

# Community Fridges in Schools – Recommendations for Use

Community fridges in a school setting can be a valuable resource for providing nutritious food to students and staff, helping to ensure that everyone has access to healthy food without needing to ask for assistance. Implementing these recommendations will help maintain the community fridge's functionality and hygiene, ensuring it continues to serve the school community effectively.

The location of the fridge should be determined based on operational goals set out by the school. Consider the potential risk for food contamination versus the benefits of higher use in secluded areas. It should be conveniently located for staff to monitor its operation, use and restocking needs. Evaluate the effectiveness of the community fridge and adjust operations based on feedback.

## 1. **Temperature Monitoring**

- Ensure the fridge operates at or below 4°C at the start of each day.
- Monitor and record the fridge temperature at least twice daily on a dated log sheet. Best practice is to check the temperature at start of school day and end of school day.
- If the temperature exceeds 4°C, notify the program head and follow food safety protocols immediately.

## 2. **Stock Management**

- Use the First In, First Out (FIFO) method to stock the fridge, ensuring older items are used before newer ones.
- Check fridge daily and discard food that has spoiled, expired, or is no longer fit to eat.
- Recommend food items be purchased or received prepackaged and labelled.
- For foods made onsite (e.g., in school cafeteria), wrap and label with name of item, ingredients and note any known allergens.
- Include a “best before” or “packaged on” date on each product.
- For fridges that have minimal variety of food items, staff may choose to post on the fridge what items are available with their ingredients/allergens listed.
- Do not accept food from unapproved sources. Please follow your Food Safety for School Food Programs document on food donations.

## 3. **Packaging**

- Individually package all food items/meals to prevent contamination, using single-use disposable packaging such as take-out containers, plastic wrap, and paper bags.
- Whole produce does not need packaging.
- Reusable dishware with plastic wrap may be use if the facility is equipped with dishwashing equipment.

## 4. **Fridge Maintenance**

- Regularly inspect the door hinges and rails to ensure the doors close easily after use.
- Clean the fridge according to the school's cleaning schedule and check daily for spills, addressing them as needed.
- High-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles) should be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- Place a sign on the door reminding users to close it after use.
- Providing a hand sanitizer station near the fridge is a good idea.

# School Fridge Tips

This fridge is for **EVERYONE**. No questions asked.

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- Ensure your hands are clean before using the fridge.
  - Take only what you need.
  - Take food from the front.
  - Do not put food back in the fridge once it is taken.
  - Fully close the fridge door after use.
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