



REDWOOD EMPIRE  
FOOD BANK

**VOLUNTEER  
HANDBOOK**



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The Redwood Empire Food Bank is an equal opportunity provider.



# WELCOME

You have made a fantastic decision to volunteer with the Redwood Empire Food Bank! You are about to embark on a journey that will help feed more than 142,000 hungry children, seniors, and families across Sonoma County and beyond. Your generous gift of time and energy is deeply appreciated, and you should give yourself a huge pat on the back—as you’re fighting for those facing food insecurity in our community (which is no easy feat).

Hunger can happen to anyone. In fact, some of the very same people who give during good times also have times of need themselves. By volunteering, you’ve joined our exclusive group of hunger relief workers, making you an integral part of our community’s safety net. This safety net allows the Redwood Empire Food Bank to function at its best and provide food to those in need throughout the entire year.

You are making a difference... doesn’t it feel amazing?!

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***“Isn’t this what we’re supposed to do as human beings? Giving back is so simple... it really is so simple... and yet, it does so much.”***

—Kathy, Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteer

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## WHO WE SERVE

<p><b>Every Child, Every Day</b> Four robust programs address the nutritional needs of children, through school distributions, food pantries, and seasonal school breaks.</p>	<p><b>Senior Security</b> Through our senior program, we ensure that more than 15,600 low-income seniors and 3,000 veterans have access to a consistent source of healthy food.</p>	<p><b>Neighborhood Hunger Network</b> We support anyone in need of food through a variety of programs that support nutrition education, food distribution, and resource assistance.</p>
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# DISTRIBUTION CENTER (AT 3990 BRICKWAY) VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## WAREHOUSE

Come help us glean fresh produce, assemble grocery boxes for seniors in need, and sort donated staple pantry items for distribution. Warehouse shifts are typically 2-3 hours long and can be a great way to make new friends, bond with coworkers, and feel great about helping the community! Children can volunteer with an adult. Children over 14 can volunteer independently. Please email [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org) to schedule a group of 10 or more. All available warehouse opportunities are listed at [volunteer.refb.org](http://volunteer.refb.org).

## SUPER VOLUNTEER

If you enjoy volunteering on a regular basis, and would be interested in taking on a leadership role, consider becoming one of our “Super Volunteers.” Super volunteers can help in the warehouse, kitchen, or market, leading a shift, assisting with check-in, and providing support to our staff. Please email [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org) if you are interested.

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## KITCHEN COLLECTIVE

The Kitchen Collective allows the Redwood Empire Food Bank to transform donated ingredients into healthy snacks. By the time people come to us for help, many have been enduring persistent hunger over an extended period of time. To address their acute food needs, we launched the On the Spot Nutrition program. Assembled by volunteers under the leadership of the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s Chef Don, these snacks allow us to feed the line at our food distributions with healthy snacks, providing immediate hunger relief for participants. Kitchen Collective volunteers require a food handlers certificate and must be at least 15 years old. Please email [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org) if you’re interested.

## FOOD CONNECTIONS MARKET

Have a knack for organizing? Consider a volunteer shift in our Community Marketplace! These volunteers assist with sorting bread, organizing and restocking shelves, and gleaning produce. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old and able to work independently, on their feet the entire shift, and be able to read fine print. All available market opportunities are listed at [volunteer.refb.org](http://volunteer.refb.org).

## OFFICE AND SPECIAL EVENT OPPORTUNITIES

We occasionally need volunteers to help in the office and at off-site events. Check out the volunteer schedule for upcoming special events.

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# DISTRIBUTION SITE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## DISTRIBUTION SITES

Get out in the community and help distribute fresh produce, healthy groceries, and staple pantry items at one of the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s distribution sites. You may be packing boxes on site, helping seniors lift boxes into their cars, directing traffic, or assisting with sign-in. Eligible volunteers are allowed to pick up their food provision 15 minutes before the distribution starts. Volunteers must be able to lift 15-35 lbs. All volunteers over the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. If a youth volunteer wishes to participate independently, prior approval is required from both Redwood Empire Food Bank staff and their parent or guardian.

## W5 VOLUNTEER

W5 Volunteers support our distribution sites by registering participants for our food programs. Civil Rights training will be provided and a confidentiality agreement will be signed. Preferred qualifications for this position include:

- Bilingual in Spanish and English
- Team player
- Kind and respectful
- Good customer service skills
- Comfortable with technology
- Able to work in varying environments (rain or shine!)
- Able to commit regularly at distribution site(s)

If you are interested in becoming a W5 volunteer, please email [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org).

