**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**

**Sharing Tables/Redistribution of Food**

The Georgia Department of Education and Georgia Department of Public Health have collaborated on this SOP for implementing sharing tables at schools. “Sharing tables” are tables or stations where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, if it is in compliance with local and State health and food safety codes. These food and beverage items are then available to other children who may want additional servings.

**Purpose:** To provide guidance on food items approved for redistribution in the cafeteria setting while maintaining food safety protocols to prevent the risk of a foodborne illness.

**Scope:** Procedure applies to school food authorities in Georgia that allow approved foods to be returned to a “share table” and utilized for redistribution.

**Instructions:**

Georgia Retail Food Establishment Rules and Regulations (511-6-1) states: "Re-service" means the transfer of food that is unused and returned by a consumer after being served or sold and in the possession of the consumer, to another person.

511-6-1-.04 (4) (x) Returned Food and Re-Service of Food

1. Except as specified in 2 of this subsection, after being served or sold and in the possession of a consumer, food that is unused or returned by the consumer may not be offered as food for human consumption.
2. Except for food served to patients or clients who are under contact precautions or protective environment isolation in a facility serving a highly susceptible population, a container of food that is not potentially hazardous (time/temperature control for safety food) may be re-served from one consumer to another if:
   (i) The food is dispensed so that it is protected from contamination and the container is closed between uses, such as a narrow-neck bottle containing catsup or steak sauce; or
   (ii) The food, such as crackers, salt, or pepper, is in an unopened original package and is maintained in sound condition.

USDA Regulation 7 CFR 210.9 (14)

Each school food authority (SFA) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) agrees to “Maintain, in the storage, preparation and service of food, proper sanitation and health standards in conformance with all applicable State and local laws and regulations, and comply with the food safety requirements of 7 CFR 210.13.”
Foods and Beverages **Allowed** for Redistribution:

- Non-temperature controlled pre-packaged products can be redistributed as long as the packaging is intact and completely sealed. Examples include crackers, cereal bowl packs, breakfast bars.
- Washed and wrapped whole fresh fruit with edible peels (such as apples, pears, and plums) as long as the wrapping is intact and completely sealed. Whole fresh fruit with inedible peels (such as oranges and bananas) as long as peels are completely intact and in sound condition.
- Individual cartons of commercially processed fruit juice that does not require temperature control for safety as long as the cartons are unopened and intact.

Foods and Beverages **Not Allowed** for Redistribution:

- Any unpackaged foods, open items, or items in packages that are not intact and completely sealed.
- Any food or beverage that requires time/temperature control for safety (TCS). Examples include milk, cut fresh fruit, salads.

**Best Practices for Share Tables**

- Before instituting share table practices, consult with your local health inspector to ensure compliance with local and State food safety regulations.
- Offer Versus Serve (OVS) helps reduce food waste by permitting students to decline foods they do not intend to eat. If your school does not utilize OVS, consider this option as a way to combat avoidable food waste. For more information about OVS, consult your Area Consultant.
- If share tables conflict with school policies and procedures, such as those pertaining to food allergies, obtain school board approval.
- Share table items must be monitored to ensure no expired foods/beverages are approved for redistribution.
- Signage should be posted informing students of the intent of the share table.
- Students are prohibited from donating items brought from home.

**Monitoring:**

A supervisor or other designated employee must visually observe to ensure that food from the share table or any returned food approved for redistribution is being handled and redistributed correctly.

**Corrective Action:**

Retrain any food service employee not in compliance with the procedures for redistribution of returned foods/share tables. Do not redistribute any food items that have been handled improperly. Ensure all food set aside for redistribution meets proper food safety guidelines and has been approved by your local health department.

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Verification and Record Keeping:

School nutrition program personnel in conjunction with the local health department will identify what foods can be safely shared or set aside for redistribution. Participation status will be documented annually upon which time a list of allowable menu items will be reviewed and revised, if necessary. The supervisor or other designated employee will verify that proper procedures for handling returned food are being followed. All corrective actions will be documented and records will be retained for a minimum of six months.

Food/Beverage Menu Items Approved for Redistribution (Sharing Tables)

| DATE IMPLEMENTED: | ____________________ | BY: ________________________________ |
| DATE REVIEWED: | ___________________ | BY: ________________________________ |
| DATE REVISED: | ____________________ | BY: ________________________________ |