



United Way
Alberta Capital Region

PRODUCT DRIVE GUIDE

Hands-on, tangible ways to give back with purpose



GIVING BACK — TOGETHER

At United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, we make it easy for workplaces, schools, and community groups to create real impact — right where they live. Product drives are a hands-on, high-impact way to give back, rally your team, and provide urgently needed items to individuals and families across the region.

From hygiene kits to school supplies, your drive will support a local agency partner actively serving people in need. And we'll be there to guide you every step of the way — from helping you select a collection drive activity to align with your group's goals and timelines to matching you with the right agency partner.

Together, we can make sure no one in our community is left behind.



How to Start a Collection Drive: Step-by-Step

1. CHOOSE A FOCUS

Determine the group you'd like to support — newcomers, youth, women, unhoused individuals — or the type of items you'd like to collect. Can't decide? Skip to step 2!

2. CONTACT UNITED WAY

United Way works in partnership with more than 50 social agencies across the Alberta Capital Region. Let's work together to find an agency in our network currently in need of the items you're gathering.

3. RALLY YOUR TEAM


Get your workplace, classroom, or community group on board and ready to help.

4. CHOOSE YOUR TIMELINE

Most drives last 2–4 weeks, depending on your capacity and goals.

5. PROMOTE YOUR DRIVE

Use our template to create a poster, email staff, and post to your organization's intranet or social channels to help you spread the word.

 **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to clarify for your audience whether the items you're collecting should be new or gently used.

- Hygiene kits, menstrual health, baby items, and children's supplies must be new only.
- Clothing and household essentials may include new or gently used items in good condition.

6. COLLECT AND SORT

Organize items by category, label them clearly, and prepare for drop-off at the agency you've been matched with.



Types of Collection Drives

Each of the following drive types includes an overview of the need, who it helps, sample items to collect, and peak times of need.

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BABY ESSENTIALS

THE NEED

For a new mother experiencing poverty or fleeing violence, basic supplies can be out of reach. Diapers and baby lotion provide comfort and care. A new sleeper outfit can keep a newborn warm. These items offer peace of mind — and a more stable start — for both parent and baby.

WHO IT HELPS

- Mothers and infants in shelters, transition housing, or living with low income
- Teen parents living with low income

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New only

- Diapers (all sizes), wipes
- Baby wash, lotion, diaper cream
- Bottles, bibs, pacifiers
- Baby clothes
- Receiving blankets, onesies

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round, especially Spring (new birth cycles) and December (family-focused giving)



CLOTHING

THE NEED

Poverty and crisis often leave families without the means to afford basic clothing. For someone attending a job interview, a clean outfit can restore confidence. For a youth in care, a hoodie in their size offers a sense of ownership and dignity. Clothing isn't just fabric — it's warmth, self-expression, and self-worth.

WHO IT HELPS

- Newcomers
- Families
- Unhoused individuals
- Youth

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New and gently used

- Pants, shirts, sweaters
- Footwear (especially winter boots)
- Undergarments (*new only*)
- Clean socks, belts, outerwear

WHEN TO HOST

Spring and Fall (transitional seasons, back-to-school, and job-seeking support)



FOOD

THE NEED

Food insecurity affects thousands of people across the Alberta Capital Region — from seniors on fixed incomes to working families struggling with rising costs. A child shouldn't have to go to school hungry. A parent shouldn't have to skip meals so their kids can eat. Donated food items provide immediate relief and allow individuals and families to meet other urgent needs like housing, transportation, or medication. Your drive helps put nourishment — and dignity — on the table.

WHO IT HELPS

- Newcomers
- Families
- Unhoused individuals
- Youth

SUGGESTED ITEMS

Non-perishable only. Please check all expiry dates and ensure packaging is unopened and in good condition.

- Canned proteins (tuna, beans, chicken)
- Peanut butter and nut-free spreads
- Pasta, rice, and grains
- Canned vegetables and fruit
- Shelf-stable milk or milk alternatives
- Granola bars, baby food, instant oatmeal

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round, with increased need in spring (post-holiday donation dip), summer (when school meal programs pause), and fall (leading into the winter season)



HOUSEHOLD ESSENTIALS



THE NEED

When individuals and families move into housing they often arrive with little more than hope. A donated kettle means they can boil water for tea. A towel means they can take a warm shower and feel safe. These basic household essentials create comfort, restore dignity, and help people begin the next chapter of their lives with stability and care.