## 5 BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Our mission is simple—to End Hunger in Our Community—how we accomplish it is not. As a volunteer, you are a vital part of our operation. Every month we rely on your generous support, which would otherwise require the work of 45 full-time employees. Here are a few reasons we think volunteering is important and worthwhile:

1. Doing good is good for your health! Volunteering is a remedy for stress, anger, and anxiety.
2. Volunteering expands your social circle. You meet people who share a common interest—the desire to make the world a better place—so making new friends is easy!
3. Volunteering can advance your career. You practice important skills used in the workplace such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving! Plus it connects you with your community.
4. Volunteering boosts your self-esteem. Volunteering provides you with a sense of purpose and pride. The more you give back to others, the more pleased you become with yourself.
5. Volunteering allows you to make a real difference in your community. Every piece of produce you glean, every can of food you pack, and every grocery box you distribute helps feed those facing hunger.



# RULES & POLICIES

## *General Expectations for Volunteer Behavior and Well-Being*

We consider our volunteers to be among the most important and wonderful people we know, but unfortunately, that doesn't get them out of paperwork. In order to become a member of our volunteer workforce, **all volunteers are required to:**

- **Read this Volunteer Handbook in its entirety**
- **Register and sign up for a volunteer shift through our online Volunteer Portal: [volunteer.refb.org](http://volunteer.refb.org)**
- **Complete the Civil Rights training, which is required for Distribution Site volunteers**

### **Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment**

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is committed to providing a volunteer environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the Redwood Empire Food Bank maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful discrimination based on sex, race, physical or intellectual disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, national origin or religious preference. This policy prohibits harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment (e.g. cartoons, photographs).

California and federal laws define sexual harassment as unwanted sexual advances, or unwanted visual, verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature. Such offensive behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Unwanted sexual advances, including propositioning, repeatedly asking someone out for a date after it is clear that the person is not interested.
- Explicitly or implicitly offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors.
- Making or threatening reprisals after negative response to sexual advances.
- Visual conduct: leering, making sexual gestures; displaying derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
- Verbal conduct: such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments.
- Physical conduct: assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other protected basis.
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
- Intolerance or abusive remarks regarding sexual orientation, religious affiliations or gender harassment of any sort is strictly forbidden. Bullying, dishonoring, yelling, belittling and other rude language and behavior will not be tolerated by or against any volunteer or staff member.



### Blade Safety Policy

At the Redwood Empire Food Bank, volunteers can borrow a safety cutter at the discretion of staff for use during volunteer activities. Please note that the use of personal pocket knives is discouraged, and knives exceeding four inches in length are prohibited. If you prefer to use your own cutter, it must have a retractable or folding blade designed to safely store the blade when not in use, minimizing the risk of cuts and injuries during use. Always use caution, and cut away from your body. The use of any blade is to be used at the volunteer's own risk. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is not liable for injury.

### Volunteer Complaint Procedure

We value open communication and want every volunteer to feel comfortable sharing concerns. If you have a complaint or issue:

1. **Talk to the On-Site Coordinator:** Most concerns can be resolved quickly by speaking directly with your on-site coordinator.
2. **Email Us:** If you prefer, or if the issue isn't resolved, email us at [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org). We'll make sure your concern is reviewed and addressed by the appropriate team member.

We do not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises a concern. Our goal is to ensure a positive and respectful experience for all volunteers. Thank you for helping us create a supportive environment at the Redwood Empire Food Bank!

**PHOTO CONSENT**

Periodically, the Redwood Empire Food Bank will take photos or videos of our volunteers in action. These images help us promote volunteerism and encourage donations. We love sharing stories about the amazing work our volunteers do for our community.

When you agree to volunteer with us, you are allowing us to use these photos or videos in our communications; however, if you would prefer we not take a photo of you during your shift, please let us know immediately when we are in the capturing process.



# RULES & POLICIES

## *General Expectations for Volunteer Behavior and Well-Being, continued*

We know rules and policies aren't exactly the most thrilling to read—but they're put in place to keep you safe, happy, and healthy. Plus, they'll help you understand what to expect at your volunteer shift!

