

Create a Mutual Aid Pod In Your Community

Growing Stronger Together

National Farm to School Network is dedicated to ensuring that all children and families have access to healthy food options. Farm to school, at its core, is about relationships: relationships that benefit children and families while strengthening local community food systems. In times of crisis, these community-based relationships are even more vital in supporting continued healthy food access, community well being, and producer viability. Models like mutual aid bring people in communities together, so no one goes hungry. Join the movement and start a Mutual Aid Pod in your neighborhood today.

What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is where a group of people organize to meet their own needs, outside of the formal frameworks of charities and government. It is, by definition, a horizontal mode of organizing, in which all individuals are equally powerful. It's about building relationships with your neighbors based on trust and common interest and treating no one as disposable. In this particular moment, our health is dependent on other people's health, and we can literally save each other's lives.

Rather than feel powerless, mutual aid groups allow us to plug in where we can make the most impact locally. This model is built around the community providing support to each other, ranging from food prep to childcare to translation to emotional support, and recognizing the value of each of these contributions.

1 Find a neighbor to help you build the group.

Start by identifying someone in your building, on your block, or in whatever form your community looks like. Working with a partner helps make the work feel less overwhelming and keeps you accountable to each other.



2 Decide which area you're serving.

Are you trying to support people on your floor, in your building, your block, your neighborhood, or a non-geography-specific social community? Remember to start small and build out as you gain confidence and more knowledge of the resources in your community.



3 Start reaching out to your neighbors.

If you don't already have phone contacts for your neighbors, you'll need to reach them somehow. Here are some ideas:

- Ask for your contacts to connect you with the neighbors you don't know.
- Reach out on social media by building a Facebook group.
- Post on community list-servs, like ones for parents of children at a local school.
- See if your community has a group on Next Door.
- Flyer spaces where people tend to pass through, such as elevators, food banks, lobbies, laundry rooms, bike rooms, or garages.

4 Decide on the best way to communicate.

You have a couple of options when it comes to staying in touch:

- Make a group text or social media chat if everyone is comfortable with text/social media.
- If most people can text but some can only talk by phone, assign people responsible for calling those people to update them.
- If most people are only comfortable talking by phone, set up a phone tree.



5 Create a resource database.

You won't be able to do everything. So start creating a list of other groups and government agencies providing resources in your community. You can start by reaching out to:

- Churches
- Foodbanks
- Local Restaurants
- Local elected officials
- Schools and early care and education sites



6 Survey people's needs and ability to help.

Here are some sample questions you can ask each other:

- When are you generally available?
- What is your living situation like and who else lives with you?
- What resources, skills or knowledge do you have that you could share with the pod or help others with?
- What do you need help with?
- Do you have any important health information about yourself that you want to share with me? For example, do you have regular prescriptions or appointments you need to maintain?

7 Designate how you are going to support each other.

Your pod will have lots of needs at this time, and they may change as this pandemic continues. You need to identify what your group can manage. Some needs that might come up:

- Food (both grocery store trips and prep)
- Picking up medicine or other absolutely essential errands
- Emotional support (someone to talk to)
- Language translation/support
- Information on what community resources are available
- Technology assistance
- Internet access



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