Disaster Household Distribution
Resource – Frequently Asked Questions

The Feeding America Government Relations Team is providing information for COVID-19-related common inquiries about Disaster Household Distribution using United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) foods.

Disaster Household Distribution Using United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foods FAQs

What is a Disaster Household Distribution Program?

A household disaster distribution program allows food banks to use USDA foods to provide food from their federal commodities (most often TEFAP) inventory to households impacted by a disaster without income eligibility restrictions AND the USDA foods that are distributed for disaster feeding can be replaced by FNS with proper documentation.

This should be considered “in addition” to not diverting from regular TEFAP and CSFP program operations. Traditionally eligible participants need to be served during the disaster as well.

What information do we need to give states to apply for Disaster Household Distribution?

• List community areas to be served
• List distribution sites
• List number of affected households expected to participate
• Timeframe for food distributions (i.e. 1x a week for a month, etc.)
• Amount and types of food in distribution boxes

Why is it necessary to provide this much information?

USDA wants to prepare for the need to replace the food used during the disaster time once the disaster period has passed.

Can you use TEFAP/ CSFP simultaneously with disaster commodities?

Yes, you distribute disaster household commodities alongside traditional TEFAP and CSFP.

Will USDA replace the food used through the Disaster Household Distribution?
Yes, USDA will replace the commodity foods used after the disaster time period is over, as of now USDA has set this time period at 45 days.

Is this only limited to TEFAP sites, or can anyone receive USDA foods through this program?

Anyone determined to be of need can receive food through the DHD program. USDA is encouraging that this food be targeted to households in the greatest needs.

Are there income requirements for DHD?

No, there are no income requirements for DHD.

Can we mix TEFAP and non-TEFAP foods in the same family boxes?

Yes, you can distribute TEFAP foods with other donated or purchased foods in family boxes.

If we mix TEFAP and non-TEFAP foods in boxes and we don’t use them all in this crisis, what happens then? If so, what paperwork or reporting requirements do we need to consider?

We recommend that you do not mix the food distribution methods if you will not use all the food in this crisis; USDA foods distributed outside of a DHD would need to follow normal commodity distribution procedures for TEFAP.

What’s the fastest way to get TEFAP food?

Immediately get your state to request disaster household distribution program from USDA. USDA FNS HQ is expediting outreach to FNS Regional offices to approve these. You state may have each food bank fill a request out. This is the easiest way to get permission to use USDA foods, without residency or income requirements, and get them replaced by USDA. Tell your representatives that you need this expedited by the state.

How much food does USDA have on hand by program?

They don’t store extra; they will pull from existing supplies in the system. But this does at least ensure you can more easily distribute what you have on hand. Fastest procurement I’ve heard USDA mention is 3-4 weeks buying from industry – there is lots of food in storage in the system.

How long will it take for us to hear back for approval to distribute DHC?

USDA has suggested it will be days, not weeks to approve requests.

What should we be thinking about when submitting a request to our state?

Make sure you explain the logistics of distribution and how to reach those most impacted by COVID-19.
Can states use CSFP foods in the DHD boxes?

They can, however due to the greater supply of food through TEFAP, it is encouraged that states utilize foods through TEFAP to operate a Disaster Household Distribution.