MCPS Food Recovery Program

Sustainability & Compliance Team
8301 Turkey Thicket Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20879
Phone: 240-740-3210 Email: Recycling@mcpsmd.org



Purpose:	The Food Recovery Program reduces food waste in schools while addressing student hunger. It allows students to return unopened or whole food items from school meals for redistribution within the school. "Food insecurity — even marginal food insecurity — is detrimental to children's health, development, and well-being." - American Academy of Pediatrics.
Core Objectives:	• **Educational Opportunities:** Educate students about the issues of food waste and food insecurity. • **Reduce Hunger:** Redirect safe, consumable food within the school or to hunger relief organizations. • **Waste Reduction:** Minimize the environmental impacts and financial costs of wasted food.
Implementation Steps:	• Schedule a kick-off meeting with the Sustainability and Compliance Team. • Review Food Recovery Requirements. • Submit a Food Recovery Program plan. • Educate students and staff (assemblies, training, announcements). • Collaborate with the Sustainability and Compliance Team staff to establish food recovery infrastructure. • Review the acceptable and unacceptable food recovery list
Infrastructure Provided :	**Mini-Refrigerators:** ◦ These are essential for storing surplus food that needs to be held at or under 41°F. **Food Safe Cart:** ◦ Food-safe carts facilitate the transportation of recovered food within the school premises. **Posters:** ◦ Posters can serve as visual reminders to encourage students and staff to participate in food recovery and to learn about its importance. **PSA (Public Service Announcement):** ◦ PSAs can be broadcasted through various school channels, such as morning announcements, newsletters, or social media platforms, to share essential program details
Federal Laws and Guidance:	• Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act – Liability protection for good-faith donations. • National School Lunch Act – Affirms protections for schools donating food. • USDA Guidance (SP 41-2014) – Encourages food consumption outside food service areas to reduce waste.
Education & Engagement:	• PSA • Lesson Plans and Education Videos • Downloadable posters

To begin a Food Recovery Program, please contact the Sustainability and Compliance Team, via email: recycling@mcpsmd.org or call: 240-740-3210.

Food Recovery Program Requirements

****Please submit the Food Recovery Program Plan to the Sustainability and Compliance Team before starting the program.****

Building Service Staff:
Will be responsible for emptying and cleaning the food recovery refrigerator every Friday after 5 pm or as needed. All food from the previous week should be disposed of.

Lunch Staff:
Should help monitor the share cart and food recovery refrigerator to ensure all items placed are allowed, the packaging is intact, and tampering is not detected.

Food Recovery Coordinators: Will work with the Sustainability and Compliance Team to complete the following:

1. Fill out the Food Recovery Plan and obtain the principal's signature.
2. Receive a refrigerator and cart from the Sustainability and Compliance Team.
3. Inform lunchroom staff of the food recovery program and its rules before the program's start date. The Sustainability and Compliance Team will be available to meet with cafeteria staff to explain program expectations and procedures.
4. Schedule a lunchtime food recovery kickoff assembly by Sustainability and Compliance Team staff or student volunteers.
5. After all lunch periods are completed, student volunteers or school staff should move the share cart and items that do not need temperature control to a central location (like outside the cafeteria or main office), where students who may be food shy can participate outside the view of their peers. Recovered food can also be used for after-school activities and daycares.
6. The Food Recovery Coordinator will be responsible for recruiting student volunteers to conduct audits of the program once a quarter (3 times a school year). The Sustainability and Compliance Team will provide the coordinator with instructions and a Google form to record the students' findings.
7. Will be responsible for recording the food recovery refrigerator's temperatures every day before lunch. (The temperature must remain below 41°F.)

Additional reminders:

- Staff may not consume items from the share cart or refrigerator until the school week has ended.
- In the event of a fridge failure, the Building Service Supervisor or Food Recovery Coordinators must dispose of all food and inform the Sustainability and Compliance Team.
- Unopened, prepackaged perishable food items (such as string cheese or milk) must be immediately stored in a temperature controlled refrigerator at 41°F or colder.
- Food recovery refrigerators' summer storage procedures

For questions, please contact:

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Eligible Items for Food Sharing

ACCEPTABLE FOOD ITEMS



Sealed Sandwich Bags





Unopened Water or Milk







Unopened Applesauce or Yogurt





Bagged Fruit and Vegetables







Whole Fruit Pieces



Unopened Bagged Items



Sealed String Cheese

UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS







Condiments





Black Tray Meals





Anything open or not sealed





Anything in a bag from home



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[Click to download 3-5 Educator Toolkit]



[Click to download 6-6 Educator Toolkit]



[Click to download 9-12 Educator Toolkit]





Videos:

- Food Waste Explained
- What is Food Waste?
- Food Waste: The Hidden Cost of the Food We Throw Out,
- Exploring Maryland Food - Conquering Food Waste



SUMMER STORAGE PROCEDURES *for* FOOD RECOVERY REFRIGERATORS

Following these steps helps keep our refrigerators clean, safe, and ready for **next school year.**

01 **REMOVE ALL FOOD ITEMS**
Take out all food and properly dispose of donations.

02 **UNPLUG THE REFRIGERATOR**
For safety and to conserve energy, disconnect the refrigerator from the power source.

03 **THOROUGHLY CLEAN AND SANITIZE**
Wipe down all interior and exterior surfaces using approved cleaner and sanitizer.

04 **DRY COMPLETELY**
Ensure all surfaces are completely dry before closing.

05 **LEAVE DOORS SLIGHTLY OPEN**
Helps prevent moisture buildup and odors.

06 **STORE TEMPERATURE LOGS AND MATERIALS**
Remove and securely store temperature logs and any other materials.

07 **INSPECT FOR DAMAGE**
Check for any damage or issues and report if needed.

Thank you!

Thank you for helping maintain the MCPS Food Recovery Program and supporting **sustainability** efforts throughout the school year!

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Contact John Meyer
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240-740-3210