# School Nutrition COVID-19 Guidance Meal Service Best Practice Examples

This document will serve as guidance during unanticipated school closures due to COVID-19 of best practices during meal service operation for school food authorities.

**Waivers.** Be sure to utilize all available waivers to help meet the needs and capacity of your district and the children you serve. Flexibilities can be found under the COVID-19 Guidance section on our [website](https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/school-nutrition.html).

**Utilize bus routes as a mobile feeding option.** This would include working with transportation and revising bus routes to best suit the district’s needs. The children would come to the bus stop in order to receive meals. The buses could run a breakfast service and lunch service route at the same time. In order to help limit exposure and help minimize labor efforts, the bus routes could potentially run every other day. For example, Monday the bus delivers 3 breakfasts to each child and 2 lunches to each child during route. Then on Wednesday, 2 breakfasts are and 3 lunches are served to each child during the route.

**Provide Grab-N-Go and drive thru options.** A Grab-N-Go and drive thru option may include pre-packaged meals served from the car drop off line at the school. This would allow parents to drive their child to the school and pick up meals through a “drive thru” type of service. The child must be present in the car/walk up to the service line to receive a meal. All children under the age of 18 are eligible to receive meals, therefore, if 3 children are in the car, all children will be able to receive a meal. Similar to the option listed above, multiple meals could be provided at once during a meal service time. For example, 3 lunches could be provided to each child in the car during the meal service time. Also, utilizing drive thru options, having the parents **pop the trunk** in order to transfer the meals into the vehicle while practicing social distancing may be a better option.

**Utilize other programs.** [Emergency Meals-to-You (eMTY)](https://mealstoyou.org/how-would-you-like-to-participate-in-meals-to-you/) provides weekday breakfasts and lunches to students who were receiving those meals through the National School Lunch Program at a free or reduced price, but temporarily cannot receive school meals due to emergency school closures. EMTY mails 10 breakfasts and 10 lunches every two weeks directly to the student’s home while schools are closed due to COVID-19.

**Make the sack meals fun.** If a school district is providing meals in paper bags, try decorating the bags prior to service. Also, districts may want to partner with community organizations to obtain “prizes” for the meals in order to make “happy meals” for all children.

**Provide recipe cards and food storage/handling information.** Recipe cards could be provided with cold items in order to make the meal a hot meal once the child gets home. For example, if you are serving a ham and cheese sandwich, the recipe card could provide instructions on how to warm the sandwich once the child is home. Also, the recipe cards could provide fun ways to mix foods that they are receiving (e.g. building your own parfait). *Be sure to provide appropriate food safety and handling information with any cold items that will need to be heated prior to consumption.*

**Mix up vegetables for lunch.** Keeping the meal pattern in mind, we understand that meeting the starchy vegetable subgroup may be a struggle during this time. It is encouraged to mix up offerings of starchy vegetables. For example, think of options that could be served cold, such as snap peas or succotash.

**Market your program.** Be sure to market the meal options your district is providing during these unprecedented times. Utilizing local newspapers, media outlets, and social media platform to market your program may help increase participation. For example, some districts are utilizing the local newspaper to provide the meal service schedules to the community

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