A FIELD-READY FOOD SAFETY RESOURCE / NOVEMBER 2026

Safe Food Donation Program Starter Kit

Practical templates for foodservice teams to screen, store, label, document and transfer surplus food safely.

What is inside

01 SETUP	Assign an owner, partner, and equipment readiness checks
02 ACCEPTANCE	Decide whether a specific batch is eligible to donate
03 TEMPERATURES	Record cooling, storage and handoff checks
04 LABELS	Print or adapt a donation label with allergen fields
05 HANDOFF	Document transportation, receipt and chain of custody
06 EXCEPTIONS	Capture corrective action, holds and rejected food

Core FDA Food Code temperature reference

COLD-HOLD TCS FOOD	HOT-HOLD TCS FOOD	COOL COOKED TCS FOOD
41°F or below	135°F or above	135°F to 70°F within 2 h; then to 41°F within 6 h total

Start here: Use one Batch ID on the acceptance checklist, temperature log, label and transfer record. Review local requirements and recipient acceptance standards before using these templates.

Designed for restaurants, hospitals, schools, government and institutional kitchens, caterers, and charitable food-recovery partners.

This is an Aldevra operational template, not an FDA-issued form, regulatory approval, or substitute for a facility-specific food safety program.

01 Set up your donation process

Complete once per facility and update when your receiving partner, procedures, or equipment change.

Facility / location: _____

Person in charge (PIC): _____

Donation partner / receiving organization: _____

Partner contact / phone: _____

Transport provider / method: _____

Donation days and cutoff times: _____

Local regulatory authority / reference: _____

Procedure effective / last reviewed: _____

Daily five-step workflow

1 SCREEN	Use the acceptance checklist. Reject food with unresolved safety concerns.
2 CONTROL	Verify correct holding/cooling, storage, sanitation and transportation capacity.
3 LABEL	Identify food, dates, ingredients/allergens, storage method and Batch ID.
4 TRANSFER	Measure at handoff; record who took the food, when and how it traveled.
5 FILE	Retain records under your facility policy; review deviations and recalls.

Prelaunch equipment check

CHECK	EQUIPMENT / CAPABILITY	READY / NOTES
[ ]	Refrigeration / freezer capacity	_____
[ ]	Rapid cooling method (if needed)	_____
[ ]	Hot-holding capacity (if needed)	_____
[ ]	Calibrated probe thermometer	_____
[ ]	Food-grade containers, seals and labels	_____
[ ]	Temperature-safe transport equipment	_____
[ ]	Sanitary workspace and handwashing	_____

Train all employees and volunteers handling donated foods on illness reporting, hand hygiene, contamination prevention, allergens, temperature controls, rejection criteria and recordkeeping. Follow the approved facility procedures, not this form alone.

02 Donation acceptance checklist

Complete for EACH batch or lot BEFORE offering it for pickup.

Batch ID	Date / time	Reviewed by
_____	_____	_____
Food item / description	Quantity / units	Intended recipient
_____	_____	_____

Food source: [ ] Unserved prepared food [ ] Original sealed package [ ] Fresh produce [ ] Other: _____

Check each requirement

ITEM / SCREENING QUESTION	PASS	FAIL	N/A
1. Food type is permitted by local rules and the recipient.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Food has been protected from consumer contact and contamination.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. No spoilage, adulteration, recall, or known safety concern.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Packaging is intact, suitable, and protected from contamination.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Ingredients / major allergens are known and communicated.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Required cold / hot holding was maintained and verified.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. Any cooked-and-chilled food has an acceptable cooling record.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. Product dates, identity and storage instructions are correct.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Food has been held separately from chemicals / cross-contact risks.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10. Receiving partner and transport can safely handle this item.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Decision

[ ] APPROVED FOR DONATION [ ] HOLD / PIC REVIEW [ ] REJECTED - DO NOT DONATE

Reason / limitations / follow-up: _____

PIC authorization / date / time: _____

Any FAIL must be resolved under an approved procedure before approval. Unknown prior temperature history, unsafe cooling, undeclared allergens or recalled/spoiled food are not automatically made safe by re-chilling or reheating.

