

✓ **Helping Hands: A Guidebook for Volunteer Meal Providers**

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**Learning Outcome:** Participants will be able to explain how to apply strategies to help food donors promote food safety practices and to prepare nutritional and cost-conscious meals.

"Helping Hands" is a 32-page practical resource for volunteer meal donors. The objective of this project was to develop a useful tool for volunteers providing prepared meals to soup kitchens, homeless shelters, Ronald McDonald House, and a cancer lodge. It was created in response to requests from local agencies that expressed concerns regarding the food safety practices and nutritional quality of meals being donated. Program administrators were interviewed to determine their specific needs. They desired a document that would include basic nutrition and food safety principles for populations at risk for malnutrition and/or infection. Additionally, they desired recipes for budget-friendly meals that could be prepared by busy volunteers. A literature and internet search and a query to dietitians on several Listserves found no existing documents to fulfill these needs. The content was outlined, and food safety information and recipes were gathered from sources including the USDA and CDC websites. The guide includes over thirty recipes with nutrition information, basic food safety guidelines, time and cost-saving tips, components of healthy meals, and testimonials from volunteers and agency personnel. Nine food, nutrition, and food safety specialists on the FNSPEC Listserve responded to a request for reviewers and provided comments on accuracy, format, and readability. A two-page brochure was developed to promote the guide. The success of "Helping Hands" will be evaluated by the comparative number of nutritionally balanced meals served, the implementation of proper food safety practices, and the overall cost of meals to volunteers. The guidebook is found at: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/fammed/index.cfm>.

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