

Strategies and Considerations for Reopening School Nutrition Programs with COVID-19 Precautions

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Summary

This document is intended to supplement the School Reopening Toolkit for School Nutrition Programs by providing more specific and comprehensive guidance regarding important considerations for School Food Authorities (SFAs) to take into account upon reopening their School Nutrition Programs amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Included are recommendations and suggestions regarding communication with stakeholders, procurement practices, potential scheduling scenarios and models for meal service options. Additionally, SFAs will find guidance regarding staffing, training, monitoring staff health, cleaning and sanitizing and practicing social distancing. SFAs may use the prompted questions this document to help ensure their plans for reopening address solutions for the many important factors.

Considerations for Communicating with Families

As standard National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal service resumes and waivers expire, nutrition programs should communicate the end of specific flexibilities afforded under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) program and waivers due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This should include an emphasis on encouraging families to apply for meal benefits as many household incomes will have been impacted during this period.

- Develop key communication points to include:
 - End date of SSO service and beginning date of NSLP service, if applicable
 - Key program differences between SSO and NSLP (including that some families may have been receiving meals at no cost that will not be eligible to do so under NSLP without a meals benefit application signaling eligibility),
 - Meal offerings by location,
 - Information on meal benefit applications and
 - Points of contact to assist with questions and meal benefits applications.
- Utilize communications strategies to inform stakeholders of any change in meal services.
- Provide additional supports on meal benefits applications, including phone support options and in-person supports as available at school sites to assist families in completing forms.

In addition, All COVID-19 safety measures adopted should be communicated to those picking up and serving food to ensure that protocols are followed.

- This information should be communicated in writing and verbally.
- Text messages, robo-calls and emails should all be used, as well as on-site signage as appropriate.
 - Use all communications channels available to you and that you would use during routine communications with families.
- This information should be communicated prior to meal distribution and may need to be repeated during meal distribution.
- Be sure to communicate in all languages spoken within the school district.

Other information to be communicated includes the menu, allergy information and any expectations regarding wearing face coverings to pick up school meals.

Questions to Consider:

- How can you keep leveraging social media to engage with parents in the community?
- How can you make use of video and a YouTube channel to reach staff, students and families?

Procurement Considerations

Communication

- Communicate with distributors, brokers, manufacturers and local growers on a regular basis. Check in with them early and often, even if conversations only center around hypotheticals. Vendor communication can and should be more than simple order and delivery updates.
- Vendors can share some of the innovative menu, equipment and supply solutions that other district customers are testing or reveal new stresses on the supply chain.
- Be upfront with vendors about what you do know (based on emergency meal participation data this spring and changes in your summer program), as well as your best guesses (given your expertise as a school nutrition professional).
- Even if free/reduced-price meal applications are on the rise due to high unemployment rates, don't assume that you'll match or exceed participation numbers from last fall, especially if the service model is drastically changing. Make sure to have this conversation with vendors. You can keep them updated with how your summer meal service is going and any parent surveys you might conduct in anticipation of the changes for fall.

Flexibility

- Wherever possible, write flexibility into your bid specs. And make sure to maintain a solid, communicative relationship with vendors.
- The most important aspect of procurement flexibility is readiness to pivot to a backup plan at any time. Be prepared to encounter potential difficulties obtaining USDA Foods, both bulk and processed, as the government is also vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. Similarly, your procurement plan should reflect the need to pivot if schools change their scheduling plans or an infection outbreak among students or staff leads to sudden school closures.

Versatility

- Scenario plan for multiple reopening models. What items can be used in a variety of ways, no matter the approach for prep and service? For example, create a menu for the first month of the school year that can be served in classrooms or in cafeterias or as take-home meals or meal kits for partial-day or partial-week schedules. Hold off initially on menuing dishes that are labor-intensive. Your labor might need to go to classroom delivery responsibilities instead of intense food prep.

Questions to Consider:

- What foods are readily available either through local sources or plentiful national supply?
- What's the *minimum* lead time manufacturers and distributors need to ensure adequate supply?

