
UPCOMING KLF SERVICE CHANGE: JANUARY 2019

Remaining mission-focused means asking ourselves; Are we using our resources to provide service to as many food insecure individuals as possible in Kalamazoo County? In 2016, our staff and Board of Directors embarked on a strategic plan to identify and address the changing face of hunger in our area. What we found further confirmed what we already knew; Our current service model doesn't work for everyone and there are food insecure people who are either not being served or are being underserved. Through our advocacy work, we also know that cuts to federal food assistance are proposed and there will likely be more people experiencing hunger.

It became clear that we needed to make changes to ensure we were providing food to as many people as possible.

Our current service model allows clients to schedule a pantry appointment once every 30 days with self-declaration of need. If further support is needed, a client can obtain a referral from a caseworker for extra visits. The practice of caseworker referrals began during the 2008 recession to help people withstand rough financial times. Our data shows that the number of households using our services more than 15 times per year has increased by 5% since that time. However, the amount of our total service capacity utilized by these households has increased by 15% in the same time period. In other words, we are concerned that the increase in consistent referrals is impeding access to food assistance for others who may need support on a situational basis or who are new to hunger. Most days, our pantries fill to capacity, and many people are not able to secure food because of it.

After a great deal of evaluation and discussion with key stakeholders, we are implementing a new service model that will begin on January 1, 2019. In the new model, clients will be able to schedule a pantry appointment once every calendar month and will receive three additional self-managed visits that can be used anytime throughout the year. We will no longer accept referrals from a caseworker or third party for extra pantry visits. In the new model, only 5% of our client base will see a reduction in service, and our staff have already met with caseworkers to discuss the upcoming changes and how we, as a community, can help these clients connect to resources that will supplement their Loaves & Fishes visits each month. We've hired a Human Services Coordinator to help clients navigate the change and access additional federal and community food resources if needed. We do anticipate, however, that the change will allow new people to access our services, maintain service levels for 95% of our clients, and will increase food assistance to those who have been underserved in the past. The new model will also allow us to explore non-traditional ways of providing food to those who can't currently access our system for a variety of reasons.

We understand that change can be difficult or confusing for everyone involved. However, we feel that these changes will allow us to use our resources in the most responsible way possible. This new model is our response to community need and aligns with our mission and founding principles of providing emergency food assistance. Clients have more flexibility to schedule extra visits without going through a caseworker. The new model is designed to be more equitable. **We will not be providing any less food to the community — we will be providing the same level of food, if not more, to a greater number of individuals.**

If you have questions regarding this change, please contact Program Director, Art Cole, at 269-488-2617 or art@kzoolf.org. For more information, visit our website at kzoolf.org or join us at one of our upcoming community information sessions.

SERVICE CHANGE COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25TH
10 - 11:30 AM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH
4 - 5:30 PM

Join us at our location at 901 Portage Street in Kalamazoo to learn more about our upcoming service change.
