(Almost) Everything You Need to Know About Volunteering with the Capital Area Food Bank

Hello and welcome! Are you ready to make an impact with us? Great – we’re excited to have you.

Table of Contents

To get you started, we’ve created this handy guide so you have the most important information all in one place. Feel free to share with others and/or print out as a reference. It answers Frequently Asked Questions for:

ALL Volunteers 2
Those organizing GROUPS of people who are all ages 18+ 7
Those organizing GROUPS that include people under age 18 10
Those performing court-ordered service hours 12
Frequently asked questions for ALL Volunteers

How old do I have to be to volunteer?

The minimum requirement to volunteer in our distribution center is 12 years of age (note: there is no age requirement to volunteer in our garden).

All volunteers under the age of 18 must:

Have a waiver signed by a parent or guardian (PDF)

Be accompanied and actively supervised by an adult

*We require 1 adult chaperone per every 10 volunteers age 18 or under.

*Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied and actively supervised by a parent or legal guardian.

Do I have to schedule in advance or can I just show up?

Whether you’re coming alone or organizing a group, all volunteering must be scheduled in advance. Register for a volunteer session through our calendar. Knowing the expected number of volunteers in advance enables our staff in volunteer services to schedule projects based on the number of people we expect.

What time should I arrive for my shift?

Please arrive at 8:30 for the morning shift, and 12:30 for our afternoon shift. This will give you plenty of time to park, get your belongings stored,
and say hi to any friends or colleagues you might be joining. It will also help us ensure that everyone gets orientation at the same time.

**Is there parking available?**

Yes, there is parking for volunteers at both of our location however we recommend carpooling for large groups. We also have parking accommodations for buses. Buses should utilize the truck entrance (on the left side facing the building) when arriving at the food bank.

**How do I get there?**

If you’re **driving**, our addresses are:

**DC Distribution Center:**

4900 Puerto Rico Avenue, NE, Washington, DC, 20017

(The best address to use for GPS is actually: 4900 6th Street, NE)

When you get to the building, follow the **rectangular orange signs** all the way to the **back** of the building. The volunteer entrance is separate from our main entrance! There is ample parking.)

**VA Distribution Center:**

6833 Hill Park Drive Lorton, Virginia 22079

You can find links to the printed directions for both our DC and VA distribution centers [here](#).
If you’re taking **Metro (DC location only)**:

The closest metro stations are Brookland/CUA (Red Line) and Fort Totten (Red Line and Green Line).

The CAFB has a 14-person passenger van that will pick up volunteers from the Brookland/CUA & Ft. Totten Metro Stations at the times listed below (please note that larger groups may require multiple pick-ups to get everyone to the food bank):

Brookland Station: 7:45 AM and 8:15 AM
Fort Totten Station: 7:15 AM and 8:45 AM

The shuttle will return to the metro following the end of each volunteer shift (12:00 PM and 4:00 PM)

**Please note that there is no shuttle for evening volunteer shifts**

The shuttle van has the Capital Area Food Bank logo on the side. If you do not see the shuttle van upon arrival or if you are running late, please call 202-327-1929 to request a ride.

**Do you have an ADA accessible entrance?**

Yes. Please take note that it is at the front entrance of our building. Please use the call box at the top of the ramp to gain entrance to the building. A food bank team member will escort you to the volunteer area at the back of our building.
**What should I wear to volunteer?**

For your best experience at the food bank, please take note of the following:

Wear closed-toed shoes (for safety reasons, **open-toed shoes and sandals are prohibited in both our DC & NOVA distribution centers**).

Wear comfortable clothing you don’t mind getting a little dirty.

Anything that dangles could be a safety risk, so please plan to keep larger earrings, necklaces, or similar items at home or stored in a locker.

Volunteering at the food bank is a family-friendly experience, so please avoid attire with curse words, or suggestive language and/or pictures.

**Is there a place to lock up my personal belongings?**

A limited number of lockers are available for small bags; larger items are not encouraged, as they will not fit in lockers. Feel free to bring your own lock & key.

**If I’m planning to be there all day, is there a place for my lunch?**

Yes, the food bank has a refrigerator for lunch storage. Space is limited, however, so we encourage you to bring an ice pack for foods that must be kept cold. We also have a microwave, and vending machines for those who wish to purchase a snack.

**Do you have WiFi?**
Yes, the food bank has guest WiFi, and we encourage our volunteers to use it as they post great pictures of their volunteer experience to their social media accounts. Don’t forget to tag the food bank!

**Facebook**: /CapitalAreaFoodBank  
**Instagram**: capitalareafoodbank  
**Twitter**: @foodbankmetrodc

**Do I have to attend a training session prior to volunteering?**

Volunteers will receive a brief orientation introducing new volunteers to the Capital Area Food Bank and detailed description and instructions of the project prior to your session.

**Will I be required to lift heavy objects?**

Most volunteer activities do not require heavy lifting (over 20 lbs.), but volunteers should be prepared to stand for 90 minutes at a time with some light lifting and bending, depending on the project.

**Do I need to bring anything to my volunteer session?**

We provide everything you need for all activities. If you’d like to add extra impact to your day, one great way to do that is to bring one or more shelf-stable food item. Most-wanted items for the food bank include: canned vegetables, soup, stew, tuna, canned fruit, rice, beans, pasta, pasta sauce, shelf-stable milk, peanut butter and jelly. [View a full list of most-needed items here.](#)
Is there anything I’m not allowed to bring?
The food bank is an alcohol and controlled-substance free environment; possessing or working under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance while at the food bank is prohibited.

