

# COVID-19 FOOD SAFETY TIP SHEET

## for School Food Service Professionals

Each district and school will need to come up with its own individual plan given the number of students and floor plans, and the same consideration will be necessary regarding food service. The building layout, including that of the kitchen and cafeteria, will be a key factor in determining your food service plan.

Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. As always, before preparing or eating food it is important to wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds for general food safety. Throughout the day, wash your hands when changing tasks, working raw meats, handling cash, taking out trash, after coughing or sneezing into your hand, blowing your nose, or going to the bathroom.



### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### Reduce Transmission Among Employees

- Designate a person who is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices. Consider drafting non-punitive emergency sick leave policies if sick leave is not offered to some or all employees. Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
- Provide information on who to contact if employees become sick. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Clean, sanitize, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as kitchen countertops, cafeteria and service tables, door knobs, drawer pulls, cart handles, and serving trays, throughout the day.
  - This should include entrances, employee breakrooms, rest areas, and other common areas, focusing on surfaces and objects that are touched by multiple people.
- Have written processes and train staff on proper cleaning procedures to ensure safe and correct use of disinfectants. Staff should follow the directions on the cleaning product's label and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Follow all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and public health agency guidelines.

#### Legionella and Legionnaires' disease

Stagnant or standing water in a plumbing system can increase the risk for growth and spread of Legionella and other biofilm-associated bacteria. When water is stagnant, hot water temperatures can decrease to the Legionella growth range (77–108°F, 25–42°C). Stagnant water can also lead to low or undetectable levels of disinfectant, such as chlorine. Ensure that your water system is safe to use after a prolonged shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water.



# Maintain a Healthy Cafeteria Environment

## Back of House

Implement measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees, volunteers, other and coworkers, such as:

- Plan menus, production, and food preparation schedules to allow employees to maintain the recommended social distance of 6 feet while working when possible.
- Use painter's tape or other easy to remove label to mark 6-foot workstations (boxes or stripes on the floor) in the kitchen, food service, and food delivery points where interactions with students or their families occur, if possible.
- Move as many activities as possible, like bagging or assembly, out of cramped kitchens and into unused spaces like the cafeteria or gym.
- Have one individual responsible for each task or workstation.
- Limit how many people need to access shared spaces like storage areas or equipment like refrigerators.
- Deliver needed items to each workstation rather than handing them off personally.

Investigate menu and meal options for unitized and grab-and-go meals along with disposable containers and utensils. When possible, select clear containers so that students may make choices as appropriate.

Purchase pre-portioned, individual foods when possible or pre-portion items from bulk such as fruits and vegetables.

Implement Offer Versus Serve with grab-and-go options, when feasible.

Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces and counters regularly. (Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces, food preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after use.)

Ensure sufficient stock of single-service and single-use articles (e.g. tableware, carryout utensils, bread wrappers, and plastic wrap) are available.

If not, ensure that all reusable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.

Employees should wash their hands after removing their gloves and after directly handling used food service items.

Ensure that paper towels and trash cans available in the bathrooms so doors can be opened and closed without touching handles directly.

Consider using hand sanitizers that are 60% alcohol and menthol-free, in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene by both customers and employees to supplement hand washing.

## Front of House

Institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees, volunteers, and customers:

- Signage reminding individuals to maintain at least 6 feet from one another
- Fun, school mascot-themed floor stickers showing students where to stand in line to be 6 feet apart
- If students are eating in the cafeteria, move the seating and/or block off seating to maintain social distancing practices.

Access to Drinking Water:

- If not already closed, consider closing any water fountains.
- Have dedicated staff pour water from pitchers into disposable cups upon request or provide reasonably priced water bottles or pouches.

Remove high touch self-service containers and items requiring frequent hand contact (e.g., condiments such as ketchup bottles and salt/pepper shakers, placemats)

Consider switching to a touchless student identification system (i.e. scannable barcodes), if possible.

If this is not possible, require students to use hand sanitizer prior to inputting their pin number.





# Non-Congregate Food Delivery Methods

**Curbside Pickup, Grab and Go, Meals in the Classroom, Home Delivery, Cafeteria Pickup or Mobile Meal Services**

Be sure to post or send home food safety instructions for storing meals or meal components as needed.

- Keep hot food hot—at or above 140 °F. Place cooked food in chafing dishes, preheated steam tables, warming trays or cabinets, and/or slow cookers.
- Keep cold food cold—at or below 40 °F. Place food in containers on ice or ice packs.
- Label foods for refrigeration and list foods that will need to be reheated with cooking instructions.
- Sorting foods into two different bags prior to distribution—one for refrigerated foods and another for shelf-stable foods.



## Food Allergy Considerations

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a **temporary policy** regarding certain food labeling requirements during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

### Back of House

SFAs serving students with food allergies should consider reaching out to food manufacturers to determine if labeling of allergens has been affected and where the most current source of food allergy information will be located.

### Front of House

Eating in the classroom has been posed as a potential solution for maintaining social distancing during mealtimes. Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) recommends the following steps be taken in any classroom with a food allergic child:

- Enforce handwashing with soap and water after food contact
- Disinfecting of surfaces after food contact is made
- A blanket “do not share” food policy

Soap and water are preferable to alcohol-based sanitizer as the latter has been proven to not remove allergenic proteins from the hand.



## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- › CDC- What School Nutrition Professionals and Volunteers at Schools Need to Know about COVID-19
- › CDC Food Safety
- › FDA Best Practices for Re-Opening Retail Food Establishments During the COVID-19 Pandemic—Food Safety Checklist
- › FDA Provides Temporary Flexibility Regarding Nutrition Labeling of Certain Packaged Food in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- › Kentucky DOE- COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools: Food Service Operations—USDA School Meal Programs
- › FARE, Allergy Groups Send Letter to CDC Asking for Adapted School Guidelines (with regards to students with allergies)
- › Distribution of School Meals During COVID-19 Quarantine: Suggested Best Practices for Food Service Personnel
- › Seamless Summer Option: Providing Multiple Meals at a Time During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic
- › <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>



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