Este de Illinois y las pautas de la FDA).
4. Asumo todos los riesgos relacionados con el consumo de alimentos, incluyendo reacciones adversas, y deslindo a Alimentando a Nuestros Niños, al distrito escolar y al personal del distrito de toda responsabilidad asociada con la participación en el programa, incluyendo cualquier reacción adversa que mi hijo(a) pueda tener a los alimentos consumidos.

Firma del Padre/Madre/Tutor y Fecha

Nourrir Nos Enfants



Formulaire de Consentement des Parents

Chers Parents/Tuteurs,

Feeding Our Kids (Nourrir Nos Enfants), en partenariat avec des organisations locales et des bénévoles, est heureux de vous informer que nous offrons un programme hebdomadaire de distribution de nourriture le vendredi. Le programme Feeding Our Kids (Nourrir Nos Enfants) fournit, sans aucun coût pour vous, un petit sac d'aliments nutritifs et faciles à préparer placé dans le sac à dos de votre enfant à la fin de chaque semaine scolaire. Cette nourriture doit rester dans le sac à dos jusqu'à ce que votre enfant arrive à la maison. Veuillez remplir le formulaire ci-dessous si vous souhaitez que votre enfant participe au programme. Pour toute question, veuillez contacter l'assistant(e) social(e) de l'école de votre enfant.

.....
Mon enfant _____ a ma permission de participer au programme Feeding Our Kids (Nourrir Nos Enfants).

Veuillez indiquer toute allergie alimentaire ou restriction alimentaire que votre enfant pourrait avoir :

En signant ce formulaire, je comprends que :

1. Tous les aliments doivent rester dans le sac à dos de mon enfant jusqu'à son arrivée à la maison.
2. Un adulte doit vérifier les sacs de nourriture pour détecter tout allergène pouvant affecter mon enfant.
3. Certains aliments reçus peuvent être proches ou avoir dépassé leur date de « À consommer de préférence avant » (Selon les directives de la FDA, les dates figurant sur les emballages indiquent « Meilleur si utilisé avant » et n'affectent pas la sécurité alimentaire. Feeding Our Kids fera tout son possible pour livrer les aliments avant la date indiquée ; cependant, certains produits peuvent dépasser cette date. Ces aliments resteront sûrs et cela sera déterminé en concertation avec la Banque Alimentaire de l'Est de l'Illinois et les directives de la FDA).
4. J'assume tous les risques liés à la consommation de nourriture, y compris les réactions indésirables, et je dégage Feeding Our Kids (Nourrir Nos Enfants), le district scolaire et le personnel du district de toute responsabilité liée à la participation au programme, y compris toute réaction indésirable que mon enfant pourrait avoir aux aliments consommés.

Signature du Parent/Tuteur et Date _____