Are there volunteer opportunities on Sunday?
There are no volunteer opportunities at either our DC or NOVA warehouses on Sunday.

Ok, got all that? Super!

Now, if you’re organizing a group, there are a few more things we want to make sure you know. Here are some more questions and answers for group leaders.

FAQs for those organizing GROUPS of people who are all ages 18+

How many people can I bring in my group?
Typically, we can accommodate groups of up to 160 (please note: if your group will be over 65 people, please call the volunteer services team before you begin registering your group online).
The number of people in your group will affect the days and times available for you to volunteer, so it’s important to know the number of people you expect when scheduling a date to volunteer. The Volunteer Services department schedules volunteers based on the needs in the warehouse as well as number of people needed to complete the projects.

**What information do I need to sign up my team for a volunteer shift at the Capital Area Food Bank?**

When you go online to sign up a volunteer group, you’ll want to have the date and shift you would like to sign up for with you.

Volunteer Services has two shifts Monday through Saturday:

Morning 9 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Afternoon 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

You may sign up your team for more than one shift per day.

You’ll also need the actual names, phone numbers and/or email addresses of each member of your team (please note: the process is different for groups with those under age 18; please skip to that section to read more if this applies to you).

**Why do we ask for actual names and emails during the registration process?**

We ask for actual names because we find that requiring this information ensures more accurate counts of volunteer group size.

This matters a lot, because an accurate count of those coming to volunteer is critical for our team’s ability to plan for and complete different kinds of
projects. Activities like packing bags of food for kids, for instance, require a certain number of helpers. When we have fewer people than planned, we can’t pack or distribute as much food as needed, and that really impacts the people we serve.

When team leaders use placeholder names, they tend to overestimate how many people will be volunteering. We know it’s not intentional, but we want to avoid having fewer people than we need.

So, we ask that you don’t input placeholder names (Ex. Jane or John Doe, Team Member 1 or 2, Student 1, 2,3) to hold slots. We will not approve teams for shifts that utilize placeholder names.

If you do not know the name and email addresses of your team members, please contact Volunteer Services at 202.644.9822 or email volunteer@capitalareafoodbank.org to talk with us. We will do our best to accommodate you.

**Can I bring additional people the day of our scheduled volunteer shift?**
Yes, but if you are bringing more than two (2) additional volunteers, please call us at 202.644.9822 and ask for a volunteer manager.

**Can my group eat lunch in the volunteer lounge?**
Yes. If you are having lunch delivered, please coordinate with volunteer services ahead of time. Also, please know that the lounge is used by many volunteer groups for lunch.

**Can my group have a meeting in the volunteer lounge?**
Yes. This must be arranged in advance with the manager of volunteer services. Please call volunteer services at 202.644.9822 or email volunteer@capitalareafoodbank.org

**Can my group have a tour of the food bank before or after my activity?**
Yes. We love to give tours to groups! They must be set up in advance. Please call volunteer services at 202.644.9822 or email volunteer@capitalareafoodbank.org and we will do our best to accommodate your group.

If you’re organizing a group (school groups, youth service projects, etc.) that contains people under the age of 18, there are a few things that will be different than organizing a group that has only adults.

**Look below for questions and answers about these kinds of groups:**

**FAQs for those organizing GROUPS that include people under age 18**

**If my group includes people under 18, what’s my first step?**

Start just as you would for adult groups by going to the sign-up page and creating an account (if you don’t already have one). Once logged in, please create a team and sign up for an available shift that both meets your scheduling needs and has enough available slots to accommodate the size of your group.
We don’t record the names of volunteers under the age of 18 in our database, and instead record them as “guests”, so our process is a little different for signing up groups with minors in them.

At this stage, *rather than entering student names or other information*, please call us at 202.644.9822, or e-mail 
volunteer@capitalareafoodbank.org.

Please be prepared with the following information:

- Your name
- School/organization team name that you created an account for
- Date and time of the shift you’ve signed up for
- The size of your group
- Age range of your group
- The best way to contact you

If you call and a staff member isn’t available, please leave the above in a voicemail. Whether you call or e-mail, we’ll get back to you shortly thereafter to confirm the information you provided.

From there, we’ll enter your youth volunteers into our system as guests.

**Once my group is registered, is there anything else we need to do?**

Yes. Please download *[this waiver form]* for volunteers under the age of 18. On the day of volunteer service, there must be a signed waiver form for every person under 18.
Can students in our group get community service credit for hours volunteering with the food bank?

Yes. Hours spent volunteering for the food bank are accepted by most schools towards required service credit hours. Students should bring any required forms for service hours with them so that CAFB staff can sign off on them during their visit. Additionally, we will create a timesheet for each.

FAQs for those performing court-ordered service hours

How do I sign up to complete court-ordered community service?

Individual orientations for those who will be joining us for court-ordered service are scheduled from 8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m., Monday – Saturday.

Your volunteer service will begin directly after your orientation. When you arrive for your individual orientation, you must bring:

1) Valid Identification

2) Documentation from the court stating the number of hours assigned to you. If you do not bring these items, we cannot complete your orientation for court ordered service.

Can I bring other people with me who are not volunteering while I complete my hours?

No. We are unable to accommodate additional people (children, significant others, etc.) who are not previously signed up to volunteer on the day of your service.