

DATE: January 2010

TO: School Food Authority Administrators and Food Service Managers

FROM: Christine Emerson, Director
School Nutrition Programs

SUBJECT: Food Recovery and Gleaning

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) supports food recovery and gleaning efforts to reduce food waste and provide usable food to assist charitable organizations. This includes recovery of foods leftover in the school meals programs. While school food authorities are required to prepare and maintain food production records to control production, sometimes events overtake good plans, and excess food is produced. School food directors/managers should plan production for one meal per child per day, but forecasting the amount of food to prepare may sometimes result in leftover food. There are occasions when it is appropriate to donate leftovers, which cannot be reused, to nonprofit organizations that feed the needy.

Overproduction or increased food costs, in order to be charitable, is not advocated by the USDA. Whenever possible, leftovers should be served the next day or frozen for another day. However, there are certain circumstances that could result in your inability to retain food items. For example, a power failure or snowstorm prior to a long school vacation period may result in the inability to hold food safely. When donating food, be sure that the transfer is in accordance with state and local sanitation and health codes, and that correct sanitation procedures are followed to ensure the food quality and safety of the food throughout the transportation process.

School food authorities are encouraged to become aware of food recovery efforts in their area. Recovery programs have been instrumental in instilling the importance of volunteerism in today's youth. These programs encourage students to volunteer and work together with school administrators and school food service directors to rescue and deliver unused food from cafeterias to agencies that feed the hungry. You can learn about one of the successful programs based on Long Island called "Rock and Wrap it Up" by accessing its web site at www.rockandwrapitup.org.

If you have questions, please contact School Nutrition Programs at (406) 444-2501.