Improving Your Pantry:
How to Give Clients Choice and Dignity

1) **Swap Table** – If your pantry can't/won't switch from giving out standardized food boxes, please consider putting a "swap table" by your client exit door. That is a table with a sign on or above it that invites clients to exchange any products they have been given that they do not want or cannot use for anything anyone else has left on the table that they can use. Your clients will appreciate being invited to be good stewards of the food you have provided, and will very much appreciate being able to tailor the products they bring home more to their family's unique needs. Providing a swap option can reduce the amount of your pantry's food that is wasted from 30-50% down to as little as 10%.

2) **Standardized Box Plus** – As above, if your pantry can't/won't switch from giving out standardized food boxes, please consider supplementing it by drawing an array of other products from the Food Bank and displaying those on an "Extra Products" table or shelving unit, inviting clients to pick out some number of "extra" goods (one per member of the household, some set number per household, etc.) to take in addition to their standardized food box. You will be amazed/touched by how appreciated getting those "extras" is.

3) **Swap Table/Standardized Box Plus Hybrid** – You might consider stocking a wide range of Food Bank products in a "swap" area, and inviting clients to swap out anything they have gotten in their standardized box that they don't want for anything in that area that they can and will use. Every time a client exchanges a product that cost your pantry or its supporters $0.75-$2.00 for an item that maybe cost the pantry $0.18 from the Food Bank, you have saved your pantry money, and come closer to meeting your client's actual needs.

4) **Shopping List** – Your pantry could consider expanding the variety of products it stocks, and providing clients with a list of what all is available, letting clients indicate on the list which of the available goods they would like to receive. Then pantry volunteers assemble that customized food box for the client. This system is a little problematic if clients cannot read or if they cannot read whatever language(s) the list is printed in.

5) **Dollar-Goal Shopping** – Pantries who are worried about clients "taking too much", can consider letting clients freely "shop" but within a pre-set total poundage or dollar goal (-If the pantry is willing/able to mark what products cost at the store on each item) based on the family size and need.

6) **Pure Client Choice** – Available products are displayed, and clients "shop" just as they would at a store. Isn't that what you would want to do if you were the person in need? It works!