03 Temperature and cooling log

Use a calibrated probe for food temperatures; record actual readings and times.

Batch ID	Food item	Cold / hot / shelf-stable
_____	_____	_____

A. Cooling cooked TCS food / complete only if cooling

Standard cooling reference: 135°F → 70°F within 2 hours; 135°F → 41°F within 6 hours total.

MILESTONE	ACTUAL DATE / TIME	FOOD TEMP °F	INITIALS
Time food reached 135°F	_____	_____	_____
Check at / before 2 h; 70°F or lower	_____	_____	_____
Check at / before 6 h total; 41°F or lower	_____	_____	_____

[ ] Cooling not applicable [ ] Milestones met [ ] Deviation - food placed on HOLD

Cooling method / equipment used: _____

B. Holding, pickup and receipt

CHECKPOINT	DATE / TIME	FOOD TEMP °F	STAFF / NOTES
Storage / holding	_____	_____	_____
Before packout	_____	_____	_____
At donor handoff	_____	_____	_____
On recipient receipt*	_____	_____	_____
Other check	_____	_____	_____

*Recipient should document receiving measurements and acceptance according to its procedures. For non-TCS items, record N/A and the basis for classification.

C. Temperature decision and corrective action

[ ] Meets facility / local requirements [ ] Hold and escalate [ ] Rejected

Explanation / corrective action record reference: _____

Reviewed by / date: _____

Food Code model holding limits: cold TCS ≤41°F; hot TCS ≥135°F, subject to specific exceptions. If a cooling milestone or holding requirement is missed, stop the donation and have the PIC apply documented disposition rules. Do not assume one acceptable final reading proves the entire handling history.

04 Food donation labels

Print, copy or modify the label below for each separately packed item. Use the same Batch ID as the logs.

Use full ingredient and allergen information where required; preserve original labels on unopened packaged foods. A donation label does not automatically satisfy every packaged-food labeling law.

FOOD DONATION LABEL / A

FOOD NAME _____

BATCH ID _____ QUANTITY / UNITS _____

PREPARED / PACKAGED _____ DISCARD / USE BY* _____

INGREDIENTS _____

_____

CONTAINS (MAJOR ALLERGENS) _____

STORAGE / HANDLING [ ] Keep at 41°F or below [ ] Keep at 135°F or above [ ] Other: _____

DONOR FACILITY / PHONE _____

Cut or copy along label edges as needed.

FOOD DONATION LABEL / B

FOOD NAME _____

BATCH ID _____ QUANTITY / UNITS _____

PREPARED / PACKAGED _____ DISCARD / USE BY* _____

INGREDIENTS _____

_____

CONTAINS (MAJOR ALLERGENS) _____

STORAGE / HANDLING [ ] Keep at 41°F or below [ ] Keep at 135°F or above [ ] Other: _____

DONOR FACILITY / PHONE _____

*Determine required date marking and any shorter manufacturer/use-by limits. FDA-model date marking for certain refrigerated, ready-to-eat TCS foods applies when held longer than 24 hours; a maximum of seven days at 41°F or below may apply with exceptions. The preparation day is Day 1.

Nine major U.S. allergens: milk, egg, fish, Crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans and sesame. Identify the applicable allergens accurately; do not use a generic "allergen-free" claim without support.

05 Pickup and transfer record

Complete together at handoff. Receiving partners should record their own acceptance and receipt temperatures.

Transfer / pickup ID: _____

Date / departure time: _____

Donating facility / address: _____

Receiving organization / delivery address: _____

Transporter / vehicle or carrier ID: _____

Items transferred

BATCH ID / FOOD	QTY	REQUIRED CONDITION	HANDOFF °F	RECEIPT °F	ACCEPT ?
_____	____	_____	_____	_____	Y / N
_____	____	_____	_____	_____	Y / N
_____	____	_____	_____	_____	Y / N
_____	____	_____	_____	_____	Y / N
_____	____	_____	_____	_____	Y / N

Write N/A for shelf-stable foods when appropriate. Record product temperatures, not only air temperatures. Attach additional sheets for large loads.

