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
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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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

- **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?
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?

________________________________________

________________________________________
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One Distribution Date:</th>
<th>Week Two Distribution Date:</th>
<th>Week Three Distribution Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FUN</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CONVERSATION</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RECIPES</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>FUN</th>
<th>CONVERSATION</th>
<th>RECIPES</th>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One Distribution Date: March 1</td>
<td>Would You Rather game</td>
<td>Music Recipe for Conversation</td>
<td>Pasta with chickpeas &quot;Dinner tonight&quot; card</td>
<td>Benefits of family dinners handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cat and Cow Game</td>
<td>Conversation starters for</td>
<td>Family Baked Ziti &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charades</td>
<td>teens page</td>
<td>Pasta with Tuna &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spanish and English)</td>
<td></td>
<td>RNA</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Benefits of family dinners handout</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Literacy and family dinner handouts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family dinner and Kid sports season handouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two Distribution Date: March 8</td>
<td>20 Questions game</td>
<td>Conversation starter cut-</td>
<td>Apple Chicken stir-fry &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Detective activity</td>
<td>apart sheets</td>
<td>Pasta with Tuna &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make-Your-Own Placemat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Bean soft tacos &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ground Beef Stroganoff &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three Distribution Date: March 15</td>
<td>Story by Sentence Game</td>
<td>Resilience Recipe for</td>
<td>Black Bean soft tacos &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funny Bunny Game</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Ground Beef Stroganoff &quot;Dinner Tonight&quot; card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which One...? Game</td>
<td>Courage Recipe for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interested? Get more information: Contact@TheFamilyDinnerProject.org
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.