- Are there expected supply chain disruptions for certain product categories?
- How will you handle shortages if they occur?
- What procurement processes can you tighten up in response to this crisis?
- Can you reduce and/or limit the variety of choices in the same menu category, such as pizza or muffins?
- If you are part of a purchasing cooperative or other group buying organization, what steps can you take to streamline the process for you, the other members and your vendor partners?
- What does the state agency say about USDA Foods?
- Will you and your vendors need to make adjustments to delivery schedules?
- What products (food, supplies, equipment, technology, etc.) are completely new for your operation this year? Do you know how to spec these properly?

Potential Scheduling Scenarios

At present, we have identified four potential scheduling scenarios that districts across the state may find practical for safely reopening schools.

Each of these scenarios will have different models of meal service that will be appropriate (see next section). Additionally, there may be regulatory waivers that will need to be implemented depending on which scenario(s) a district chooses. The state agency will be heavily involved with writing statewide waivers in order to best suit the needs of the districts. Therefore, the state agency may reach out asking for specific data and information in order to address certain waiver justifications. It will be very important that school districts work closely with the state agency in regards to waivers.

A/B Scheduling Scenario 1

Group A: Attends morning classes, Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 10:45 am.

Group B: Attends afternoon classes, Monday through Friday, 11:00 am – 3:45 pm.

Potential Waivers Needed

- ✓ Meal Pattern Waiver
- ✓ Meal Time Waiver
- ✓ Parental Pickup Waiver
- ✓ OVS Waiver for grades 9-12
- ✓ Potable Water Waiver
- ✓ Pre-K Meal Pattern Waiver
- ✓ Non-Congregate Waiver
- ✓ Waive the SSO 10-Day school closure requirement

Appropriate Meal Service Model

- Classroom Dining/ Socially Distanced Cafeteria Dining and Take-Home Meals

Additional Considerations

- How will you maintain social distancing and other safety measures if offering take-home meals for pickup alongside campus meal service?

A/B Scheduling Scenario 2

Group A: Attends class on campus Monday and Wednesday, and will attend remotely via online classes, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Group B: Attends class on campus Tuesday and Thursday, and will attend remotely via online classes Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Potential Waivers Needed

- ✓ Non-Congregate Waiver
- ✓ Meal Pattern Waiver
- ✓ Meal Time Waiver
- ✓ Parental Pick Up Waiver

- ✓ OVS Waiver for grades 9-12
- ✓ Potable Water Waiver
- ✓ Area Eligibility Waiver
- ✓ Multiple day meals (7 days)
- ✓ After School Snack Program Activities Waiver
- ✓ Waive the SSO 10-day school closure requirement

Appropriate Meal Service Model

- Classroom Dining/ Socially Distanced Cafeteria Dining and Take-Home Meals

Additional Considerations

- How will you maintain social distancing and other safety measures if offering take-home meals for pickup alongside campus meal service?

All Students Attend Class on Campus

Potential Waivers Needed

- ✓ Meal Pattern Waiver
- ✓ Meal Time Waiver
- ✓ OVS Waiver for grades 9-12
- ✓ Potable Water
- ✓ Waive the SSO 10-day school closure requirement

Appropriate Meal Service Model

- Classroom Dining/ Socially Distanced Cafeteria Dining

Additional Considerations

- Extra time, staff and equipment may be needed to serve or distribute meals to classrooms.
- Extra time and training will be needed for cafeteria service to sanitize equipment in between service times.

