

CARE TO SHARE

TOOLKIT



RESCUING FOOD WASTE IN OUR SCHOOLS:
Support food insecurity initiatives and learn
how to start a food waste rescue program!



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WELCOME! AND THANK YOU!

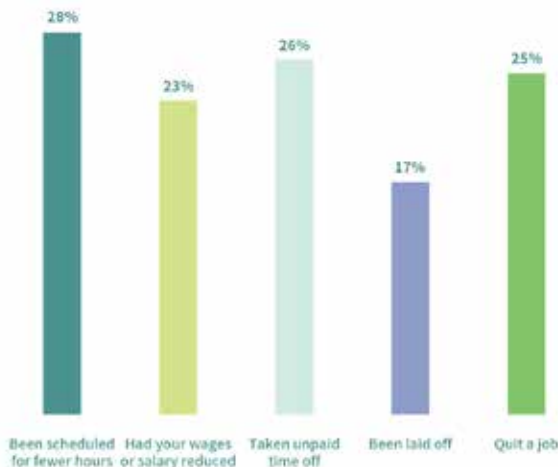
Welcome to the Care To Share Toolkit! We are so excited that you are interested in starting a similar program in your school! According to the Capital Area Food Bank’s 2022 Hunger Report, the prevalence of food insecurity among Fairfax County households with children is 41%! And as of October 31, 2021, approximately 31% of students in FCPS qualified for free and reduced-price meals.

And what exactly does that mean?

According to the USDA, “food insecurity means that households were, at times, unable to acquire adequate food for one or more household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food.” In the United States in 2019 (prior to the pandemic), 10.5% of households were food insecure. This problem has dramatically increased in the face of the pandemic, as illustrated here:

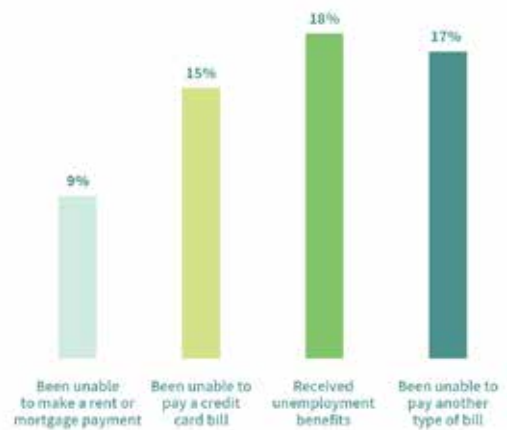
Question: At any point since March 1, 2020, have you or has someone in your household experienced each of the following because of the coronavirus pandemic, or not?

Employment impacts of the pandemic on Fairfax County residents



Question: Since March 1, 2020, have you or has someone in your household experienced each of the following or not?

Financial impacts of the pandemic on Fairfax County residents



Source: Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted February 4—March 2, 2022 with 3,769 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area

So needless to say, we need your help!



HISTORY OF THE CARE TO SHARE PROGRAM

The Care To Share program was started in two elementary schools in Springfield, Virginia in 2019, by a mom who saw something that bothered her and took action! She was substitute teaching and noticed the amount of food that was being thrown away when she picked her class up from the cafeteria. She kept thinking “someone needs to do something about all of this food waste!” And then continued to think, “why is no one addressing this?” She then attended a community meeting that was being held in the cafeteria of a different school and as she was sitting there, she noticed that this school had a basket and refrigerator dedicated to collecting food. She opened the refrigerator out of curiosity and saw it full of milks, bananas, and carrots. That night staring into the refrigerator she figured out that the answer to “who is going to do something about this food waste?” was HER. And thus, Care To Share was born!

The program was paused during the height of the pandemic, when all schooling was virtual, and meals weren’t being served in the school buildings.

As students began to go back to the physical school buildings, the Principals were approached about restarting the program. Some of the protocols and procedures needed to be tweaked to be COVID-19 friendly.

RESEARCH BEFORE GETTING STARTED

TIP

The research phase of the Care To Share program is extremely important and should not be skipped. The amount of preparation will directly affect the effectiveness of the program.

Before you approach school administration, [identify the percentage of the school's student population that is food insecure](#). This will be important to share with the administration and anyone else from who you are looking for support. Check out the FCPS Get2Green [website](#) to find the latest food sharing guidance, learn about additional ways to reduce waste at your school, and discover the schools that have self-reported having a food sharing program in the Get2Green [Inventory Data](#).

Ask around to find out if there has ever been any kind of food rescue at the school in the past. Many programs never restarted when students returned to school after the height of the pandemic. Jumping off an existing program will be easier than starting from scratch, so if you have the opportunity to restart a dormant program, investigate what was going on previously.

Investigate who your food insecurity champions are. In some cases this may be the PTA, the school nurse, the cafeteria staff, clubs (Environmental, Key, etc.), or other parents. Support from the Principal and Vice Principal is vital. You may want to designate a Food Coordinator or committee as champions. To assure the program is sustainable from year to year, it will be very helpful to have the Coordinator be directly linked to an ongoing position. For example, a school may name its PTA President as the Coordinator, regardless of the year or the person.

Decide where donations will be taken. Take into account the proximity of the drop-off location to the school and ease of donation (are there specific hours that food can be donated?). Does this school or a school that is close by have a food pantry? Refer to the Resources section of this toolkit for some options.

Set up a dedicated email address for this effort. Decide who will monitor this email box. This email box will be the contact point for people to volunteer to pick up/drop off food, ask questions, and send the inventory afterwards.

Decide if you are going to recover perishable and/or non-perishable food. You will need designated locations in the school for each. See the [Physical Considerations](#) section of this toolkit for more details.



ENLISTING THE TROOPS

This is not a solo program, nor should it rely on the manpower of a single person. Build your team!

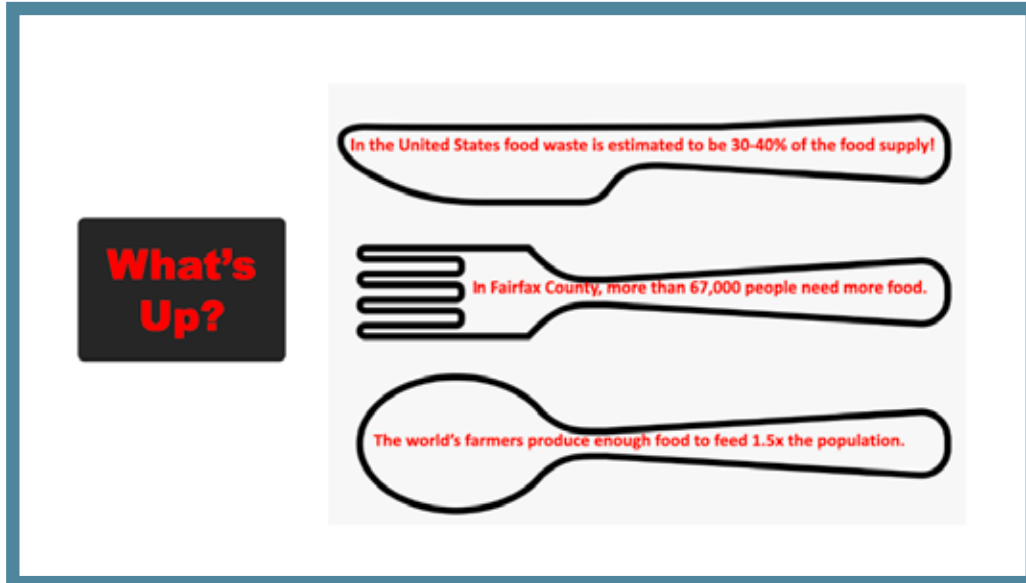
TIP

Educate the students why this is important. One successful technique is to create a PowerPoint that can either be shown on the Morning News or each teacher can share with their class. For the *younger grades*, it's helpful to frame it as being a "Community Helper," as that's part of their curriculum. For example:

A graphic with two columns of text and illustrations. The left column has the text "Do you know any Community Helpers?" above a group of colorful cartoon characters representing various professions like a firefighter, police officer, chef, and construction worker. The right column has the text "What about YOU?" above a hand pointing, and "Could YOU be a Community Helper?" below it.

