

# MEAL SERVING OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS WHEN RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Due to concerns of spreading COVID-19, each school needs to have a plan to feed students while minimizing exposure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people maintain a 6 foot of separation to practice **social distancing**. The Michigan Department of Education has gathered the following guidance. [Local health departments](#) should be contacted to ensure compliance with local rules and regulations and for additional guidance.

There are many items to consider when deciding **how to serve** and **where to eat meals** this fall. The State of Michigan requires lunch and breakfast be served as stated in the [Michigan Revised School Code Act 451 of 1976, Section 380.1272a](#)

This information was gathered from a group of food service directors around the state and is intended for use in creating a safe plan for feeding students. When considering feeding students this fall you should also **consider the risk level of your community**. <https://www.mistartmap.info/>

## POS Consideration:

Using current POS system is encouraged to increase accuracy of counting and claiming and to minimize overt identification

### General Guidelines from CDC to consider when planning for the fall:

- CDC does not recommend using a communal dining hall or cafeteria.
- CDC recommends meals in the classroom
- CDC recommends individual plated meals

## Menu Considerations for all service models

- Write menus that are sustainable within the supply chain.
- Allow menu choices to keep up participation, but limit options to simplify food preparation.
- Pre-packaged, grab and go or bagged meals may help to speed up serving.
- Portability of menu items—including spilling.
- Consider a hot meal and a cold sack lunch option.
- Offer a 'sides' bag with fruit and milk ready to go and a hot vegetable on the line.
- Keep emergency menu on hand for unanticipated shut down.
- Minimize self-service options by serving food directly to students.
- Your food distributor or consortia may have a sample menu cycle available.
- Cost out the menu to make sure it is feasible to maintain.
- Expect higher menu cost with additional packaging needed.
- Pre-Ordered meals through web-based system, so kids or parents could order and then come to cafeteria for pick up.

## Safety Precautions for all service models

- If cards are used, they need to be cleaned daily and handled by cashier with gloves and returned in a sanitary way back to teacher.
- If keypad is used, it needs to be cleaned between groups.
- May use roster in laminated sheets, cashier scans student name as they come through the line.
- Mark floor with signage to space students in line and direct traffic flow through cafeteria and/or hallway. (See resources for examples for ordering and options)
- Limit sharing of utensils, tools and equipment by staff members.
- **Avoid student self-service stations and salad bars.**
- Common table for condiments and cutlery is discouraged.
- Share tables should not be used.
- Use disposable utensils and dishes for student use.
- Encourage use of individually wrapped food items as feasible and available.
- Create written procedures for new processes and update HACCP Plan.
- Promote online free/reduced applications and direct deposits into meal accounts.

Covid-19 Food Safety Resources: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/COVID-19\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Resources\\_Web\\_Page\\_Document\\_693639\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/COVID-19_Food_Safety_Resources_Web_Page_Document_693639_7.pdf)

## Financial Considerations

- Increased food cost due to individually wrapped items and packaging.
- Decreased participation and revenue is likely.
- Increased labor costs due to higher staffing needs (lower meals per labor hour).
- Consider working with other directors for consolidating purchases and maximizing consortia membership.

### Communication

- If serving plans change contact distributor, consortia and MDE.
- Establish email chain with all pertinent people for quick communication.
- Develop a communication plan for staff and parents when food service changes occur.

### A La Carte

- Consider eliminating a la carte for elementary students to increase speed of service.
- Limit options at secondary schools to increase speed of service and reduce cash exchanges.

# Consider When Serving in the Cafeteria

## Mealtimes

- Establish multiple meal periods to minimize number of students in the serving area at one time but may still need an adult to manage the number of students at a time.
- Dismiss students by classroom to get meal and then return to classroom to eat.
- Stagger meal periods to allow students to get their food and leave—may be every 5 to 10 minutes.

## Staffing

- Extra staff may be needed since self-service bars are no longer recommended
- Monitoring may be needed in the cafeteria to ensure students remain distanced
- Follow normal food safety and personal hygiene procedures

## Pre-ordering meals

- Online ordering system may be used to help increase speed of service
  - INSERT RESOURCES

## Food

- No buffet type or self-service is recommended
- If self-service is used, items should be individually wrapped

## Equipment

- Stanchions to direct students to maintain social distance while in line
  - Insert resource
- Floor graphics to assist with social distancing
  - Insert resources
- Plexi glass divider at cashier station
- Ability to have cashless system
- Hand sanitizer at beginning of line

## Keeping students with [food allergies safe](#)

- Continue with current protocols to keep students safe

## Waivers submitted – (waiting for USDA Approval)

- Waiver request so that potable water is only required when lunch is eaten in the cafeteria
- Mealtime waiver to allow meals served outside of 10 AM-2 PM for social distancing or take-home meals

# Consider When Serving in the Classroom

## Mealtimes

- Set up meal delivery schedule with set mealtimes for each classroom
- Stagger mealtimes to allow for student handwashing break prior to delivery time
- May work best in elementary schools or smaller secondary schools

## Staffing

- Establish who will deliver meals to classrooms or if they will be picked up
  - Students/Teachers/FS Workers/Para Pro's
- Create a trash collection plan
- Counting/claiming will be done in the classroom and staff will need to be trained on procedures, including [Civil Rights](#)

## Ordering meals

- Accurate order system in place to have the correct number of meals for each classroom
  - Insert resources
- System for late students to order meal
- Consider “milk only” students when establishing order system

## Food

- No buffet type service, food encouraged to be individually packaged
- Transporting hot food and maintaining food safety protocols once food reaches classroom

## Equipment

- Equipment needs will be high if school isn't previously equipped
- Transport vessels to maintain food safety measures
- Point of sale for counting and claiming meals (mobile POS or card system)
- Trash cans
- Spill kits for classrooms

## Student hygiene

- Students should be able to wash hands before and after eating
- Sanitation procedure in place for ensuring sanitary eating surface

## Keeping students with [food allergies safe](#)

- Create a plan for each student based on their food allergies
- The person who is supervising meal service should be trained in food allergies and choking prevention
  - Include resource
- Avoid cross contamination on classroom surfaces
- Do not discriminate against students who have allergies

## Waivers submitted – (waiting for USDA Approval)

- Waiver request so that potable water is only required when lunch is eaten in the cafeteria
- Mealtime waiver to allow meals served outside of 10 AM-2 PM for social distancing

# Consider When Serving in the Hallway

## Mealtimes

- Establish schedule so students are coming at staggered times to allow for social distancing and allow for handwashing break

## Staffing

- Consider how many hallways or areas you can provide service to at the same time to determine staffing needs
- Runner likely will be needed for refills
- Staff must be capable of potentially maneuvering large, heavy carts

## Equipment

- Point of sale for counting and claiming meals (mobile POS or card system)
  - Insert resource
- Consider using what you already have – mobile breakfast carts or unused salad bars
  - Other equipment options (insert resource)
- Space on cart to transport all menu items
- Speed racks with covers

## Student hygiene

- Students should be able to wash hands before and after eating

## Keeping students with [food allergies safe](#)

- Create a plan for each student based on their food allergies

## Waivers submitted – (waiting for USDA Approval)

- Waiver request so that potable water is only required when lunch is eaten in the cafeteria
- Mealtime waiver to allow meals served outside of 10 AM-2 PM for social distancing or take-home meals