All students Attend Class Remotely

Potential Waivers Needed

- ✓ Non-Congregate Waiver for off-site distribution
- ✓ Meal Pattern Waivers
- ✓ Multiple meals to be served at one time waiver (breakfast/lunch together & multiple days)
- ✓ Parental Pickup Waiver
- ✓ Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Waiver
- ✓ After School Snacks Program Activities Waiver
- ✓ OVS Waiver for grades 9-12

- ✓ a Waiver from the requirement to distribute, collect and process Free and Reduced Applications
- ✓ Waive the SSO 10-day school closure requirement and extend the current waivers

Appropriate Meal Service Model

- Take-Home Meals

Additional Considerations

- Plan for households to get to the school to pick up, complete and return the free and reduced applications since their children are not going to the school building (transportation issues).
- Will it be possible for School Food Authorities (SFAs) to accurately count and claim meals that are being distributed under models like have been used this summer? How will you budget time and staff to achieve this?
- How will households who are not eligible for free meals pay? Not everyone has access to online meal payment options and even if the district offers it, there may be barriers for households to access online payment options (technology limitations, security concerns, no electronic banking, etc.)
- Is it financially viable to execute any of these feeding models if the district is only reimbursed based on their Free/Reduced eligibility?

Models of Meal Service based on Scheduling Scenarios

This section will explore the potential models for meal service based on following four scheduling options for reopening schools:

A/B Scheduling Scenario 1

Group A: Attends morning classes, Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 10:45 am.

Group B: Attends afternoon classes, Monday through Friday, 11:00 am – 3:45 pm.

A/B Scheduling Scenario 2

Group A: Attends class on campus Monday and Wednesday, and will attend remotely via online classes, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Group B: Attends class on campus Tuesday and Thursday, and will attend remotely via online classes Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

All Students Attend Class on Campus

All Students Attend Class Remotely

For each of these scheduling scenarios, various modes of meal service may be appropriate. We will focus on the three most common models, including:

- *Classroom Delivery with Classroom Dining*
- *Cafeteria Service with Classroom Dining*
- *Take-Home Meals*

Each of these models should be considered for both breakfast and lunch, as well as for how they might work for different school/grade levels. Note that some discussions are considering in-cafeteria service and dining, but with the stipulation that there is sufficient space for social distancing along the serving line, cashier stations and at tables. This could be possible in buildings with smaller enrollments and/or those that are adopting a cohort approach to keeping controlled groups of students together for all activities. Students also could be assigned designated seats in the cafeteria. Remember, there is not one model that will work best for all school districts—or even for all schools within the district. Be sure to involve the public health department as you develop your plans for providing meal service. Understand the differences between recommendations and requirements.

The next section will further discuss what each model may look like, menu considerations, logistics for ordering, prepping and serving and questions to keep in mind when planning for each meal service model.

Classroom Delivery with Classroom Dining

What it May Look Like

For breakfast service, you may be able to provide prepackaged grab 'n' go meals at school entryways that students take to their classes. For lunch, depending on the configuration of your building, rather than delivering orders to each classroom, you may be able to establish multiple points of service in areas close to classrooms, such as intersecting hallways, the

gymnasium, outside the school library and lobbies. Students can, in small groups at designated times, pick up their meals from these nearby locations and return to the classrooms.

Menu Considerations

You likely will need a more simplified menu—along with a shorter menu cycle—at least for the initial weeks of reopening, while you focus on other logistics. A limited number of entrée and side options will also be necessary to reduce complexity. Some directors are considering the model they used for emergency meals: one hot entrée and one cold entrée daily. Fruit and vegetable options packaged individually will have to be limited, as maximizing use of USDA Foods—especially for entrées—is another financial must. While a la carte items have been a crucial revenue generator, they will be very difficult to manage in this model. If a school has a sophisticated order system and the manpower to prep, package and label individual meal requests, a la carte may be able to be accommodated.

Don't forget that federal requirements for the National School Lunch Program include providing water access. If the school does not have water bottle fountains, the school nutrition department may be required to buy bottled water to replace communal water pitchers.

Order, Prep and Serving Logistics

Since this service model will preclude batch cooking and restocking serving lines during meal periods, and since you won't be able to rely on production records from previous back-to-school seasons, you will have to think about how the team will prep sufficient numbers of each meal option and how to deliver appropriate quantities to each classroom or point-of-service area.

One option is to analyze your past data and put together a best guestimate. You can work with children (and their teachers) to manage expectations that they may not get their preferred meal in the classroom every time. Teachers may have to alternate the order that students pick up meal options to ensure the same child isn't always at the end of the line.