### General DOs and DON'Ts

- **DO** register online for your shift prior to attending at [volunteer.refb.org](http://volunteer.refb.org).
- **DO** arrive on time and plan to stay for the entirety of the shift (unless prior arrangements have been made). If late, you may be asked to return another time.
- **DO** cancel your shift at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to attend.
- **DO** check in with staff or at the kiosk upon arrival and wait for instructions (even if you are a regular volunteer and know the routine).
- **DO** come prepared to work focused and independently, as staff may not always be available.
- If you need something signed for work or school, **DO** have the form filled out before handing it to a staff member at the end of the shift. **We do not accept court-ordered volunteers.**
- **DO** act with respect and courtesy toward fellow volunteers, staff, and food recipients.
- **DO** abide by the safety protocol of the department in which you are volunteering in order to maintain the safety of yourself, the food, and those around you.
- **DON'T** disrupt normal operations. Any volunteer that disrupts normal operation will be asked to leave.
- **DO** respect the provision of help. **DON'T** throw the food or items.
- **DO** sign up for food assistance if needed. **DON'T** take or eat the donations during your shift. If you

are in need of food please let a staff member know.

- **DON'T** come to a volunteer shift if you are ill or have been around someone who is ill.
- **DO** download the volunteer app, **Causar**, for convenient volunteer registration at your fingertips!
- **DON'T** open or remove plastic wrapping on food until directed to do so by the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff.
- **DO** report any problems, or safety issues to a staff member immediately.
- **DO HAVE FUN!** We want you to have a good time and encourage you to take pictures—so, **DON'T** forget to tag us! (@redwoodempirefoodbank)

### Dress Code

- Sturdy, comfortable, and closed-toed shoes are required. Crocs, slip-on styles, sandals, or open-toe shoes of any kind are not permitted due to safety regulations.
- Dress comfortably and in layers—the warehouse and outdoor distributions can be chilly but you may warm up once you start moving!
- For Kitchen Collective volunteers, you must wear your hair back.
- For Distribution volunteers, hats, water, safety vests or bright-colored clothing, and sunscreen are recommended.

### Parking

- Parking is limited at our distribution





- center, if able, please plan to carpool.
- Parking for distribution center shifts is permitted in our parking lot directly in front of the Redwood Empire Food Bank in the Thermal Sun parking lot across from our entrance.
- Distribution site shift parking can vary, please plan to arrive on site a few minutes early to check with the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff about where to park.

### Health & Safety

- All volunteers must arrive prepared and able to safely perform their assigned tasks. If a coordinator determines someone is not fit for duty—due to health, preparedness, or other concerns—they may address it to ensure everyone’s safety. Please let staff know in advance if you have concerns about your ability to participate.
- As a food service organization, we follow all State and local hygiene regulations. Volunteers must arrive clean, in appropriate attire, and ready for food handling—even if not working directly with food. Daily bathing, clean clothes, and frequent hand washing are required; always wash hands at the start and end of each shift and after restroom use.
- Stay hydrated! Bring your own water bottle.
- Please leave personal items at home. Lockers in our warehouse can be used. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Always remain in your designated work area.
- Volunteers must not report to their shift under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Electrical equipment and vehicles are to be used by staff only.

- Any injuries must be reported immediately to a Redwood Empire Food Bank employee. It is our policy that we refer all accidents and injuries to a medical professional.
- Use proper lifting techniques when lifting heavy objects. Use your legs to push upwards, keep your back straight and your body balanced. Ask for help from another volunteer or staff member for lifting heavy items.
- Volunteers understand the risks and take responsibility for their safety.

## GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES POLICY

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) is a system of processes, procedures, and documentation that ensures our products are consistently produced and controlled according to established quality standards. GMP helps protect everyone from negative food safety events that can be catastrophic for products, such as cross-contamination, adulteration, and mislabeling.

GMP guidelines and regulations address several key areas that influence the safety and quality of products, including:

• Quality management	• Validation and qualification
• Sanitation and hygiene	• Complaints
• Building and facilities	• Documentation
• Equipment	• Record-keeping
• Personnel	• Inspections and quality audits

If you would like more information about our GMP practices and how you can help maintain our policy, please reach out to [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org).



# RULES & POLICIES

## Group Volunteer Policy

We value the collective energy, teamwork, and impact that groups bring to our mission. To ensure a positive and productive experience for everyone involved, this section outlines key policies and expectations for group volunteering. Whether you're joining us as part of a corporate team, community organization, or group of friends, these guidelines will help create a smooth and rewarding experience. Please review the following information carefully, including general guidelines, communication and updates, and our cancellation policy, so we can work together effectively to make a difference.

