



**To:** National School Lunch Program Sponsors

**From:** Brigette Hires, Administrator, Office of Nutrition

**Date:** July 28, 2025

**Re:** Policy on Leftover Food and Share Tables in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

## **Introduction**

This policy provides guidance on the use of share tables in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to minimize food waste and increase the consumption of nutritious foods. Share tables are designated areas where children can place NSLP/SBP whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, which can then be taken by other children.

## **Policy**

### **1. Eligibility and Compliance**

- All schools participating in National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) institutions, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors must comply with local and State health and food safety codes when implementing share tables.
- Share tables must be used in accordance with the food safety requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 220.7, 226.20(I), and 225.16(a).

### **2. Usage Guidelines**

- Share Table food is not for adult consumption.
- Children may take an additional helping of a food or beverage item from the share table at no cost.
- Share Table food items are for consumption in a congregate setting during mealtime, not for another time or snack during the school day.
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be returned to inventory and served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service (e.g., breakfast or lunch the next day).
- In no instance can school staff store food for later use or take home leftover items.

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) donated food may never be sold, given away, or traded.
- Staff must monitor the share table for compliance with all regulations regarding food safety and usage.

### **3. Food Donation**

- Program food not consumed may be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations, which are exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)).
- Schools must adjust menu planning and production practices to reduce leftovers if they have leftover or unusable foods on a frequent basis.

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