



# Dinner in a Box Program

## What is Dinner in a Box?

Dinner in a Box is a new family dinner program that helps families have fun and connect with each other by providing recipes, ingredients, dinner games, conversation ideas, and other resources.

The Family Dinner Project works with community organizations and food pantries to create relevant and accessible boxes for local families. You provide the food; we provide the rest, free of charge!

Below is an example of what a box might include, but we can also tailor contents to your community's needs.

## Included in a typical box:

- Food items you provide
- Low-budget recipes using the ingredients
- Dinner games for all ages
- Conversation jars with cut-apart questions
- Conversation cards
- Additional resources on a variety of topics, including special needs, mental health, ages and stages, holidays, and more



**Interested? Get more information:  
[Contact@TheFamilyDinnerProject.org](mailto:Contact@TheFamilyDinnerProject.org)**



# Dinner in a Box Program

## How Can I Become a Dinner in a Box Distribution Partner?

First, we recommend reaching out to The Family Dinner Project team to schedule a conversation about your organization, your experience with food distribution programs, and what your community needs.

If we decide together that your organization would be a good fit for Dinner in a Box partnership, you can proceed with planning your Dinner in a Box program using the set-up checklist and resource request form on the following pages.

## What Might a Successful Dinner in a Box Program Look Like?

We've worked with several different distribution partners on Dinner in a Box models across the country, so there's no "one right way" to create the program that works for your community. But here are some guidelines that we think work for most sites:

- Start with a pilot program of about 6-8 box distribution dates, so you can see what works and what doesn't;
- Keep your pilot group at a manageable size for you. You can always expand to more clients later;
- Try to line up your Dinner in a Box program with your existing efforts, to minimize extra work and confusion;
- Do your best to interact with recipients of the boxes face-to-face, to help answer questions, share your excitement about the program, and get feedback on their experiences.

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# Dinner in a Box Program

## Project Case Study: Wellspring Multi-Service Center in Hull, Massachusetts

Wellspring Multi-Service Center created a successful Dinner in a Box project through two of its existing nutrition assistance programs: In-person food pantry distribution at their Aunt Dot's Kitchen site, and in-home food delivery to homebound clients.

Boxes were distributed weekly by Wellspring staff and volunteers. The boxes included fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable food items, as well as corresponding recipes, conversation starters, games, and family resources from The Family Dinner Project. After six weeks of distribution, two-thirds of families said they had spent more time together around the table, and were eager to continue using Dinner in a Box resources.

You can learn more about Wellspring's approach to Dinner in a Box on our website: [Partnering with Wellspring Multi-Service Center](#)

**"We use food as an engagement tool. Food gets families through the door and makes them more open to other services."**

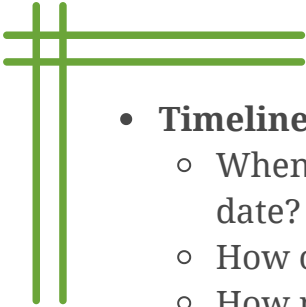

**– Paul Williams,  
Wellspring Multi-Service Center**

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# Dinner in a Box Program

## Set-Up Checklist for New Partners

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- **Timeline and Distribution Schedule**
    - When will you begin distributing boxes? What is your estimated end date?
    - How often will you distribute boxes?
    - How many boxes do you expect to distribute? How many families and family members do you anticipate reaching?
  - **Box Contents**
    - Food
      - What items will you pack in your boxes?
      - What recipes can The Family Dinner Project provide that will utilize box contents wisely?
    - Fun and Conversation
      - What are the demographics of your families?
      - Are there any special considerations -- language needs, special medical or educational needs, or specific themes or seasons that should be considered?
    - Number and type of resources included
    - How many resources will be included in each box?
    - Are there additional expert resources that may be added to one or more of the boxes for families?
  - **Access Considerations**
    - How can we best provide the printed resources for each box to your organization?
    - Is there a specific timeline that should be followed for providing assets, to be sure they can be packed in time?
  - **Community Feedback**
    - What type of feedback will we solicit from families who receive boxes?
    - Are there any confidentiality or accessibility considerations? Should we collect feedback via computer, on paper, by phone?
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# Dinner in a Box Program

## Resource Requests for Boxes

Please select which types of resources you are most interested in distributing to your community through Dinner in a Box:

- ☐ Information on the Benefits of Family Meals
- ☐ Information for families with special needs
- ☐ Budget-friendly recipes
- ☐ Dinner Games for Toddlers and Preschoolers
- ☐ Dinner Games for Kids Ages 6-12
- ☐ Dinner Games for Tweens and Teens
- ☐ Conversation Ideas for Toddlers and Preschoolers
- ☐ Conversation Ideas for Kids Ages 6-12
- ☐ Conversation Ideas for Tweens and Teens
- ☐ Seasonal resources (Please specify)

☐ Other requests or suggestions?

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# Dinner in a Box Program

## Box Preparation Worksheet

You can use this worksheet template as a guide to help you plan and schedule the contents and distribution of your boxes. A sample follows on the next page.

	Week One Distribution Date:	Week Two Distribution Date:	Week Three Distribution Date:
FOOD			
FUN			
CONVERSATION			
RECIPES			
RESOURCES			





# Dinner in a Box Program

## Box Preparation Worksheet SAMPLE

This is an example of what your planning worksheet might look like, based on one of our existing distribution partners' boxes.

	Week One Distribution Date: March 1	Week Two Distribution Date: March 8	Week Three Distribution Date: March 15
FOOD	Pasta; canned tomatoes; frozen ground beef; broccoli; chickpeas; peanut butter; apples	Rice; chicken; apples; tuna; pasta; carrots	Black beans; canned tomatoes; noodles; ground beef; frozen vegetables
FUN	Would You Rather game Cat and Cow Game Charades (Spanish and English)	20 Questions game Food Detective activity Make-Your-Own Placemat	Story by Sentence Game Funny Bunny Game Which One...? Game
CONVERSATION	Music Recipe for Conversation Conversation starters for teens page	Conversation starter cut-apart sheets	Resilience Recipe for Conversation Courage Recipe for Conversation
RECIPES	Pasta with chickpeas "Dinner tonight" card Family Baked Ziti "Dinner Tonight" card	Apple Chicken stir-fry "Dinner Tonight" card Pasta with Tuna "Dinner Tonight" card	Black Bean soft tacos "Dinner Tonight" card Ground Beef Stroganoff "Dinner Tonight" card
RESOURCES	Benefits of family dinners handout	Literacy and family dinner handouts	Family dinner and Kid sports season handouts



# Dinner in a Box Program

## Evaluating Your Program

The Family Dinner Project will send a link to a customized survey for your organization once you're approved as a new partner. Surveys can be administered either in person, online, or over the phone, depending on the needs of your community.

We ask that every Dinner in a Box distribution partner administers these user surveys as part of your commitment to the program; not only do the answers help us measure our impact, but they're valuable information on how we can work together to make Dinner in a Box even better.

Some of our Dinner in a Box sites have shared the following tips to help improve community responsiveness to the program and the survey collection process:

- Establish a trusted point of contact who will be present for box distribution and build relationships with the recipients.
- Share your enthusiasm for Dinner in a Box with recipients. For example, "We're so excited to show you what's in your food pick-up today! We've been working with a new partner who gave us these games, recipes, and other fun ideas you can try out when you eat dinner together. Let us know how you like it next time you come in!"
- Offer multiple ways for clients to give feedback. Have printed surveys available at pick-ups, have a computer or tablet available with the survey already set up for clients to complete, and offer to take feedback verbally if that's more comfortable for some of your program participants.