### General Guidelines

- **Arrival and Check-In:** If volunteering in our *Distribution Center*, please arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled shift to allow time for check-in and orientation. If volunteering at a *Distribution Site*, please arrive on time and make sure your group has read the shift description, time, and location.
- **Dress Code:** Wear sturdy, comfortable, closed-toed shoes—no Crocs, slip-ons, sandals, or open-toe shoes allowed for safety reasons. Dress in comfortable layers, as temperatures may vary. Distribution volunteers should also bring hats, water, safety vests or bright clothing, and sunscreen.
- **Health and Safety:** If you are feeling unwell, we kindly ask that you refrain from volunteering and notify us as soon as possible.

### Communication and Updates

- Please provide a primary contact person who can communicate any updates or changes in your group's plans.
- If your group size changes, please notify us immediately at [volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org) or call 707-523-7905.

### Cancellation Policy

We depend on the commitment of our volunteers to meet community needs. Late cancellations or no-shows significantly impact our operations and the people we serve. While we understand that plans may change, we kindly ask for your consideration of the following policy:

1. **Cancellations/Changes:** Cancellations or significant changes to your group size (reducing the number of volunteers by 20% or more) must be communicated at least 7 days before your scheduled shift.
2. **Fees for Late Cancellations or No-Shows:** If your group cancels with less than 7 days notice or fails to bring the expected number of volunteers, a donation of \$30 per absent volunteer per scheduled hour may be requested to help cover the operational costs incurred to accommodate your group's reservation.



# RULES & POLICIES

## *No-Show Management, Termination, and Acknowledgment*

Reliable attendance and clear communication are vital to the success of our volunteer program. We rely on volunteers to be present at their scheduled shifts to complete essential tasks. This policy outlines how we handle missed shifts, how we address situations where volunteering may no longer be a good fit, and how we celebrate our volunteers' contributions—while allowing for flexibility in emergencies or with advance notice.

### **No-Show Policy**

- **First No-Show:** The volunteer will receive a friendly reminder email acknowledging the missed shift, reiterating the importance of advance notice, and providing information on how to communicate future absences.
- **Second Consecutive No-Show:** The absence will be documented, and the volunteer will receive a reminder email reinforcing our attendance expectations.
- **Third Consecutive No-Show:** The absence will be documented, and the volunteer will be removed from any upcoming shifts and notified via email.
- **Fourth Consecutive No-Show:** The absence will be documented, the volunteer's account will be inactivated, and they will receive a final notification email.

Volunteers who provide advance notice or experience emergencies may have their status adjusted at the discretion of the Volunteer Team. This policy applies to all Redwood Empire Food Bank volunteer opportunities and is designed to ensure that our efforts run smoothly and effectively.

### **Volunteer Termination**

While we deeply value all our volunteers and the time they dedicate, there may be instances where a volunteer is not the best fit for a particular role. In such cases, we will work together to find the best solution, and if necessary, part ways on a positive note. Our priority is to maintain a supportive and effective environment for everyone.

### **Volunteer Acknowledgment**

We love our regular volunteers and truly appreciate the impact you make. Volunteer milestones are recognized at designated service hour levels. We also understand that life and circumstances change, so if you're no longer able to volunteer, we kindly ask that you let us know. We want to celebrate your contributions and thank you for the time and effort you've shared with us. Your support has made a meaningful difference, and you will always be a valued part of our community.



## Our Promise to You: Ensuring a Positive Volunteer Experience

See, those rules and regulations weren't so bad, were they? You're feeling a little more prepared for your shift, right? Now, we'd like to share our promise to you for an enjoyable experience.

### We promise to...

- Assign you a job that is worthwhile and fulfilling.
- Provide you with instructions for your assigned task.
- Provide breaks during your shift (let a staff member know if you need one).
- Accommodate your needs as best as we can.
- Not tolerate any form of harassment (please report to a staff member if you feel uncomfortable in any situation).
- Provide a productive, enjoyable, and safe environment.
- Answer any questions or concerns.
- Respect your privacy and protect your personal information ([see our Privacy Policy for details](#)).

### The Volunteer Coordination Team can be reached at

3990 Brickway Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
[volunteers@refb.org](mailto:volunteers@refb.org)  
707-523-7905  
[refb.org](http://refb.org)



### Social Media

Stay connected with us across all our social channels. Remember to incorporate our hashtags #RedwoodEmpireFoodBank and #hungerreliefvolunteer when posting about us!

### Facebook

@redwoodempirefoodbank and join the "Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteers" group.

### X

@refb

### Instagram

@redwoodempirefoodbank



THANKS FOR HELPING END  
HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY