

Food Drive

Guide



*A Simple Guide to Organizing
a Food Drive for PTAs*



2025



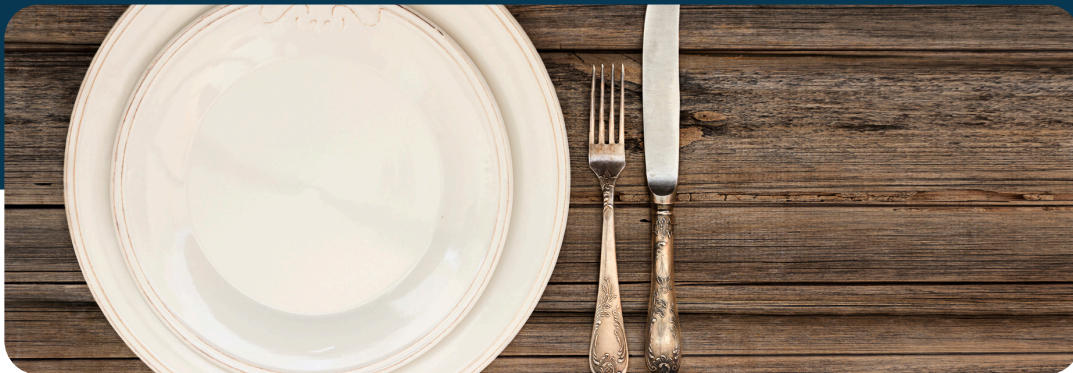
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Why Host a Food Drive

Hosting a food drive is a powerful way for PTAs to support students and families in their own community. Many children rely on school meals as a primary source of nutrition, and when food insecurity affects a household, it can impact a child's ability to focus, learn, and thrive. By organizing a food drive, PTAs help ensure that no student goes hungry, especially during weekends or school breaks. Beyond meeting immediate needs, food drives also teach students compassion, community responsibility, and the importance of helping others—values that strengthen both the school and the wider community.



Food Insecurity Statistics

- In 2023, about 13.5% of U.S. households (approximately 1 in 7) experienced food insecurity, meaning they lacked consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.*
- Among households with children under age 18, the rate was higher: around 17.9% in 2023 (about 6.5 million households) experienced food insecurity at some point during the year.*
- More than 13.8 million children lived in food-insecure households in 2023 — this includes nearly 2 million children under age 3.**
- For children younger than three years old, 17.1% nationally lived in food-insecure households in 2023, with higher rates among some racial and ethnic groups (e.g., ~25.9% for Black children, ~22.4% for Hispanic children).**

*Household food security in the United States in 2023 (Report No. ERR-337). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

**Nearly 2 Million Young Children in the U.S. Lived in Food-Insecure Households in 2023, Center on Budget & Policy Priorities

Planning Your Food Drive

To ensure a successful food drive, it is important to have a strong plan that considers the needs of your community and collects the most needed items to support the food access organizations already serving your neighbors.

Food Drive Timeline



HOW TO CHOOSE AN ORGANIZATION

Start by identifying local food banks, pantries, or community centers that directly serve families in your school district. Look for organizations with clear distribution processes and a strong reputation for supporting children and families. Reach out to learn about their specific needs, donation guidelines, and preferred collection times. Choose a partner organization that best aligns with what your school community can provide and that directly serves the needs of your families.



Communicate with the Organization

Once you've selected a partner, maintain open communication from start to finish. Confirm what types of food are most helpful, whether they can provide collection bins, and how donations should be packaged and delivered. Discuss timing—both for your drive and for when the organization can receive donations—and clarify who your main contact will be. Clear coordination helps avoid confusion and makes the process smooth for everyone involved.



Questions to Ask Your Partner Organization

- What types of food or items are most needed right now?
- Are there any items you cannot accept?
- What is your intake process like and how can we prepare our donations to make it easier for your team?
- Are there specific cultural or dietary preferences we can support through our food drive?
- Can you provide collection bins, boxes, or promotional materials?
- How should we deliver the donations once the drive ends or do you offer pickup?
- Who will be our main point of contact?
- Can you provide feedback or data on how our donations helped?