You can also use low- and high-tech options for placing meal orders. Consider using a Google Forms document to take orders for all classroom cohorts. Check with K-12 technology vendors about the availability of ordering apps. If technology is not an option, you can create an old-fashioned paper document for meal orders that is provided to classrooms, distributed to students, collected by the teacher and delivered to the foodservice team.

If you are providing a meal order option, know that timing will be a critical element. Orders may need to be placed the day or evening before in order to give your team sufficient time to prep. In addition, teachers (and/or parents) may need training to help assist younger children.

Classroom delivery will require a complex system to track ordered meals as you prep and pack. You may need a way to label meals to identify meals for specific customers. Even if you

keep it simple, you may need to separate different entrées into different transport packs. Will you be packing all the components of a meal into a component tray? Do you have a tray sealer? Or will you be putting each menu component in its own packaging? If you are using bulk foods or preparing menu items from recipes, you will need to provide the packaging—and the labor to manage it.

Another consideration is how meals will be delivered to classrooms. In many breakfast in the classroom settings, student volunteers are designated to transport meals from the cafeteria to the class. Will students be permitted to do this? Do you have enough staff on hand to deliver meals, while also prepping for the next service? You may need to coordinate support from adult staff and volunteers, such as para-educators, former lunchroom monitors, custodians and others.

Questions to Consider

- Are there regulatory waivers you need to implement your plan?
- Will you need to train teachers to assist with participation counts? What technology is necessary—and available—to ensure proper counting and claiming?
- Do you have sufficient meal transport equipment and supplies? Will you need to purchase more? What funds will be used for these purchases?
- Do you have sufficient meal packaging supplies? Will this be a line item in your budget?
- Where and how will students wash their hands before/ after meals? How will students clean and sanitize their desks after eating?
- Will students be eating meals during instructional time or will there be a designated break?
- Will additional staff or volunteers be needed to distribute the food to classrooms in a timely manner?
- How will transport equipment, leftover meals and paperwork be returned to the cafeteria after meal service?
- Without share tables, is there any safe way to collect unused prepackaged items and keep these from the trash?
- How will all these changes affect staffing and schedules?

Cafeteria Service with Classroom Dining

What it May Look Like

Students purchasing or selecting a school meal are dismissed from the classroom to visit the cafeteria and go through the serving line. Once they have selected a meal and any additional items, the student returns to the classroom with their food to eat. This model allows for the continuation of a la carte sales, which are important to the bottom line for many school nutrition operations.

This model also could be combined with kiosk grab 'n' go sales at locations outside of the cafeteria; these might serve reimbursable meals or only offer a la carte items. Students would still be required to visit such points of sale in small groups and maintain physical

distance when waiting in line.

Menu Considerations

This model of service requires several of the same menu considerations as the classroom delivery model. One significant difference is to consider is that items can be easily transported by children, especially without spills.

Service and packaging are intricately related to your menu decisions in the approach. For example, you will need to determine what menu items on the line will require servers to scoop or place into a multi-compartment clamshell, closeable package. If you do not opt to use this style of packaging, consider how students will manage to carry multiple individually packaged items. You likely will need to provide take-out bags at cashier stations.

Are all these packaged items durable for student transport—both spill- and leak-resistant? Do they stand up to heat? How do the performance factors of your packaging dictate the menu items you are considering? What are the implications on classroom trash, as well as the overall school/district efforts to prioritize compostable or recyclable packaging?

Self-service items will be off-limits, which means no salad and food bars. However, if you have sufficient staff, you could offer customizable meal builds, with students identifying the different ingredients they would like staff to use to assemble deli sandwiches, salads, pasta bowls and so on. This may even be easier to facilitate with students coming to the cafeteria in significantly smaller groups. Still, it's unlikely to be something you offer right at the start of the new year.

