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# School Cafeteria Share Tables

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A guide to reduce  
food waste at  
schools in Ohio,  
Kentucky, and  
Indiana

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Created by the Green Umbrella  
Waste Reduction Action Team  
and the Greater Cincinnati Food  
Policy Council

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## Introduction

To further the federal goal of reducing wasted food by 50% by 2030, as announced in 2015 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the USDA Food and Nutrition Service has issued guidance urging states to reduce wasted food in school cafeterias by establishing Share Table Programs. In these programs, children can place unconsumed foods and beverages - items that they choose not to eat or drink - on a designated table or in a designated refrigerator. This provides other children the opportunity to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no extra cost. At the end of the meal, some schools collect remaining food to be donated to feeding programs or food pantries.

Share Tables educate our youth that food is a valuable resource and food donation teaches them socially responsible citizenship by assisting those who do not have enough to eat.

Any Share Tables must be in accordance with state and local health department rules and regulations. This document is an effort to educate and promote food sharing and food donation in the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky by providing information on best practices for share tables and guidance from regulatory agencies regarding food safety.

*The Green Umbrella Waste Action Team and The Greater Cincinnati Food Policy Council  
December 2017*

*These guidelines are subject to change in the future, pending further legislation, but are current as of December 2017.*

## Best Practices to Reduce Wasted Food

Taking a proactive approach to food waste reduction at your school can be achieved in multiple ways. Established best practices are outlined below:

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Have recess *before* lunch (proven to [reduce waste](#))
- Extending the lunch period from 20 to 30 minutes ([may reduce waste as much as 1/3](#))
- Offer information about school meals – benefits, fun facts, etc.
- Engage students in learning where the food comes from by nutritional education, on-site gardening, farm tours, etc.
- Participate in food promotion programs (HealthierUS School Challenge, Farm to School, Chefs Move to Schools, Fuel Up to Play 60, Share our Strength, etc.).

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- Allow students to volunteer in the cafeteria where applicable
- Have students offer feedback of the menu through surveys or by hand count

### ATMOSPHERE IN THE CAFETERIA

- Display positive posters, such as student art and nutritious food
- Place compost, recycling, and trash cans at least 5 feet away from dining students
- Represent cleanliness in the cafeteria – cleaning supplies are out of sight, traffic pattern is clear, trash cans are emptied when full, etc.

### FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Offer at least two different types of fruits and vegetables – think variety, hot and cold, etc.
- Offer easy-to-eat fruit like sliced apples and mangoes
- Incorporate vegetables into entrees
- Offer fruit and vegetable tastings throughout the year
- Place suitably-sized tongs at the salad bar – larger for lettuce and smaller for croutons

For more information on smarter lunchroom strategies, click [here!](#) – To test your cafeteria, download the scorecard [here!](#) – To download smart lunchroom meal signs, click [here!](#)

## What is a Share Table?

Share Tables are tables and/or refrigerators designed for children to return safe, unwanted food and beverages so other children are able to access them. A Share Table is an approach to reduce wasted food in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). These additional servings are free to the children *if it complies with local and state health and food safety codes*. Each state has their own guidelines and it is up to the local health department of the school to interpret these guidelines.

### Why is it beneficial?

Americans waste approximately 40% of our food supply each year, meanwhile 1 in 6 children in the Tri-State area is food insecure. Share Tables not only give extra food to children who are still hungry, they help reduce wasted food, and teach students food is a valuable resource<sup>1</sup>.

### What food and beverages are acceptable?

Check with your state and local health department.

### What food safety laws are required?

To ensure compliance with food safety requirements, operators should discuss plans for a Share Table with their local health department prior to implementation. Further, schools must ensure that their policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan<sup>2</sup>.

### What happens to food left on the Share Table?

Schools are encouraged to donate food and beverage items to a non-profit organization. Refer to the [Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs](#) document for additional guidance on food donation and your state and local health department for specific guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Visit [FeedingAmerica.org](http://FeedingAmerica.org) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> Visit [www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/) for more information.