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For the *older grades*, it's ok to surprise them with some hard facts about how prevalent food insecurity is in Fairfax County. For example:



Make sure to give explicit instructions on what food is being collected. For example:



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Find a way to recruit volunteers to pick up the recovered food from the school and drive it to the donation location. PTA meetings/newsletters/websites/Facebook groups, school newsletters, and the Morning News are all good options. Think about how parents are most likely to receive information and tap into that. Schools that utilize Parent Liaisons may also be helpful.

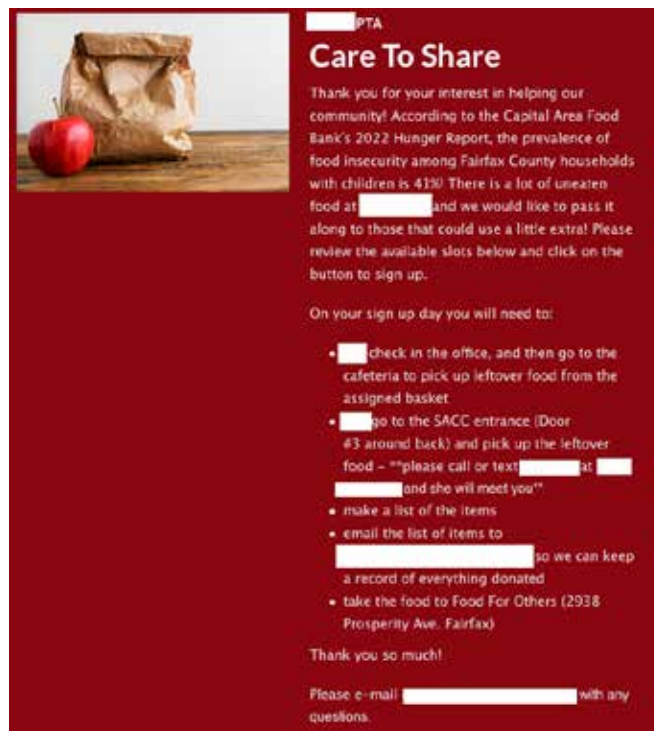
TIP

Keep in mind that certain grades require Service Hours for graduation. This could be a valuable resource.

Set-up a [SignUpGenius](#) that can be linked to on the newsletter, Facebook page, etc. Make sure to include all pertinent information, such as:

1. Steps/procedure to pick up the food at the school (Do they need to sign into the office? Is there a specific person to find? Is there more than one place in the school they need to check – for example, the cafeteria and the SACC room?)
2. Where to send the inventory of items (the dedicated email address)
3. The address of where to take the food and anything special about the location (for example: “please go around to the side loading dock and ask for Joe”)
4. Preferred pick up/drop off day of the week and time
5. Where to direct questions or last-minute cancellations (the dedicated email address)

Here is an example of a [SignUpGenius](#):



The screenshot shows a SignUpGenius form titled "Care To Share" for a PTA. It includes a photo of a brown paper bag and a red apple. The text explains the purpose of the form: to help the community by donating leftover food from the school cafeteria. It provides instructions on how to sign up, including where to pick up the food (SACC entrance) and where to take it (Food For Others). The form also includes a list of items to bring and a contact email for questions.

PTA

Care To Share

Thank you for your interest in helping our community! According to the Capital Area Food Bank's 2022 Hunger Report, the prevalence of food insecurity among Fairfax County households with children is 41%. There is a lot of uneaten food at [redacted] and we would like to pass it along to those that could use a little extra! Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up.