Prep and Serving Logistics

If students are coming to the cafeteria to select meals, it's likely that you can batch cook and manage your production yields as you would normally. As noted above, self-serve or communal items, like bulk condiment dispensers, run counter to most safety recommendations. A cashier may be charged with distributing condiments, as well as utensils and napkins.

Guides to help students to maintain physical distancing will be essential. Apply appropriate signage and floor markings to indicate how far students must remain from one another and employees. Determine how easy this will be to facilitate at mobile locations. In addition, it's likely that you will need to apply additional sneeze guards along the serving line and at cashier stations.

You may need to make adjustments in your POS technology. Can you continue to use PIN pads safely? What are the best practices of retail businesses that continue to use touch-pad or touch-screen systems? Will you transition to a student ID card and barcode scanner? If the school is on CEP, can you use a simple clicker?

Questions to Consider

- Are there regulatory waivers you need to implement your plan?

- How far away is the cafeteria from most classrooms? Does it necessitate travel up and down stairs? Elevators? How much time will be added to meal periods to accommodate small groups traveling to and from classrooms and the cafeteria?
- Do you have sufficient meal packaging supplies? Or will you continue to use reusable trays and/or utensils that must be returned to the cafeteria for cleaning? How will this be managed? Will you provide carts or a bus tub to classrooms or hallway areas?
- If you establish points of service from mobile kiosks that use hot/cold food wells and pay stations, are there electrical outlets nearby to power these? How about Wi-Fi?
- If more time is required to accommodate student visits to the cafeteria or mobile kiosks, how will this affect the school day schedule? How will it affect staff work schedules?
- Can you expect some resistance and a lack of cooperation from teachers? How will you facilitate solutions?

Take-Home Meals

What it May Look Like

Take home meals would be applicable for both A/B Scheduling scenarios, as well as the remote learning scenario. The first decision is to determine who receives such meals. Will you make take-home meals available to all students, the way that most districts did with curbside feeding operations in the spring? Or will they be available only for low-income students? If they are available to all, how will you manage students who opt to refuse this meal opportunity? Will you require families to place orders in advance? Daily? Weekly? One semester at a time?

Menu Considerations

Your curbside meal service from this spring is a great foundation for what worked and what didn't when it came to take-home meals. However, it was determined on the basis that all meals were eaten at home. While some school districts provided meals daily, many others transitioned to sending multiple meals home with each pickup. This facilitated the option of "meal kits," which featured more bulk food ingredients that could be used to prepare several different meals. What kind of menu changes will be required if students are picking up meals only for that day (partial-school day schedule) or only for the next day (alternate-day schedule)? What type of cycle menu will you need to adopt? How will you manage the challenge of keeping meals interesting?

Administrative, Prep and Serving Logistics

Curbside feeding was largely facilitated by allowing schools to serve meals through the Summer Food Service Program (with additional waivers applied). USDA will need to provide guidance to school food authorities about how the split between take-home and in-school meals can be served and claimed for reimbursement. As previously noted, you will need to devise a new system or adapt a current one to track participation.

You likely will need to divide your prep staff into two teams: One team would be responsible for prepping and serving meals for in-school dining, while the other is charged with prepping, packing and serving meals for take-home. Many school site kitchens don't have

the facility space to manage one of these tasks, never mind both. So your plan must incorporate logistics and time for delivering one or both meals from a central kitchen to individual schools.

This presumes that you will send meals home with students when they leave school for the day. How will students transport these meals if they are riding a bus? If they are walking or biking home? What if they are participating in after-school care programs? Where will meals be kept (safely) for students who leave at different times of day? Consider keeping siblings' meals together for quick and easy pick-up. Keeping siblings' meals at one site ensures that families do not have to travel to multiple sites or spend more time at the pick-up location than necessary. If any allergy issues exist for siblings, be sure to keep allergenic foods separate from other foods.

Is there instead the expectation that families will pick up meals curbside on their non-school days? When, where and how would this be scheduled? Similarly, would school nutrition teams ride bus routes to drop off meals to families? Would this work best for morning runs (dropping meals for students not attending school) or afternoon runs (helping to facilitate meals going home with students not returning the next day)?