## RESOURCES

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): [The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): [7CFR; Part 210, National School Lunch Program; Part 220, School Breakfast Program; Part 225, Summer Food Service Program; Part 226, Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act:  
[www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf)

USDA: [Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

The remainder of this document will discuss what the Federal government, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky *currently* have as guidance for Share Tables and donation. *Each agenda is unique and is subject to change.*



## Federal Guidelines



United States Department of Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

DATE: June 22, 2016

Park Office  
Center

MEMO CODE: SP 41-2016, CACFP 13-2016, SFSP 15-2016

3101 Park  
Center Drive  
Alexandria  
VA 22302

SUBJECT: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

Using “share tables” is an innovative strategy to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and reduce food waste in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This memorandum provides a reminder of the opportunities presented by share tables, extends the use of share tables to the at-risk afterschool component of the CACFP, and gives an overview of the food safety requirements Child Nutrition Program (CNP) operators must follow when choosing to include share tables in their meal service. CNP operators include school food authorities, local educational agencies (LEAs), CACFP institutions, and SFSP sponsors.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) encourages State agencies to support CNP operators in their efforts to increase consumption of nutritious foods and minimize food waste in their programs. As a reminder, all CNP operators must plan, prepare, and order food with the goal of providing one meal per child at each meal service. If a school, CACFP institution, or SFSP sponsor has leftover or unusable foods on a frequent basis, menu planning and production practices should be adjusted to reduce leftovers or unusable foods.

### Share Table Overview

FNS regulations require participating schools, CACFP institutions, and SFSP sponsors to provide reimbursable meals that meet specific meal pattern requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.10, 220.8, 226.20, and 225.16, respectively. However, FNS recognizes that, for various reasons, children may not always want to consume certain food or beverage items included in their meal. “Share tables” are tables or stations where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, if it is in compliance with local and State health and food safety codes. These food and beverage items are then available to other children who may want additional servings.



Regional Directors  
State Directors  
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Share tables allow food or beverage items to be reused in a number of ways, depending on the Program's preference:

- Children may take an additional helping of a food or beverage item from the share table at no cost;
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service (i.e., during an afterschool program when leftover from a school lunch); and/or
- Food or beverage items may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter or other non-profit charitable organization (see SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2012, SFSP 07-2012, *Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs*, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP11\\_CACFP05\\_SFSP07-2012os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP11_CACFP05_SFSP07-2012os.pdf)).

FNS Instruction 786-6 provides FNS the authority to allow the use of share tables and the recycling of food and beverage items in CNPs. The Instruction allows milk (when the milk carton is unopened and the proper temperature is maintained) and other meal components that are served to be retrieved for re-service if such a practice is permitted under local and State health and food safety codes. The Instruction also states that food or beverage items should only be reused in situations where it is necessary to prevent food waste. It is important to note that when using a share table, CNP operators are able to claim the reimbursable meal at the point of service even if a child then puts one or more of the meal components on the share table. When food items are left on the share table at the end of the meal service, that food can be used in later meals that are claimed for reimbursement.

As always, CNP operators should take steps to encourage consumption of the meal, including preparing appealing meals and serving them in a convenient manner. For example, CNP operators are encouraged to promote meal consumption by including an option of cut up whole fruit to make it easier to eat, and engaging children through taste tests, student advisory committees, and nutrition education. These practices help ensure children get the most out of the food assistance programs.

### **Food Safety Requirements for Share Tables**

As with all foods and beverages prepared for the NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and SFSP, CNP operators choosing to use share tables must follow the food safety requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 220.7, 226.20(l), and 225.16(a), respectively. In addition, CNP operators must be aware of all applicable local and State health and food safety codes to ensure their use of share tables does not violate any of those codes. It is important to keep in mind that local and State health and food safety codes may be more restrictive than the FNS requirements, or may place specific limitations on which food or beverage items may be reused. To ensure compliance with food safety requirements, CNP operators should discuss plans for a share table with their local health department and State agency prior to implementation. Further, schools must ensure that their policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the LEA's Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.





