

# HOSPITAL FOOD RECOVERY PROGRAMS FOCUS ON FOOD WASTE PROBLEM WHILE HELPING THE NEEDY

A number of Southern California hospitals are taking action to help solve America's food waste problem by offering food recovery programs that assist the needy and impoverished.

In 2016, Kaiser Permanente launched its Southern California Food Redistribution Initiative. As of today, 12 of its 15 hospitals are actively participating. The program began in 1989 when Kaiser's Riverside facility first partnered with a local charity to feed those in need.

John Yamamoto, vice president of community health and government relations for Kaiser Permanente Southern California, said food rescue partnerships provide a simple solution that has a multipronged impact. "We are trying to extract the most value from the day-to-day function of serving food in order to address a community need, be good environmental stewards and reduce waste in our operations, which allows us to improve affordability for our patients," he said.

Kaiser Permanente measures its community impact through pounds of food donated, carbon dioxide emissions prevention, and number of meals provided.

## KAISER PERMANENTE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOOD REDISTRIBUTION INITIATIVE RESULTS

Food Recovered	Meals Served	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Prevented
2017 = 74,892 LBS	2017 = 62,410	2017 = 40,666 LBS
2018 = 72,559 LBS	2018 = 60,466	2018 = 39,400 LBS

Kaiser Permanente's food recovery program partners with local food rescue organizations. The Food Services Director at each campus acts as lead contact and is responsible for developing and coordinating a food pickup schedule, which can vary from daily pickup to a couple of days per week.

Employees support the program knowing the positive difference their work will have in increasing food access for those who are homeless or simply cannot afford a healthy nutritious meal.



## FAST FACTS

### NATIONAL

42 million people in the US are food insecure  
An estimated 40 percent of food is wasted in the United States

### CALIFORNIA

4.9 million Californians are food insecure  
12 billion pounds of food waste are disposed in CA landfills each year

### WASTED FOOD CONSUMES:

- 21% of all fresh water
- 18% of crop land
- 19% of all fertilizer
- 21% of all landfill volume



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Hospitals can simultaneously realize a financial savings by participating in a food recovery program. Specifically, reduced food waste can result in a hospital spending less on disposal fees to haul away food that is otherwise safe for consumption but can no longer be served or sold within a hospital.

“Simply put, it’s the right thing to do, with fewer barriers than most realize,” said Justin Joe, director of community health improvement with Providence Health & Services’ Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Torrance.

Two of Providence’s six hospitals are fully participating in food recovery and redistribution programs, with the rest of its facilities at varying stages of readiness and scaling up quickly.

Concerns about liability issues have created unnecessary barriers to program participation. In fact, both Congress and the California Legislature have enacted legislation that protect food donors from potential civil and criminal liability.

A hospital can partner with a local nonprofit organization or locate a third-party nonprofit food rescue organization that will pick up and deliver food to other agencies.

Both Kaiser Permanente and Providence have partnered with Food Finders, a multi-regional food bank and food rescue program headquartered in Lakewood.

On pickup days, a volunteer from Food Finders or a representative from the recipient agency picks up donations from the medical facilities and drives them directly to the agency. To curtail the program’s carbon footprint and foster connections within communities, food travels no more than a few miles.

Brief transportation times also help ensure that food remains at a safe temperature. Donations are covered and refrigerated prior to pickup and are either served immediately or refrigerated on arrival. Food Finders uses its own refrigerated trucks for larger deliveries.

Once delivered, agencies have the pleasure of serving fresh minestrone or lasagna to guests. And food service workers in the medical facilities, who would otherwise have disposed of this food, know that they have contributed to the health of their local community.

*For additional information about Communities Lifting Communities, contact Karen Ochoa, CLC Project Manager, at (213) 538-0765 or [kochoa@hasc.org](mailto:kochoa@hasc.org).*



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**COMMUNITIES LIFTING COMMUNITIES**

co-hosted a webinar about food waste, and edible food recovery.

A recording is available at:  
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/6111977729435730434>