Determine the Details

Now that you have gathered all the relevant information, it is time to decide exactly how you will conduct the food drive. Work through the checklist below and write out your plan.

- ✓ Who will be on the food drive committee and who will be its chairperson?
- ✓ Will you partner with other groups or businesses?
- ✓ Determine the start date and duration of the drive (usually 1-2 weeks)
- ✓ Decide if you will collect food AND money, or just food.
- ✓ Identify collection location(s)
- ✓ Secure a collection method - medium sized boxes are ideal as they can be easily transported. Consider contacting a local grocery store and ask them to donate extra produce boxes.
- ✓ Determine how the collected items will get to the organization.
- ✓ Set a goal. This could be pounds of food, number of items, or containers filled.



Encourage Healthy Donations

Encourage donations that are low in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar, such as canned beans, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Providing healthy options helps families access nutritious foods, supports long-term well-being, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

Promote Your Drive



Now that all the details are finalized, it's time to start promoting your food drive. Share the upcoming event with your school community, families, neighbors, colleagues, and other potential participants to encourage widespread involvement.



Effective communication is key to a successful drive. Use multiple channels to reach your audience and provide regular reminders to keep participation high.

Promote, Promote, Promote!

In addition to the promotion ideas below, consider adding classroom challenges or themed days to make the drive fun, engaging, and memorable for everyone.



School Newsletters



Social Media



Morning Announcements



Paper & Electronic Flyers



Posters



Emails

Collect & Manage Donations

When your food drive officially begins, focus on making participation simple, visible, and rewarding. A well-organized collection process encourages more people to get involved and helps maintain enthusiasm throughout the event. Make sure everyone knows where, when, and how to donate, and provide clear reminders during the collection period.



Ways to Encourage Participation

Be sure and keep all participants informed of the goal and the progress that has been made. This can be done through signage in high-traffic areas, announcements in meetings and newsletters, or email blasts. This will keep participants motivated to continue donating.

Consider running an event in conjunction with your food drive. You could offer reduced admission, or substitute canned goods for cost of admission.



After the Food Drive



Deliver the Donations

Transport the collected food to your partner organization based on the delivery method agreed upon in advance. Confirm that all items meet their donation guidelines.



Clean Up the Collection Site

Remove bins, signage, and leftover materials, leaving the space clean and ready for regular use.



Share the Results

Create a short summary or press release highlighting the success of your food drive—include total donations, photos, and the impact on the community. Share it through newsletters, social media, and local news outlets.



Reflect and Take Notes

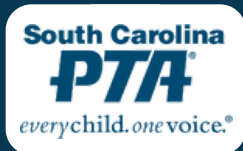
Record what worked well and what could be improved for next time. Gather feedback from volunteers and your partner organization to strengthen future drives.



Celebrate Your Success

Take pride in your accomplishments! Your efforts helped provide food and hope to families in need and strengthened your community through compassion and teamwork.





Thank Donors & Community Partners

After the food drive concludes, take time to celebrate your success and recognize everyone who contributed to making it possible. Express sincere appreciation to families, students, teachers, staff, and community partners who donated time, food, or resources. Gratitude goes a long way in building lasting relationships and encouraging future participation.

Share your results widely through school newsletters, social media, morning announcements, or PTA meetings. Include photos, total pounds of food collected, and where the donations will go to help families understand the tangible impact of their generosity. Highlight student involvement whenever possible—seeing their efforts recognized reinforces the value of community service and teamwork.

Finally, personally thank your partner organization for their collaboration and support. A thoughtful note or certificate of appreciation can help strengthen this partnership for future drives. Celebrating the collective effort not only honors those who gave but also inspires others to join in next time.

Need additional ideas or support?

Contact us!



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