



2026

Virginia Healthy Pantry Initiative

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT DATA REPORT



FEDERATION OF
VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS



VIRGINIA
Healthy Pantry
INITIATIVE

2026 HPI Assessment At a Glance



640 pantry responses across all 7 regional food banks



An average of **93% completion rate** across all food banks



80% of pantries have opted-in to the Healthy Pantry Initiative

The Virginia Healthy Pantry Initiative

Food insecure families do not simply lack consistent access to food; they struggle to afford enough **high quality, nutritious foods** that **support good health**. As a result, people facing food insecurity face an **increased risk** of developing **chronic disease**. Food pantries throughout Virginia play a **key role** in ensuring more than 700,000 people have access to **fresh, healthy foods**.

The **Virginia Healthy Pantry Initiative** (HPI) is a statewide program that helps pantries to better support the health of Virginia neighbors facing food insecurity. HPI provides **training and resources**, connects pantries to **strategic partnerships**, **invests** in the implementation of the 20 identified "Healthy Pantry Best Practices", and **collects annual data** on practice implementation and pantry needs.

Pantries in Virginia are Removing Barriers

Pantry Accessibility

- **98%** of pantries are **fully** or **somewhat accessible**

Accessibility means that people of **all ability levels** can access pantry services during food distributions.

Onsight Services Offered

- **108** pantries offer **housing** support
- **72** pantries offer **healthcare** services
- Many pantries also offer:
 - Behavioral or mental health services
 - Financial assistance for food purchasing, financial advising, or financial literacy classes

Transportation Barriers

- **55%** of pantries are addressing transportation barriers in some way

SNAP Assistance

- **226 pantries** *refer neighbors* for SNAP assistance
- **82 pantries** *assist neighbors* in filling out SNAP applications
- **66 pantries** *receive support* to help neighbors apply for SNAP

Choice at Pantries

- **70%** of pantries in Virginia offer '**choice**' **models** allowing neighbors to select food based on dietary needs and preferences

Pantries Are Listening to the Needs of their Neighbors

HPI Practice Implementation

Over 80% of pantries in Virginia are implementing these practices:



Culturally inclusive and welcoming environment (**96%**)



Accommodations for people with physical and mental abilities (**95%**)



Offer food from the five food groups (**95%**)



Offer fresh fruits and vegetables (**94%**)



Serve anyone regardless of zip-code (**87%**)



Foods that address chronic disease or dietary needs (**83%**)

Since the first HPI Assessment in 2023, **practice implementation has increased significantly**, and continues to climb.

Across all 20 HPI Practices, **implementation has increased** by an average of **20%** since 2023.

Implementation of Practices Increased Across the State:

Since 2025, these practices increased in implementation by **10% or more**:

- Someone at the food pantry is trained on a formal nutrition education curriculum (+**10%**)
- Collect neighbor feedback (+**11%**)
- Use a visual system to highlight the location of healthy items within the pantry (+**12%**)



Visit the
Federation of VA
Food Banks
website to learn
more:

<https://vafoodbanks.org>

Pantries Want to Do Even More for Neighbors

Within the next year, pantries want to do more to address their neighbors' needs

Of the surveyed pantries who are **NOT fully implementing** these practices, **over 60%** of pantries are interested in beginning/expanding their implementation:

- Offer items from each of the following five food groups **75%**
- Offer food choices that address specific chronic disease or dietary needs **65%**
- Offer nutrition and health education materials/resources **65%**
- Offer fresh fruits and vegetables **63%**

Since 2025, interest in implementation has **increased by 10%** for these practices:

- ★ Serve neighbors on evenings and/or weekends
- ★ Address transportation barriers
- ★ Make accommodations for people with all physical and mental abilities

In order to increase practice adoption, pantries need support:

Pantries have indicated a need for monetary support and access to trainings on best practices. Pantries requested these supports most often for these practices:

Grants

- Provide information or resources on benefits, health, and other social needs
- Offer foods to meet cultural/religious needs of neighbors
- Offer nutrition and health education materials/resources

Virtual Learning Center

- Someone at the food pantry is trained on a formal nutrition education curriculum
- Offer nutrition and health education materials
- Offer food demonstrations and tastings, cooking classes, or nutrition education sessions