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Please see section 3-306.14 of the 2013 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code for more information about food safety considerations when re-serving food (available at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode/>). In addition, see the attachment for a list of food safety requirements and other best practices to consider when establishing a share table.

### **Other Strategies to Reduce Food Waste**

FNS has additional resources available to Program operators interested in reducing food waste in the CNPs:

- Creative Solutions to Ending School Food Waste: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/creative-solutions-ending-school-food-waste>
- Join the Food Waste Challenge: <http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/join.htm>
- The Smarter Lunchroom Movement: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/>
- SP 41-2014, *Clarification of the Policy on Food Consumption Outside of Foodservice Area*, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP41-2014os.pdf>

State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

**Original Signed**

Angela Kline  
Director, Policy and Program Development Division  
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachment



**Attachment: Share Tables Food Safety Requirements and Other Best Practices**

This resource provides a list of food safety requirements and other best practices to consider when establishing a share table.

<b>Step 1 (REQUIRED): Follow Federal, State, and local health and food safety requirements:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comply with FNS food safety requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 226.20(l), and 225.16(a).</li> <li>Comply with all local and State health and food safety codes, including storage of reused items.</li> <li><u>Schools only</u>: Ensure policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the local educational agency’s Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.</li> </ul>	
<b>Step 2: Establish clear guidelines for food components that may and may not be shared or reused as part of a later reimbursable meal:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Food components FNS recommends sharing:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unopened pre-packaged items, such as a bag of baby carrots or sliced apples stored in a cooling bin.</li> <li>Whole pieces of fruit, such as apples or bananas.</li> <li>Unopened milk, if immediately stored in a cooling bin maintained at 41°F or below.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Food components FNS does not recommend sharing:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unpackaged items, such as a salad bowl without a lid.</li> <li>Packaged items that can be opened and resealed.</li> <li>Open items, such as an opened bag of baby carrots or sliced apples.</li> <li>Perishable foods, when a temperature control mechanism is not in place.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Step 3: If sharing items that require cooling is permissible under local and State laws, establish strict food safety guidelines to prevent the risk of foodborne illness:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain proper temperature (and temperature logs) (<i>41 degrees Fahrenheit or colder</i>) by storing food components in a temperature controlled storage bin, such as an ice tub or cooler.</li> <li>Make note of expiration dates on packaged foods, and do not intermix reused items with items that have not yet been prepared and served yet.</li> <li>Decide how many times a food item can be re-used (recommended just once).</li> </ul>	
<b>Step 4: Supervise the share table at all times to ensure compliance with food safety requirements:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask supervisors to make sure packaging of items placed on the share table is not open, punctured, or otherwise compromised.</li> <li>If cooling bins are used, have supervisors monitor the bin to ensure that time and temperature control requirements are met.</li> <li>Invite children to participate as “share table helpers,” or assistant monitors, teaching them about the importance of food safety and recycling.</li> </ul>	
<b>Step 5: Promote the share table to children and families:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide children and families with information about share table guidelines.</li> <li>Ask for input from parents and guardians, and make sure families are comfortable with their children participating in the share table option.</li> <li>Explain the share table concept to children, taking care to emphasize the importance of healthy eating and trying new foods whenever possible.</li> <li>Display signage outlining share table “rules” and encouraging recycling.</li> </ul>	



## Implementing Share Tables in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) have created guidelines for schools to follow allowing the set-up of Share Tables and donation of what remains at the end of the meal period. These Share Tables must be in accordance with not only the guidelines established by the Ohio Department of Health but also each school district's local health department.