Questions to Consider

- What regulatory guidance and waivers do you need for your plan?
- Do you have sufficient prep space for managing two types of breakfasts and two types of lunch all at roughly the same time?
- Do you have sufficient labor to manage preparation for both in-school and take-home meals? Breakfast and lunch?
- What extra equipment (racks, insulated bags, carts) will you need to facilitate this blended meal service? Can you find creative solutions that don't leave you with excess equipment you can't use once the crisis has passed and schools return to conventional schedules?
- What types of training and marketing materials can your team develop to help communicate the complexity of the plan to students, parents and school stakeholders?
- What are the best solutions for partnering with transportation and teachers?

Staffing and Training Strategies

Staffing Considerations

Many staffers are working parents. They may not be available to work if their children are home for e-learning days. Similarly, if a child tests positive for the virus—or his or her class is quarantined—that working parent is also quarantined at home for several days. Your labor model may need to rely on a deep pool of substitutes who are qualified to work in a wide variety of roles.

If fewer children are in school buildings each day, will you need correspondingly fewer staff members on hand? Or will you need just as many (or more) in order to prep/serve same-day meals, while also prep/serving take-home meals? This is difficult to anticipate—how will you tweak a staffing plan throughout the initial months of the school year to adapt?

Considering conducting any hiring and training before the start of the school year, especially if you need to adapt your typical hiring process, either conducting interviews and tests remotely or putting into place changes that allow for safe in-person assessment steps.

Consider financial implications. Will you have to change your policies and budgets to pay for staff to be home if they have been quarantined? Do staff work under a union or other negotiated agreement? Are there contracts for workers at a certain position- or staff-level? How might these needs be tailored for SY2020-21?

Training

While it is unlikely that you will be bringing the entire district staff together prior to the start of the school year for a multi-day in-service event this year, training is still vital to the success of your operation—arguably more today than ever before, as very little will be business as usual.

Utilize online learning platforms for requirements for civil rights and food-handling training. Webinars offered by the School Nutrition Association and the Institute for Child Nutrition also have grown in popularity and familiarity. Look into the options provided by such platforms as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts and GoToMeetings.

Will your *entire* team be able to meet their minimum training requirements via technology solutions? What kind of past success have you had in this regard when it comes to staff who are not tech-savvy, who have English literacy accommodation needs or who do not have stable access to the internet or devices that support training? Some staff may be able to access virtual training sessions if you create a set of easy-to-follow instructions.

Some digital technology may be too sophisticated for your budget or your team, but consider other options, such as videos uploaded to a YouTube channel.

Creative approaches to redesigning typical training will be necessary. How much can you convey through written material packets—with a heavy emphasis on illustrations to address language and literacy barriers? Can you organize small-group training sessions, dividing people into different rooms where they can participate in lectures or discussions while remaining physically separate? You may want to divide staff into grade clusters, such as elementary school employees one day and

middle school employees the next day, especially since feeding scenarios may differ among school levels. Spread training over multiple days, or schedule one group in the morning and one in the afternoon. Similarly, you can divide training by technological skill level/access:

- In-person sessions for the staff who aren't able to access technology.
- Recorded training for those who are able to watch videos sent via email or uploaded to the internet.
- Virtual meetings for employees who have access to and comfort with using technology.
- Congregate small numbers of employees in locations big enough for social distancing and set up a screen for small groups to participate in virtual training at the same time as groups at other locations.

If you have not already cross-trained staff members to take on different roles and responsibilities, this may be the right time to do so. Your team will need to be prepared to step in if a coworker gets sick or needs to be quarantined.