Transport confirmation

[ ] Clean vehicle / protected load [ ] Hot/cold holding method appropriate for route

[ ] Packaging and labels intact [ ] Pickup and arrival times recorded

Departure time: _____

Arrival / receipt time: _____

Known delays or temperature concerns: _____

Acknowledgement

Donor staff name / signature: _____

Carrier name / signature: _____

Recipient name / signature: _____

Recipient disposition: [ ] Accepted all [ ] Accepted with exclusions documented below [ ] Refused

Items rejected / reason / next step: _____

This form records custody and observations; it does not override the receiving organization's acceptance criteria or create proof that food remained at safe temperatures throughout the entire trip.

06 Exceptions, holds and corrective actions

Use when food, packaging, temperature, transportation or labeling does not meet the approved program requirements.

Incident ID	Batch ID(s)	Detected / time / by
_____	_____	_____

Issue type: [ ] Temperature [ ] Cooling [ ] Allergen / labeling [ ] Packaging
[ ] Contamination [ ] Recall [ ] Transport failure [ ] Other

What happened / measured facts: _____

How long / temperature history known? _____

Immediate containment action / who notified: _____

Food disposition / basis for decision: _____

Corrective / preventive action assigned: _____

PIC review / authorization / date: _____

Pre-pickup equipment and hygiene walk-through

CHECK	CONFIRMATION
[ ]	Refrigeration / hot holding operating within required limits
[ ]	Food temperature probes available, clean and calibrated
[ ]	Storage and packaging areas clean; cross-contamination controlled
[ ]	Containers sealed; labels legible with applicable allergen information
[ ]	Insulated / active transport appropriate for trip length and ambient conditions
[ ]	Staff healthy, trained and following hand hygiene procedures
[ ]	Recipient confirmed pickup and ability to maintain temperature on arrival

Completed by: _____ Date / time: _____

When safety cannot be substantiated, do not donate. Keep affected food segregated while the PIC determines disposition. Do not use reheating or re-chilling as an automatic correction for improper temperature control.

07 Manager reference and sources

A short reference for staff training, procedure review and equipment planning.

Operating limits and reminders

TOPIC	FDA MODEL / OPERATIONAL REMINDER
Food donation	Food Code §3-204.10 permits donation of food handled and labeled in accordance with applicable law.
Cold / hot holding	TCS cold holding generally 41°F or below; hot holding generally 135°F or above, with specific exceptions.
Cooked-food cooling	Cool from 135°F to 70°F within 2 h, and to 41°F or below within 6 h total.
Other cooling methods	2026 Code includes an alternative method only when specifically approved and subject to detailed conditions.
Date marking	For certain ready-to-eat refrigerated TCS food held >24 h: maximum 7 d at ≤41°F, subject to exceptions. Day prepared = Day 1.
Allergens / original packaging	Identify applicable major allergens and preserve labels on unopened packaged foods.
Recordkeeping	Track food identity, storage, temperatures, carrier, recipient, date and corrective actions.

Primary references

FDA Food Code 2026 (Ch. 3, especially §§3-204.10 and 3-501.14–3-501.17)

FDA: Key Steps for Donating Food - For Retail Food Establishments

FDA: Food Allergies and the Nine Major Food Allergens

Equipment checklist for program expansion

Depending on your program: blast chillers, commercial refrigeration, temperature monitoring and alarms, hot holding, insulated carriers, calibrated thermometers, sanitary containers, labeling supplies and stainless worktables.

Equipment guidance:
www.aldevra.com | shop.aldevra.com

IMPORTANT: The 2026 FDA Food Code is a model; adoption varies. Apply current state/local food codes, recipient policies, manufacturer instructions and any more restrictive requirements. Adapt this kit to your operation. It is not legal advice, a HACCP plan, or a substitute for regulatory approval.

Prepared by Aldevra • Commercial kitchen equipment & support • November 2026