In an effort to reduce the amount of food waste and encourage the consumption of food served, many school food service operations have established Share Tables. Children can place unconsumed food and beverage items that they choose not to eat or drink on the table, providing other children the opportunity to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no extra cost.

Below Ohio's best practices when setting up a Share Table at your school:

1. Food service operations and retail food establishments are advised to contact their local health department to ensure their Share Table plans are in accordance with the [Ohio Uniform Food Safety Health Code](#), the ODH Guidelines (attached) and local health department interpretation.
2. Adults on duty must monitor the share table at all times so that any opened, tainted, or contaminated foods are discarded.
3. All foods on a share table must be in an intact package, excluding peeling-fruits such as oranges and bananas.
4. Time/Temperature Controlled for Safety (TCS) foods are to be kept in preservation with a temperature of 41°F or below - this can be through refrigeration, ice bath, cooler, or another method. If the TCS foods are not kept at 41°F or below, they are to be discarded after three hours.\* The foods or drinks are not to be donated or redistributed after such time.
5. Foods left on the Share Table at the end of the mealtime are available to be donated. This can include commercially pre-packaged TCS foods that have remained intact and held at 41°F or below, and commercially pre-packaged non-TCS foods that have remained intact in their packaging.

*\*The TCS controls listed above may vary for local health departments, be sure to follow your health department's rules.*



**Ohio Department of Agriculture  
 and  
 Ohio Department of Health**



**Governor  
 John R. Kasich**

**Lieutenant Governor  
 Mary Taylor**

**ODA Director  
 David T. Daniels**

**ODH Interim Director  
 Lance Himes**

## Guidance for School Share Tables

To reduce food waste, many schools in Ohio are operating share tables, in which foods that are served to students but not consumed are placed on a table for other students to take at no charge.

Section 3717-1-03.2(X) of the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code states the following:

*After being served or sold and in the possession of a consumer, food that is unused or returned by the consumer may not be offered as food for human consumption; except a container of food that is not time/temperature controlled for safety may be re-served from one consumer to another if:*

- (1) The population served is not as specified in paragraphs (F)(1) and (F)(2) of rule 3717-1-03.7 of the Administrative Code; and*
- (2) The food is dispensed so that it is protected from contamination and the container is closed between uses, such as a narrow-neck bottle containing catsup, steak sauce, or wine; or*
- (3) The food, such as crackers, salt, or pepper, is in an unopened original package and is maintained in sound condition.*

The Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Department of Agriculture provide the following guidance for food service operations (FSOs) and retail food establishments (RFEs) that wish to operate a share table:

1. Except for fruits that require peeling such as bananas or oranges, all foods placed on the share table should be in an intact package.
2. Time/Temperature Controlled for Safety (TCS) foods placed on the share table should be held at 41°F or below by using mechanical refrigeration, ice bath, or other method. If it is not possible to hold TCS foods at 41°F or below: the foods should remain on the table for no more than three hours; the time the foods are held on the table above 41°F should be monitored by staff; and the foods should be discarded after three hours and may not be re-served or donated.
3. The share table should be monitored by staff and any foods that have been opened, punctured, or contaminated or adulterated in any way should be discarded.
4. It is also recommended that any FSO or RFE wishing to operate a share table consult with their local health department to ensure the FSO or RFE complies with the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code.
5. Any foods left on the table at the end of meal service shall not be returned to the FSO or RFE for re-sale or re-service. The following foods left on the share table at the end of meal service may be donated: commercially pre-packaged TCS foods that are in an intact package and have been properly held at 41°F or below, and commercially pre-packaged non-TCS foods that are in an intact package. All other foods left on the table shall be discarded.
6. For food safety information regarding food donations, please refer to the Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs guidance document developed by the Conference for Food Protection:

<http://www.foodprotect.org/media/guide/comprehensive-resource-for-food-recovery-2016-version.pdf>

Update: 6/17



## Implementing Share Tables in Kentucky

The state of Kentucky currently does not provide a local share table guide; instead the document provided by the USDA is followed (as shown on pages 6-9). Historically, the school district's Food Service Director determines if the district will have share tables and the Food Service Manager of each cafeteria is responsible for implementation. Please contact the Northern Kentucky Health Department if you have questions regarding share tables and donation of surplus food.

