

HELPING SCHOOLS SAVE FOOD: Donate Before Holiday Breaks



Under state law SB 1383, schools and local education agencies are now required to donate surplus edible food to non-profit organizations to reduce waste and address food insecurity. Acknowledging the challenges that this new requirement may pose, one of a district's first steps to initiating a school food donation program is collaborating with a non-profit organization who will accept the surplus edible food donations.

Before holiday breaks, schools often end up with a surplus of food as their kitchens clear out their inventory. By planning a donation during this time, schools can test their procedures and evaluate the compatibility of their chosen non-profit partner. This opportunity brings schools closer to complying with the law, cuts costs, reduces food waste, and helps those in need.

This guide helps schools consider how to initiate a food donation program that recovers surplus food just before school closures.

Results from Holiday Food Donation Pilots:

School Closure	One School in FUSD	LVJUSD	OUSD
Thanksgiving Break	271 lbs	4,032 lbs	1,688 lbs
Winter Break	263 lbs	860 lbs	No Data
Spring Break	236 lbs	185 lbs	730 lbs
Summer Break	230 lbs	345 lbs	985 lbs



Thanks to the **Fremont, Livermore Valley Joint and Oakland Unified School Districts** for piloting the best practices shared in this guide, and to the **Alameda County Department of Environmental Health** for providing valuable guidance.

Steps for Donating Food Before Holiday Breaks

1. Assess Surplus Edible Food

Begin by conducting a comprehensive assessment of surplus edible food in your school kitchens, in collaboration with Child Nutrition Services. Some key questions include:

- What types of surplus edible food are expected to be generated? Can all the surplus edible food be safely stored for donation?
- Are there prevention practices the Nutrition Services department can implement to prevent surplus from being generated in the first place?

2. Identify Pilot Sites

Select specific school sites within your district where the pilot program will be implemented. Consider factors like the size of the kitchen, the volume of surplus food, accessibility of kitchen, and the availability of staff to manage the program.

If you plan to coordinate a donation at the district level, consider consolidating surpluses at your district warehouse or other location that will store the food safely until pickup can be arranged. Most food recovery organizations prefer to pick up from a single location, and are more likely to partner if this can be worked out.

3. Identify Non-Profit Food Recovery Partner

Public schools must donate to organizations that are 501c3 non-profits, per the California Department of Education. Ensure that your chosen partner has the capacity and infrastructure to handle food donations, including proper storage and transportation. Request that the selected non-profit(s) enters into a written agreement with the school district to comply with the edible food recovery component of SB 1383.

Find a local food recovery partner here:

www.resource.stopwaste.org/food-recovery-organizations

Learn more about the donation requirements for local education agencies at:

www.StopWaste.org/donate-surplus-food

TIP: Food recovery organizations may not have room to store large donations right before major holidays but will have space immediately afterwards. It can be a big help if districts are flexible with scheduling pickup dates.

For example, the Livermore Joint Valley Unified School District scheduled a donation for December 28th, during winter break, at the request of their recovery partner. The partner was able to make room for 21 cases of milk because the district could store the donation for a few additional days.

4. Trial Run

Conduct a trial run of the program shortly before a holiday break, as this is an ideal time to assess its feasibility and identify any potential challenges. Ensure that food is kept within safe food handling parameters by following the California Retail Food Code.

5. Keep Track of Donations

To ensure compliance with SB 1383, it is required for the school district to track the quantity in pounds and types of food donated to the non-profit food recovery partner, on a monthly basis.

6. Evaluate, Adjust & Share Successes

After the trial run, evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Gather feedback from school staff and the non-profit partner to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments. Determine what prevention practices can be implemented in the future to reduce the amount of surplus before the next school break.



Food Share Stations in cafeterias can help capture unwanted and still sealed food items to be served again or donated.