Questions to Consider

- How can site supervisors perform their responsibilities without visiting multiple kitchens in a single day, increasing the risk for virus spread?
- Will you need to provide food-handling training to volunteers who may be helping with food delivery, such as classroom teachers, para-professionals or school bus drivers? How about meal orders and counts from teachers?
 - How will you get buy-in from these groups to perform their roles and participate in training? Will you need school administrators to intercede on your behalf?
 - How will you deliver the training to these individuals?
- Do all department employees have an internet-connected device? If not, can you get one to them?
- How will you adapt current on-the-job training processes for new hires?
- Are there existing online curriculums that you can use for staff training?
- Is there a space large enough to hold in-person training while allowing for appropriate social distancing?
- What topics absolutely must be covered, and what can be minimized for this year?
- Are there ways to conduct team-building during training, without risking safety protocols?
- What technology is required to facilitate regular staff meetings throughout the year?
- Have you consulted with your IT department for their suggestions?
- How will you communicate significant changes in protocols and processes to staff? For example, sites that are totally or partially closed for quarantine; ways to handle supply chain shortages; or new administrative/regulatory requirements? What are the most efficient ways to ensure this communication is relayed?

Monitoring Staff Health

Standards of Practice

Per existing FDA Food Code requirements, employees who are sick should not come to work. If an employee becomes ill or shows symptoms of an illness, the manager or supervisor should confirm the signs during a pre-work screening and follow established policies on when the ill employee is allowed to return to work. At a minimum, however, follow CDC guidelines for COVID-19 that say the employee should self-isolate for seven days from the onset of symptoms and be symptom-free for three days without medication.

There are also recommendations for quarantines up to 14 days; check with your public health department and/or district policy for specifics. There are several practices to adopt:

- **You may be required to pre-screen your team for illness.** Each time an employee enters a school site, they must take their temperature and write it down in a logbook with the time and date. Keep in mind that CDC guidance states the minimum temperature that indicates a fever is 100°F.
- **Enlist the aid of health experts to help you devise procedures.** This might mean partnering with the school nurse for school-specific plans or working with the local health department for setting district-wide protocols.
- **Constantly emphasize the proper protocols for handwashing, glove-wearing and other safety steps.**
 - For detailed information on school food personnel safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, check this page on the CDC's website regularly for the latest information: [What School Nutrition Professionals and Volunteers at Schools Need to Know about COVID-19](#).
 - For additional food safety guidelines, please reference the [Food Safety Plan](#).
- **Send safety reminders to staff regularly via email.** There are plenty of resources you can turn to for content, including information from SNA, the Institute of Child Nutrition and the CDC.

Ensure employees understand that they must remain home if they have exposure to the virus. Per the CDC, potential exposure means having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis. The timeframe for having contact with a person includes up to 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic or otherwise had a positive test. This requirement may be difficult to convey to staff, especially if they will not be paid while in quarantine.

Questions to Consider

- Will staff be required to take temperatures upon arrival to work? Will this process repeat throughout the shift? Will staff that work at multiple sites—such as supervisors or delivery personnel—have to repeat this process at each site?
- How will staff take their temperatures?

- Will a school nurse or other volunteer be available to do this? Will it be the responsibility of a site manager? Or will staff be self-accountable?
- Will you need to purchase a communal no-touch forehead thermometer?
- What is the process if an employee shows up at work with a fever? Who will be notified? Will you provide the individual with written instructions on next steps?
- How should an employee go about reporting if a family member is ill with COVID-19? Or if they have been informed of other exposure to the virus? How will you address this if you hear the information casually?
- Will facemasks be added as a dress-code requirement? How will you address complaints about wearing these in a hot kitchen?
- What if staff want to wear additional PPE, such as goggles or plastic face shields? Will that be allowed? What approval steps are required?
- What enforcement measures can you put into place to ensure compliance? What changes do you need to make to your policies and/or staff employment contracts?

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Best Practices

- Before reopening for SY2020-21, **thoroughly deep-clean and sanitize** your entire facilities, focusing on high-contact areas.
- If students will be coming through the cafeteria to pick up meals, be prepared to **sanitize the serving line** between each group or class.
- If meals are delivered to classrooms, you will need to **sanitize transport equipment** (bags, racks, trays) upon their return to the kitchen.
- Identify the **disinfectant products** that can be used effectively against COVID-19. The Environmental Protection Agency has compiled a list of such products, found at www.tinyurl.com/disinfectants-sna. If EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, the CDC says alternative disinfectants (such as 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water) can be used.
- **Always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals** being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting. Additional PPE may be required.
- If you have outdoor eating areas, the CDC does not recommend disinfection. Instead, simply maintain existing cleaning routines there.