Schools in Kentucky may also call on bill [HB 237 17 RS](#) for food donation information. The governor signed this bill on March 3, 2017. In summary the bill states:

1. "Donate" means to give to a nonprofit organization without demanding anything of monetary value from the recipient.
2. "Nonprofit organization" operates for religious, charitable, or *educational* purposes and does not provide net earnings or benefits any officer, employee, or shareholder.
3. The person behind the nonprofit organization shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability that may arise from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of the donated fit and wholesome food provided.
4. Liability protection extends to apparently fit and wholesome food bearing a past-date expiration date, sell-by date, use-by date, or other date.

## Implementing Share Tables in Indiana



Michael R. Pence  
Governor

Jerome M. Adams, MD, MPH  
State Health Commissioner

**Date:** December 23, 2015

**To:** All Local Health Departments & Other Indiana Food Regulatory Agencies

**From:** Krista Click, Director *KC*  
Food Protection Program

**Subject:** Guidance on Schools and Other Facilities Implementing “Sharing Tables” and “Food Recovery” Programs Recommended by USDA

### Purpose

This document is provided for awareness and guidance to local health departments (LHDs) and other Indiana food regulatory agencies regarding food safety aspects of “Sharing Tables” and “Food Recovery” in schools and other participants of US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Child Nutrition Program (CNP),  
National School Lunch Program (NSLP),  
School Breakfast Program (SBP),  
Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP), and  
the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

These two food handling concepts have developed through USDA as a means to reduce food waste and to encourage consumption of food being offered.

This guidance covers standards for operations based on Indiana Retail Food Establishment (RFE) Sanitation Requirements, 410 IAC 7-24. Attached are educational handouts created through the Department of Education (DOE) and provided to sponsors in Indiana.

### Background

#### **Sharing Tables:**

USDA defines Sharing Tables as carts and/or tables where a child can place unconsumed food and beverage items that they choose not to eat/drink. Sharing Tables provide an opportunity for other children to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no cost to them for their consumption at school during a meal period.

#### **Food Recovery:**

Surplus food recovered under the above mentioned nutrition programs may be donated to eligible organizations, which are defined as any IRS Code 501 (c)(3) tax exempt food banks or charitable organizations. Protections are extended against civil and criminal liability for persons or organizations when making donations to the extent provided under the “Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act,” found in Section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act and Indiana Code 34-4-12.5, “Immunity from Civil Liability for Gifts of Food to Charitable Entities”. Facilities which may receive these food donations include food banks, food pantries, homeless shelters, and similar not-for-profit organizations.



## Discussion

### Sharing Tables

The safe handling of food in a retail food establishment (RFE) that has been served to one consumer, not consumed, and then re-served to another consumer is provided in section 201 of 410 IAC 7-24. This guidance document, as provided in IC 16-42-5-5, acts to vary this rule section on a statewide basis for facilities operating under the above named USDA programs to enable the re-service of certain potentially hazardous food (PHF) under specified conditions. This will apply only to PHF placed on the table or in the cooler dedicated to the Sharing Table process. Sharing Table PHF cannot be used for later discussed Food Recovery purposes. Any other requirements of 410 IAC 7-24 remain unchanged for these facilities.

Although most Sharing Table operations will only involve the use of a table and/or a refrigerator, LHDs and other Indiana food regulatory agencies may need to be contacted in advance of implementation of these procedures if structural building changes or significant equipment purchase/movement will be involved.

Equipment used in a Sharing Table process may include a table, cart, insulated container, or refrigerator placed at the end of a serving line or nearby. Prepackaged, PHF such as unopened milk, cheese, or yogurt, will be placed on the Sharing Table either directly after purchase or after the buyer is finished with their meal. These items must be consumed or discarded by the end of the meal period and within four hours of service.