WHO IT HELPS

- Newcomers to Canada
- Domestic violence survivors
- Individuals and families leaving temporary housing

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New and gently used

- Kitchen tools and dish sets
- Small appliances (toasters, kettles)
- Towels, bedding (*new only*)
- Cleaning supplies
- Laundry baskets and storage bins

WHEN TO HOST

Spring and Fall (high turnover in housing supports)



HYGIENE PRODUCTS

THE NEED

For someone living rough or in shelter, access to personal hygiene isn't just about cleanliness — it's about dignity. A toothbrush and deodorant can restore confidence before a job interview. A small bottle of shampoo means being able to show up to class or work without shame.

WHO IT HELPS

- Unhoused individuals
- Low-income families
- Youth living independently
- 2SLGBTQ+ individuals

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New only; travel or full-size

- Shampoo and conditioner
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Soap or body wash
- Deodorant
- Razors, combs, lip balm

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round



MENSTRUAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

THE NEED

No one should have to miss school or work because of their period. Yet many do. A student without access to pads may skip class. A woman fleeing domestic violence may not have brought essential supplies. These items restore dignity and ensure full participation in daily life.

WHO IT HELPS

Humans who menstruate including:

- Women
- Girls
- Individuals accessing shelters, schools, and community supports

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New, unopened packages only

- Pads and tampons (all sizes)
- Panty liners
- Personal wipes

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round, with high impact leading up to Menstrual Health Day (May 28 annually)



MENTAL HEALTH CARE



THE NEED

Crisis and recovery are isolating. A journal can help someone process their emotions. Herbal tea and cozy socks can offer comfort on a difficult night.

A small, thoughtful package can remind someone navigating mental health challenges that they are not alone — and that people care.

WHO IT HELPS

- Youth
- Adults
- Seniors
- 2SLGBTQ+ individuals

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New or gently used

- Notebooks, journals, colouring books
- Puzzle books or playing cards
- Herbal tea, cozy socks, stress balls
- Calming essential oil rollers
- Encouragement cards or affirmations

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round, particularly May (Mental Health Awareness month), January (post-holiday stress), and October (World Mental Health Day)



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

THE NEED

Thousands of children in our region begin school each year without the supplies they need to succeed. These children often start the year feeling left out or behind. A backpack filled with essentials helps them walk into class with pride and preparedness. A pencil case can be a tool of confidence. Every item is a small vote of belief in a child's future.

WHO IT HELPS

K-12 students in low-income households

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New only, no corporate branding

- Backpacks
- Pencils, pens, erasers
- Notebooks, duotangs, paper
- Markers, crayons, pencil crayons
- Scissors, glue sticks

WHEN TO HOST

June to August (for Fall school start)



TOYS, BOOKS & GAMES

THE NEED

Play is vital to a child's development and emotional well-being. A toy can bring joy to a child spending the holidays in a shelter. A board game can foster connection in a transitional housing unit. These donations help kids feel seen, valued, and — importantly — like kids again.

WHO IT HELPS

Children and youth

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New and gently used; age appropriate

- Board games, puzzles
- Dolls, trucks, action figures
- Art and craft supplies
- Books for various reading levels
- Gift cards for teens (e.g., movie passes, retail)

WHEN TO HOST

Year-round, with need increasing from November to mid-December (holiday season)



WINTERWEAR

THE NEED

In our region, winter gear isn't optional — it's life-saving. A warm coat and proper boots can be the difference between safety and frostbite for someone experiencing houselessness. For children walking to school, warm gloves and snow pants mean they arrive safe, focused, and ready to learn and play.

WHO IT HELPS

Families and individuals experiencing houselessness or housing insecurity.

SUGGESTED ITEMS

New and gently used

- Winter jackets (all sizes)
- Toques, mittens, gloves
- Warm socks (*new only*)
- Snow pants, scarves

WHEN TO HOST

September to December



SPECIALIZED COLLECTION DRIVES



THE NEED

Our community's needs are diverse and ever-changing. Newcomer welcome kits can help families start fresh in a new country. A secondhand laptop or Chromebook can connect a job-seeker with employment to get them back on their feet. Whatever the drive, your donations meet real, human needs — and help people feel supported as they face life's hardest moments.

Let's get creative — your drive can be customized to fit your team and community goals.

EXAMPLES


- Welcome kits for refugees
- Books and literacy kits
- Senior care packages
- Cell phone drive


WHEN TO HOST

Custom by campaign or emerging need — contact United Way to coordinate

NEED HELP? WE'VE GOT YOU.

From ideas to execution, we're here to support your team every step of the way.
Our promise: You bring the heart — we'll help with the how.

 Email: servicehub@myunitedway.ca

 Call: 780-990-1000

Together, let's deliver dignity, one item at a time.

myunitedway.ca

 **DO LOCAL GOOD**



United Way
Alberta Capital Region

