

# Volunteer Training Scenarios from James Island Outreach



**Directions:** Utilize this training to run various scenarios for training staff and volunteers.

1. The client says to you: "I don't eat veggies. May I skip veggies and just get a lot of meat?" **How you can respond:**  
"Everyone gets a fair amount of food according to the number of family members. We do not allow clients to choose more of any product because they skip another. You do not have to choose veggies but, by passing up veggies, you are not allowed to double your meat."
2. The client says to you: "May I get a can of pineapple for my friend, Gloria? She loves pineapple."  
**How you can respond:**  
(While smiling you could say something like:) "How thoughtful to think of your friend." I have two suggestions.
  1. "You are allowed two cans of fruit. Why not invite Gloria over to have some pineapple with you?"
  2. Tell Gloria about the (Organization's Name). Talk to her about your experience and how to check and see if she is eligible to shop here."
3. The client starts choosing more cans or packages than you instructed and continues to add several cans or packages to the basket.  
**How you can respond:**  
Avoid negative words like, "No! Don't do that! "  
Be calm! Do not touch the client. In a firm voice say: "I am sorry, perhaps you did not hear me. I said you can choose 2 cans/packages."  
(Try to obtain eye contact. Begin to put extra cans or packages back on the shelf.) Say to the client, "Please help me put these cans/packages back on the shelf."  
Continue shopping with a pleasant attitude.
4. You point out the prompt card on the shelf regarding High Blood Pressure. The client says, "My husband has that." You suggest that the client choose low-salt veggies. The client does not take your suggestion.  
**How you can respond:**  
There is no reason to respond. This is a Client Choice Pantry; not a Volunteer Choice Pantry. The prompt cards are suggestions; not mandates.
5. The client says to you: "What do you think of President XXX?"  
**How you can respond:**  
"I don't discuss politics in the pantry. Let's talk about all this delicious food."
6. The client says to you: "I hate this new way of getting food. Can you just bag up my food, and get me out of here?"  
**What do you say or do?**  
"I know change can be difficult. Let's just try the new way and see all the choices you have. I will be glad to help you with any questions."



7. You tell the client he/she may choose 4 cans of vegetables. The client takes 4 cans of corn.

**How you can respond:**

There is no reason to respond. This is a Client Choice Pantry; not a Volunteer Choice Pantry

8. The client says to you: May I please take 8 cans of fruit instead of vegetables? I hate veggies.

**How you can respond:**

"Everyone gets a fair amount of food according to the number of family members. We do not allow clients to choose more of any product because they skip another. You do not have to choose veggies but, by passing up veggies, you are not allowed to double your fruit."

9. You tell the client the amount of food he/she can choose. The client begins to argue with you and insists that his/her family needs more food than that to get through the month. You keep your cool and try to explain; but the client is not listening and is getting louder and louder.

**How you can respond:**

First, try to calm the client down. Discord in the pantry makes everyone uncomfortable. Tell the client that we will not have enough for other clients if we give more than allowed.

If the client continues to shout,

Say: "Just a moment Sir/ Madam, please excuse me while I get my Food Leader." Leave and get your Food Leader. Give the leader a quick outline. Introduce the client and, step away. Do not interfere with client and Food Leader conversation. Hopefully, the Food Leader will succeed in calming the client down.

Next is where the challenge really happens:

This client yelled at you and was not very nice. Your job is to return to shopping with this client like you were prior to the conflict. It is not easy.

Continue working with the client to the end of the shopping trip. (It may help to remember that you do not know the circumstances of the client's life. They were probably very nice before (insert current life circumstance)).

10. The client says to you, "I am broke. Will you give me a few dollars for gas?"

**How you can respond:**

I'm sorry it is against our policy to give clients money.

11. A client enters the pantry and is not wearing a lanyard. (which is what this organization uses to signify family size by lanyard color)

**What do you say to this client?**

"Please stop by the Registration Office on the left.



12. The client is getting food for himself and his home bound sister who does not live with him. She is registered and eligible for food.

**How you can respond:**

1. Have him go through the pantry twice?

2. Push two baskets through the pantry at one time?

This is a volunteer's choice. Which method works best for you and the current traffic in the pantry.

13. The client whispers to you, "I just lost my job and I have never had to ask for food before. Are you going to tell anyone you saw me here?"

**What do you say to the client?** (Only say what is accurate for your pantry)

"No, I will not tell anyone that I saw you here. All pantry volunteers sign a Confidentiality Statement before volunteering. We promise that everything that happens at (Pantry Name) stays at the pantry. Please relax and enjoy shopping with us. This is a safe place."

14. The client says to you: "The lady who interviewed me is mean. She would not let me get food for my sister. I could save her a trip by getting it for her today." **How do you respond to this situation?**

"Your sister must be eligible to shop in the pantry. Tell her about your sign-up experience and encourage her to come to the pantry. You can come with her the first time."

15. The client says to you: "How about letting me get a couple of extra boxes of pasta? No one will ever know."

**How do you handle this request?**

Say to the client, "That does not sound very honest. We try to stock our pantry so that every client is served fairly."

16. The client says to you: "We don't eat none of that bean stuff. So, I am going to take another jar of peanut butter. My kids love peanut butter."

**What do you say to this client?**

"On your next visit, you can get more peanut butter, but we have to make sure we have enough for other families who love peanut butter too."

17. A client asks you: Will you give me your phone number so I can call and ask you how to cook these beans?"

**What do you say to this client?**

Never give a client your phone number. Say; "Here are some bean recipes we have from the Lowcountry Food Bank. They are great. I like to keep my phone # private."