On your sign up day you will need to:

- [redacted] check in the office, and then go to the cafeteria to pick up leftover food from the assigned basket.
- [redacted] go to the SACC entrance (Door #3 around back) and pick up the leftover food – “please call or text [redacted] at [redacted] and she will meet you!”
- make a list of the items
- email the list of items to [redacted] so we can keep a record of everything donated
- take the food to Food For Others (2938 Prosperity Ave. Fairfax)

Thank you so much!

Please e-mail [redacted] with any questions.

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Approach student groups. For example, perhaps the student leadership (SGA), environmental clubs, or other student volunteers would like to be involved. Student energy can be very helpful – not only in manpower, but in talking about it with friends, parents, etc. An enthusiastic student is a force to be reckoned with!

Complete the standard [Fairfax County Public Schools Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) with the place that will receive the donations (unless it is a pantry within the school itself). Please note that there are some circumstances, such as a new principal, that require a new MOU.

PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are some practical physical considerations to think about before you begin. Is there a place in the cafeteria where donations can be collected? Baskets or bins with bright signage are a great way to grab attention. Here are some examples:



Please note that if a basket is utilized for perishable foods, someone will need to move these foods to the refrigerator after every lunch period. This may be a great way to utilize Key Club members, students needing Service Hours, etc.

TIP

Consider where the nonperishable items will be stored. Will they remain in the basket until donations are picked up once/week? Or are they going to be stored elsewhere?



LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are some logistical considerations to think through before launching your program. You will need to tailor it to what works for your school situation, and what your Principal/Assistant Principal prefer.

TIP

Determine if donations need to be transported within the school. For example, if the donations are going to the Food Pantry within the school, could student volunteers rotate to pick them up from the cafeteria and take them to the Food Pantry? If the storage location [until a volunteer transports to the donation location] of the food is not in the cafeteria, can a cafeteria monitor move the foods to that location after each lunch period?

The Food Coordinator should send a reminder email a few days before the pick-up/drop off day. The email should include answers to most frequently asked questions and/or refer the person back to the SignUpGenius for answers, in addition to a reminder to email a list of items donated. The Food Coordinator should encourage the volunteer to notify them if they find themselves unable to do the pick-up/drop off.

The Food Coordinator should check the email address frequently for cancellations, last minute questions, and to make sure the inventory of items donated is received. It's helpful to keep a folder in the email box for all emailed inventories.

RESOURCES

In Fairfax County we are very lucky to have a wide variety of resources at our fingertips! Because Fairfax County is so large, you should check out what is closest to your school, as this will make the most sense to support your mission and make it easier for everyone involved. Here are some ideas (but not a comprehensive list) grouped by FCPS region. But you can look outside your region too! For example, your school might be right next to one of these resources, but technically a different school region.

REGION 1

- [Cornerstones](#)
- [Helping Hungry Kids](#)
- [LINK Against Hunger](#)

REGION 2

- [Food For Others](#)
- [Columbia Baptist Church, Spend Yourself Pantry](#)

REGION 3

- [Lorton Community Action Center](#)
- [United Community](#)
- [Rising Hope](#)

REGION 4

- [Western Fairfax Christian Ministries](#)
- [Ecumenical Community Helping Others \(ECHO\)](#)

REGION 5

- [Western Fairfax Christian Ministries](#)
- [FACETS](#)
- [Britepaths](#)



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QUESTIONS?

Still have some unanswered questions? Please reach out to the Fairfax Food Council at: fairfaxfoodcouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov

This Toolkit is a response to the component of the Healthy Eating priority of the Live Healthy Fairfax 2019-2023 Community Health Improvement Plan - to develop a protocol for school lunch donations.



To request this information in an alternate format, contact the Fairfax County Health Department 703-246-2411 TTY 711. A Fairfax County, Va., publication. October 2022.