

VOLUNTEER FAQ : RETURNING TO IN-PERSON SHOPPING



Beginning **Monday, November 2**, The Open Door will return to in-person shopping at both the Gloucester Food Pantry and on **Wednesday, November 4** at the Ipswich Community Food Pantry.

Moving forward, most clients will make an appointment online at FOODPANTRY.org to shop in-person for groceries weekly instead of ordering online. There will be **no change for delivery and food locker clients**.

In-person shopping was a successful model at The Open Door for many years before the pandemic and offers greater choice, flexibility, and dignity for clients while helping us serve more people during a time of unprecedented food insecurity.

Q: What does this mean for volunteers?

A: Volunteers who currently serve in the Fulfillment Center, Food Pantries, and Corner Market will experience the biggest changes. As we transition to in-person shopping, some volunteer roles will evolve and new opportunities will be created to support the needs of our clients.

We are also expanding volunteer opportunities across the organization, including at Second Glance, the thrift store of The Open Door. It's a great time to try out new volunteer roles at all of our locations!

Q: How was this decision made?

A: The conversation began in 2025 as we saw a **36% increase** in requests for food assistance, following nearly 30% increases in both 2023 and 2024.

After expanding services and pantry hours, we began exploring additional ways to meet the growing demand. **We surveyed clients**, gathered feedback, and **engaged managers from across the organization** in discussions about possible solutions.

Based on that feedback and careful operational planning, **our team identified that returning to in-person shopping would allow us to serve more people while providing greater choice and dignity for clients**.

Q: Will my current volunteer shift still exist?

A: **Some shifts will remain the same while others may change or be replaced by new opportunities**. Please continue to check VolunteerHub for updated role descriptions and opportunities. If your role changes and you want to explore new opportunities, there will be many new shifts available and our volunteer team is happy to work with you to find roles that match your interests and availability.

VOLUNTEER FAQ : RETURNING TO IN-PERSON SHOPPING (CONTINUED)



Q: Do you still need my help?

A: Absolutely!

In fact, **this change is happening because we need to serve more people.** Over the past several years, demand for food assistance has continued to grow, and our current system can no longer keep pace with the level of need we're seeing in our community.

While your volunteer shift may look different after November 2, your support remains just as important. We hope you'll be open to exploring new opportunities and continue to help us ensure local families, seniors, and individuals have access to the food they need.

Simply put: we couldn't do this work without you.

Q: What will the new volunteer opportunities look like?

A: Potential roles tied to our in-person shopping model might include:

- Welcoming and checking in clients
- Assisting shoppers in the pantry
- Stocking shelves and organizing products
- Restocking produce and fresh foods
- Supporting pantry flow and client navigation
- Helping at the Corner Market
- Chopping produce

Details, schedules, and role descriptions will be shared as we identify program needs over the coming weeks and months.

Q: Will there be training for the new volunteer roles?

A: Yes. We want all volunteers to feel comfortable and confident in their roles.

Training opportunities will be offered as we roll out the transition and throughout the implementation process. We expect roles will evolve as we iron out what in-person shopping looks like.

Q: What if I don't feel comfortable in a client-facing role?

A: That's okay. We will continue to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, including behind-the-scenes roles that support our mission without direct client interaction.

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Q: If I have a weekly volunteer shift and the role changes, will I be able to sign up for a new weekly shift?

A: Yes! Our volunteer team will work with you to find a weekly shift that works for your schedule.

Q: What will the transition to in-person shopping look like?

A: Our team has spent much of 2026 planning for a thoughtful and successful transition. Even with careful preparation, we know there will be a learning curve as staff, volunteers, and clients adjust to a new model for getting groceries.

We are looking forward to providing clients with an in-person shopping experience that serves more people with increased choice, dignity, and connection.

Q: Is there an opportunity to learn more?

A: Yes! **We will be hosting informational Zoom meetings on 10/23 and 10/26** to share more details about the transition and answer questions. Please check your email for more information.

Q: How can I help?

A: Please keep signing up for shifts with patience and a willingness to be flexible as we navigate this change together.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your support, flexibility, and commitment to our mission.

Quite simply, we could not have responded to the tremendous increase in food insecurity over the last several years without our volunteers.

As we begin this next chapter, we're excited to welcome clients back into our pantries and create an experience that allows us to serve even more people with dignity and increased choice.

There will be new opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. **Most of all, please know how grateful we are for each and every one of you.**