Prepackaged, non-PHF will also be placed on the Sharing Table. It may be consumed during the meal period, consumed during later meal periods, or used for Food Recovery purposes when it has been examined by a trained food employee and determined to be in good condition and the package is still intact. A trained food employee could be a food service worker, teacher, adult volunteer, or other adult who has been instructed how to monitor Sharing Table items for product condition, package condition, or contamination.

### Sharing Table Requirements

A school or other participants of USDA nutrition programs operating a Sharing Table must do the following:

- Limit the types of food exchanged at the Sharing Table. Examples of food that may be safely shared include:
  - unopened, pre-packaged PHF, such as milk, wrapped cheese, yogurt;
  - unopened pre-packaged non-PHF, such as crackers, fruit bars, cookies, nuts; and
  - wrapped whole fruits and vegetables/unwrapped whole fruits with an inedible peel, such as bananas or oranges.
- Monitor Sharing Table items by at least 1 food employee trained as mentioned above.
- Assure that PHF items placed on a Sharing Table have been consumed by the end of a meal period (breakfast meal period, lunch meal period) or discarded within four (4) hours beyond serving.

### Food Recovery

Although most Food Recovery operations should involve only the use of currently installed equipment, LHDs and other Indiana food regulatory agencies may be contacted in advance of implementation of Food Recovery if structural building changes or significant equipment purchase/movement will be involved. A school or other participants of USDA nutrition programs are recommended to make advance contact with food donation receiving organization(s) to assure development of a process for safely handling food.



Food Recovery can involve donating food surpluses of:

- packaged/unpackaged, unserved PHF;
- served/unserved non-PHF with packaging in good condition;
- whole, uncut produce;
- wrapped raw produce; and/or
- fruit which will be peeled (bananas, oranges).

*Opened* packages of PHF that have been served to a consumer may not be used for Food Recovery purposes.

*Unopened* packages of PHF placed in a cooler at the end of the serving line, and not taken by another student may be recovered at the end of the lunch period and donated to charitable organizations Food Recovery purposes.

Other PHF/nonPHF recovered for donation must be temperature controlled and handled as otherwise required under 410 IAC 7-24 throughout storage, transport, and while awaiting transport.

### **Conclusion**

USDA seeks to reduce food waste and to encourage consumption of food being offered in schools and by other participants of USDA nutrition programs by promoting the use of Sharing Tables and through Food Recovery.

This guidance varies for these participants on a statewide basis the requirement in 410 IAC 7-24-201, relating to re-service of certain PHF as long as facilities providing Sharing Tables use the criteria stated above. Food Recovery may not involve PHF which has been served to a consumer.

The Indiana Department of Education and/or USDA may have additional requirements not related to food safety.

Food safety questions related to this issue may be directed to the ISDH Food Protection Program at 317-234-8569.



## SHARING TABLES

- The Indiana State Department of Health and Indiana Department of Education have collaborated on guidance for implementing sharing tables at school.
- In an effort to reduce the amount of food waste and encourage the consumption of food served, many school food service operations have established sharing tables. Children can place unconsumed food and beverage items that they choose not to eat or drink on the table, providing other children the opportunity to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no extra cost.

### Basics

- Before implementing a sharing table, make sure to discuss these plans with your local health department.
- Figure out the location of the sharing table - ideally the table should be close to the cashier or wherever students exit the food service line.
- The sharing table must be monitored by any employee other than the cashier.
- Students can share unopened milk, cheese sticks, and other food or beverages that must be under temperature control if time is used as a public health control and the food is shared within 4 hours.
- Food or beverages sold cannot be collected for resale. Recovered food and beverages should be clearly labeled in a container or box marked food recovery or recovered food for donation and not mixed with unsold foods.

