

## **Giving Kitchen's Stability Network Makes Mental Health a Priority for Food Service Workers Non-profit Offers Free Suicide Prevention Training and Other Mental Health Resources**

*September is Suicide Prevention Month. Giving Kitchen offers:*

- [Free QPR Suicide Prevention Training to any food service worker in the United States.](#)
- [Hosted national mental health seminars online in May 2021](#)
- *Offers network of resources to an industry that is statistically proven to suffer from mental health issues*

Giving Kitchen, the James Beard award-winning nonprofit that helps food service workers in crisis, has recently celebrated awarding their 3,000<sup>th</sup> financial assistance package. While the organization has given away nearly five million dollars in financial assistance since 2013, their message is clear: It's not only about the money. "The money awarded is not what makes Giving Kitchen's work special," says GK Executive Director Bryan Schroeder. "We ensure we provide the right support, to the right people, at the right time. Sometimes it's through financial assistance, sometimes it's through referrals via our Stability Network."

Stability Network is a referral program that connects food service workers to low- or no-cost community resources. Referral categories include housing and utilities, health and wellness, employment, and more.

As Giving Kitchen celebrated awarding their 3000<sup>th</sup> financial assistance package in June, they also surpassed their 4500<sup>th</sup> Stability Network client since the nonprofit's inception 8 years ago. That's over 4500 food service workers in 19 states who received at least one referral from GK's Stability Network.

One of the things that makes Giving Kitchen's Stability Network different from other referral programs is the case management team. Stability Network Case Managers work closely with clients to find resources to fit their specific needs, and often provide direct referrals that give GK clients access to services that either aren't available otherwise, or may be significantly more expensive without a referral from GK. Of the requested services, one of the most prevalent – and vital – is mental health care.

In May 2021, GK hosted a month-long campaign called [Mind Matters](#), hosting mindful discussions with industry leaders and mental health professionals in pursuit of destigmatizing mental health conversations. These seminars were broadcast live on Facebook and included topics like self-care, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, substance misuse, and meditation. Giving Kitchen's six seminars (one of which was in Spanish), one panel discussion, and four live dance parties have reached over 10,000 people via GK's Facebook page. From May to April, GK's website saw a 210% increase in Spanish-language food service workers seeking support and a 91% increase in traffic to the [Stability Network page](#).

“Giving Kitchen has always prioritized mental health through our Stability Network,” says Senior Director of Client Services Leah Melnick. “We have partnerships with counseling organizations, treatment centers, and advocacy groups, and we have a multitude of mental health resources available in our resource library and at our [Pop-Up Doc](#) events. Mind Matters is another platform to showcase these resources and make them more accessible to food service workers.”

As part of Mind Matters, GK Co-Founder Jen Hiding-Kendrick led an all-star panel on substance abuse in the restaurant industry with celebrity chef Andrew Zimmern, Patrick Mulvaney of I Got Your Back, Steve Palmer of Ben’s Friends, and Zia Sheikh of Restaurant After Hours.

Chef Andrew Zimmern is a long-time friend of Giving Kitchen, lending his voice in support of GK’s Substance Abuse Recovery Initiative when it launched in late 2020. “Substance abuse is rampant in the restaurant industry, and resources to help employees recover from addiction are very limited,” [says Andrew Zimmern](#), Giving Kitchen partner and Emmy- and four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality and chef. “Giving Kitchen is actively addressing this issue by reinforcing that substance abuse is an illness and making recovery a qualifying crisis for financial support and resource allocation. This is a significant step toward providing the life-changing services that are long overdue and is more important than ever during a time when the industry itself is fighting to survive.”

In addition to case management, GK has launched an updated, searchable library of resources on their website at [givingkitchen.org/stability-network](https://givingkitchen.org/stability-network), where any food service worker can search GK’s database and access resources without direct referrals. This robust library evolved from a list of resources curated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and now boasts a full menu of resources in all Stability Network categories. “While case management is still our bread-and-butter, this library of resources makes it even easier for food service workers to find stability – especially with their mental health,” says Melnick.

Specific financial assistance clients automatically receive mental health referrals depending on their crisis; for example, any client that comes to Giving Kitchen seeking financial assistance after the death of an immediate family member will automatically receive a referral to grief counseling or an equivalent mental health resource.

While financial assistance is currently available to those in recovery in Georgia and Tennessee, any food service worker in the U.S. can receive referrals to substance abuse recovery resources via Stability Network. “Sometimes, financial assistance isn’t what someone needs to survive; they need mental health resources to find stability,” says Senior Stability Network Manager Kaitlynn Mockett.

Food service workers in need of assistance can ask for help from Giving Kitchen at [givingkitchen.org/help](https://givingkitchen.org/help).

Information and resources about mental health have been shared via Giving Kitchen's social media channels and through the Mind Matters webpage, [givingkitchen.org/mindmatters](https://givingkitchen.org/mindmatters), along with recordings of the live panel and seminars. Food service workers nationwide are encouraged to access the resources available on Giving Kitchen's website, [givingkitchen.org](https://givingkitchen.org)

For more information on Giving Kitchen and Mind Matters, [click here](#).

### **About Giving Kitchen**

Giving Kitchen (GK) is a nonprofit organization that provides emergency assistance to food service workers through financial support and a network of community resources. Their goal is to create a food service community where crisis is met with compassion and care. Since its inception, GK has served over 8,000 food service workers. For more about Giving Kitchen, visit [givingkitchen.org](https://givingkitchen.org) and follow @givingkitchen on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Giving Kitchen's vision of creating a community where crisis is met with compassion and care would not be possible without the generous support of the organization's 2021 Annual Corporate Partners: Anheuser-Busch, Eagle Rock Distributing, Empire Communities, Georgia Natural Gas, Global Payments, Liberty House Restaurant Co., Mailchimp, National Distributing Co., Revel Systems, Ruth's Chris Steak House, , Savannah Distributing Co., Sysco, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Up on the Roof, and US Foods.

### **More Information and Resources About GK and Mental Health:**

In 2019, GK began a partnership with the [QPR Institute](#) to provide free suicide prevention training to any food service worker in the U.S. GK has hosted Pop-Up Docs – offering free medical appointments for food service workers. Their [substance abuse recovery initiative](#) launched in late 2020 to provide financial assistance to food service workers in Georgia and Tennessee who undergo inpatient treatment for substance abuse, and to offer referrals for those seeking recovery resources. One of the first clients to receive help as part of this initiative was Will Baber, who doesn't shy away from his story. [Watch Will's Story Here: "My name is Will and I'm an alcoholic."](#)