



Montana Food Bank Network

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The Backpack Program School Checklist

Identify: Through observation and asking questions, staff should identify the students they believe to be chronically hungry. If needed, please refer to the information that explains more about identifying chronically hungry children. Once a child has been identified, a referral form needs to be filled out and given to the Backpack program coordinator for approval.

Prepare: Once you identify the number of children needing assistance, provisions will need to be made before food can be sent. Here is a checklist of things to do:

- *Food Storage* – Determine a location in the school where food can be safely stored. Preferably this needs to be in a place that can be locked and where food can be stored off the floor as required by the Health Department.
- *Recruitment* – Choose someone who will be responsible for distributing them each week. This person may be a teacher or counselor in the school or you may want to involve parents who could be recruited through the PTA or other volunteers. Students should **NOT** be allowed to distribute them.
- *Logistics* – Have a plan for how the food will be distributed. Some questions to think about are as follows:
 - How will the child receive the bags on Friday? Will there be a central location where they pick it up, or will the bags be delivered to their last class for ease of making sure the child gets to his/her bus on time?

Contact: The students that have been referred and approved to be on the program will need to be notified. When you talk to the individual please make sure you communicate the following:

- First, confirm that there is a need. Ask them if they think it would be helpful if they got a free backpack of food to eat over the weekend.
- Explain that they will receive a backpack of food every Friday as needed.
- Tell the child that the food is for them to eat when and if they get hungry throughout the weekend. Although it is okay for them to share, try and stress that the food is for them.
- Caution the child that they are not to share the food with their friends or open the bag until they get home. Enforcing this will cut down on potential problems with other kids who will want a bag, but who are not necessarily eligible.
- Explain that if their home situation improves and they no longer need the food then they need to let the Backpack program Coordinator know and have the bag returned.
- Contacting the parent or sending a letter explaining the program is optional.