For additional food safety guidelines, please refer to the [Food Safety Plan](#).

Questions to Consider

- How should you go about procuring EPA-approved disinfectants?
- Do employees understand the difference between regular cleaning and disinfecting?
- How can your team partner with the school or district's custodial staff?

Social Distancing

The CDC has emphasized that close-contact, person-to-person transmission of the virus is the most likely reason for its spread, so it's critical for the health and safety of both students and staff that recommendations are followed.

This applies to all facets of the school nutrition operation, from receiving deliveries to prepping food to serving students. It is highly recommended that these procedures are written into a formal policy. However, there may be some work situations in which it's simply not possible to keep employees 6 feet apart. Your procedures should emphasize common sense. If social distancing would increase the risk of injury, be sure other steps, like wearing facemasks, are being followed, and then separate as soon as the task is completed.

Regular reminders will be essential to help employees adopt social distancing as a new habit. Other suggestions follow:

- If students are eating in classrooms, can you use the cafeteria space as workstations for meal prep?
- Where possible, workstations should be staggered so employees can avoid standing directly opposite one another or next to each other. Can you reconfigure your prep areas? It may mean setting up and tearing down your makeshift work areas every day, but think out of the box about making use of different spaces and surfaces—safely.
- Stagger the worktimes of employees when possible, so that there are fewer team members working in a small kitchen at any given time.
- Consider physical barriers such as partitions or Plexiglass barriers at cashier stations.
- Explore new technologies that reduce person-to-person interaction, such as contactless payment systems.
- Use floor signage, tape and/or cones, to ensure students stay separate while waiting to be served.
- Limit the number of employees allowed in break rooms or storage areas at the same time.
- If physical distancing is impossible in small spaces, try to minimize the amount of time you share the space with others. Be sure all team members in tight spaces are wearing face masks and that they are being worn properly, covering both the mouth and the nose.

Questions to Consider

- How can you make use of carts to transport ingredients and smallwares to transform unused spaces into temporary prep areas?
- What type of training might be helpful to explain the value of social distancing to staff?
- How can you make social distancing more “fun” to maintain team spirit and morale? Can you create small incentives to reward employees who demonstrate compliance most reliably or who come up with clever ideas to help facilitate social distancing?

Resources

School Nutrition Program

NSLP Start-Up Forms

<https://www.tn.gov/education/snp-resources/snp-forms.html>

Series of documents and forms for the launch of NSLP each year.

Regional Consultant Contact information

https://public.tableau.com/profile/t.andrew.mccluskey#!/vizhome/ConsultantMap_15881142652810/TennesseeSchoolNutritionConsultants?publish=yes

Regional consultant information per district.

Free and Reduced-Price Application Instructions

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/nutrition/resources/snp_res_application_instructions_household_letter002.docx

Instructions for SFAs to provide families for how to apply to for free and reduce-price meal benefits.

Prototype Free & Reduced-Price Meal Application

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/nutrition/resources/snp_res_free_and_reduced_household_application.doc

Prototype application for families to use to apply for free and reduced-price meal benefits.

School Nutrition Resources

<https://www.tn.gov/education/snp-resources.html>

SNA COVID-19 Thought-Starters on Reopening Schools for SY2020-21

https://schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles/11COVID-19/3_Webinar_Series_and_Other_Resources/COVID-19-Thought-Starters-on-Reopening-Schools-for-SY2020-21.pdf

CDC Recommendations and Guidance

CDC Fact Sheet for School Nutrition Professionals

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/school-nutrition-professionals.html>

CDC Guidance for Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting (Including Schools)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

Business and Employer Guidance

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Cleaning and Disinfection

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>