GREAT PLAINS FOOD BANK

Creating an Accessible Food Pantry for Everyone

OUR GOAL

Everyone deserves access to nutritious food with dignity, respect, and equitable service. Understanding different disabilities helps us reduce barriers and create a more welcoming environment for every neighbor.

Disability	Common Barriers	How You Can Help
Mobility Impairments	Transportation challenges, stairs, narrow aisles, fatigue, carrying food	Keep aisles clear, provide accessible parking, offer assistance carrying food, discuss delivery or proxy pickup options.
Chronic Illness	Fatigue, pain, difficulty completing forms, limited stamina	Offer seating, provide assistance with paperwork, allow additional time, be flexible with accommodations.
Neurological Disorders	Sensory overload, difficulty processing information, executive functioning challenges	Use simple instructions, allow extra processing time, reduce noise when possible, offer one-on-one assistance.
Deafness & Hearing Loss	Difficulty communicating, inaccessible information, noisy environments	Face the individual, speak clearly, use written communication or technology, provide visual aids and captions when available.
Blindness & Low Vision	Reading labels, navigating unfamiliar spaces, identifying food	Offer verbal directions, keep pathways clear, read labels aloud, ask before assisting, provide accessible formats.
Communication Disorders	Difficulty expressing needs, completing intake, verbal communication	Be patient, allow extra time, use writing or communication devices, ask one question at a time, never assume understanding or intelligence based on speech.
Mental Illnesses	Anxiety, sensory overload, difficulty processing information or communicating	Stay calm, speak respectfully, provide a quiet space if possible, avoid assumptions, allow extra time, focus on the person's needs.

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Best Practices for Every Interaction

- Treat every individual with dignity and respect.
- Ask before offering assistance.
- Speak directly to the individual, not just their caregiver.
- Use person-centered, respectful language.
- Be patient and allow extra time for communication.
- Provide information in multiple formats whenever possible.
- Reduce unnecessary physical and communication barriers.
- Focus on abilities rather than limitations.

Accessibility Benefits Everyone

Creating an accessible food pantry improves the experience for everyone—not only individuals with disabilities, but also older adults, families with young children, individuals recovering from illness or injury, and anyone experiencing temporary challenges.

Small accommodations can make a lasting impact.