### Food Safety

- Students are allowed to drop off their unwanted food on the sharing table or in the designated fridge/coolers at any point during the lunch service. However only temperature controlled food dropped off immediately after leaving the serving line can be donated to food recovery groups.
- The monitor should identify any food, beverage, or condiment to make sure it has not been contaminated (e.g. opened, partially consumed, etc.) and the original packaging is in sound condition.
- If not donating leftovers, discard sharing table items at the end of the last meal service, or within 4 hours of service.
- Students may not be allowed to donate items brought from home.
- Develop a Standard Operating Plan (SOP) in the school's Food Safety HACCP Plan.

### Allowable Products

- Non-temperature controlled pre-packaged products like food bars, drinks, crackers and cereal packs.
- Wrapped fruit and vegetables or fruit with a thick skin, like bananas and oranges.
- Temperature controlled pre-packaged products like cheese and milk as long as they are placed in a cooler, refrigerator or ice bath or are consumed within the same lunch period (no more than 4 hours).

### Best Practices

- If the school is not already implementing Offer vs. Serve, this will be the best way to combat excess waste on trays.
- Contact the State or your Field Consultant to learn more about the requirements of Offer vs. Serve.
- Other ways to minimize food waste include:
  - Program marketing
  - Increasing food choices
  - Changing food presentation
  - Allowing appropriate time for meals
  - Implementing recess before lunch

## FOOD RECOVERY

- The Indiana State Department of Health and Indiana Department of Education have collaborated on guidance for implementing food recovery at school.
- As long as schools are planning and preparing meals with the intent to serve one reimbursable meal per child per day, schools that occasionally have unexpected meal or food surpluses may donate the leftover foods to food banks, food pantries, homeless shelters, and similar non-profit charitable organizations.

### Basics

- Before starting any food recovery program, make sure to discuss these plans with your local health department.
- Connect with local non-profit charitable organizations and discuss the best methods for food recovery.
- Develop a system for freezing, labeling the food in a container or box as "recovered food for donation" and storing the prepared food separate from food that will be served to students.
- Figure out how the food will arrive at the organization. Will volunteers pick up the food once a week? Set up the right time and day that works best for the cafeteria managers and kitchen staff.

### Food Safety

- Only food that has not been served or in an unopened original package and is maintained in sound condition can be donated.
- Allowable products include pre-packaged products (food bars, drinks, crackers, etc.), wrapped fruit and vegetables or fruit with a thick skin (bananas and oranges), and temperature controlled pre-packaged products like cheese and milk as long as they are placed in a cooler, refrigerator, or ice bath.
- Food that is contaminated by food employees, consumers, or other persons through contact with soiled hands, bodily discharges, or other means shall be discarded.
- All potentially donated food must be stored separately in a container or box labeled, "recovered for food donation" and dated.
- Develop a Standard Operating Plan (SOP) in the school's Food Safety HACCP Plan.

### Liability

- Protected for liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, found in section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act and Indiana Code 34-4-12.5 "Immunity from Civil Liability for Gifts of Food to Charitable Entities."
- Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) provides clear statutory authority for current Food and Nutrition Service food recovery and donation policy in use by schools and institutions participating in the Child Nutrition Programs, NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and SFSP.

### Best Practices

- Proper menu planning, utilizing production records, and implementing offer versus serve are the best tools to prevent excess leftovers. Contact the State or your Field Consultant to learn more.
- When possible, use leftovers in subsequent meal services, offer sharing tables or transfer food to other sites.
- Use a tracking log to monitor how much food is recovered from each school. This is another way to monitor student acceptability and make changes to future production.

### Resources

- [www.usda.gov/documents/usda\\_gleaning\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf)
- <http://infohouse.p2ric.org/ref/40/39580.pdf>
- [www.foodrescue.net](http://www.foodrescue.net)
- [http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/resources/K12\\_schools.html](http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/resources/K12_schools.html)

