
SCHOOL NUTRITION



Through school closures, summer breaks, and re-opening, school nutrition programming remains a crucial support to students and families by providing meal services in normal and uncertain times. Districts should build on the experiences of the spring school closures in 2020 to inform strategies on how to ensure continuity of meal services through new and evolving contexts. This toolkit provides an overview for district leaders and local school nutrition directors on strategies and considerations to approach re-opening of schools, exploring alternative nutrition operations, and capturing the best practices from the spring closures. As districts map out goals for what school will look like in the upcoming academic year, these resources may be used to inform decisions related to how school nutrition may continue to meet student needs in a variety of settings, especially when students are unable to get to meals. As always, the department remains committed to seeking additional supports and flexibilities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the form of guidance and waivers. If any questions arise on allowable practices or potentially required waivers to implement a strategy, please contact your regional nutrition consultant for guidance and support.

II. Checklist

Close-Out Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Operations

Operating under the SSO program, along with additional waivers, school food authorities (SFAs) will need to close out programming, including:

- Determine end date of SSO meal service.
- Communicate to staff and families (see below).
- Identify staff needed and relocate any shifted equipment or equipment used for meal delivery back to original sites.
- Conduct inventory of supplies and equipment to validate sites have resources that may have been used elsewhere during SSO operations.
- Ensure all appropriate SSO claims have been submitted in the allocated time period for claims within the Tennessee: Meals, Accounting, and Claiming (TMAC) system. [Once school resumes, all claims will be submitted under National School Lunch Program (NSLP).]
- Review financials to identify any issues or concerns that have been uncovered during COVID-19 and to address all concerns with appropriate parties. This should be done prior to transitioning back to normal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) operations.

Communicate with Families

Assuming standard NSLP meal service resumes and waivers expire, nutrition programs should communicate the end of specific flexibilities afforded under the 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 and disseminate clear communication points, at the earliest possible date, to include:
 - End date of SSO service and beginning date of NSLP service
 - Key program changes 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, including general eligibility requirements
 - Points of contact to assist with questions and meal benefits applications
- Use SSO meal service delivery and other communication strategies (including the same used to communicate SSO services being launched) to message changes in service.
- 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.

□ **Revise, Refine, and Launch NSLP Services**

While school food authorities (SFAs) should complete the same annual preparation and opening steps as in any other year, local nutrition teams should do so while considering any program revisions or refinements needed to relaunch NSLP services with additional emphasis on health and safety (see sections V & VI for more context):

- **Review and Refine NSLP Plans:** Review Section V of this document and consider health and safety contexts as you review and revise your plan for distributing school nutrition program (SNP) and consider the following steps in light of any potential changes to distribution model. ***If considering an alternate school schedule in district, consider SBP and NSLP distribution for students who are engaging in remote learning. Leverage regional nutrition consultants to brainstorm approaches and regulatory considerations, including needed waivers.***
- **Check-in with Staff:** Contact nutrition staff members to check-in on status to begin work with the launch of NSLP services. The SFA should validate staff's intent to return, and make any needed additional hires to resume services with the start of the school year.
- **Check-in with Vendors and Suppliers:** Contact representatives of any vendors/suppliers used in the nutrition program. The unexpected closures may have impacted supply chains or availability of certain services, and it will be important to account for any of these changes prior to the start of standard operations.
- **Plan Meals Accordingly:** In alignment with any implications identified above, adjust as needed in developing the meal cycle.
- **Administrative Reviews (AR) & Procurement Reviews (PR):** If an SFA was slated to have either an AR or PR conducted during the unexpected closure period, please note guidance will be provided by regional consultants on when the reviews will be rescheduled.
- **Plan for Potential Future School Closure:** As you plan for the coming year, build in contingencies to allow for quick adjustments to distribution model depending on local health conditions and school building closures (see Section VI for considerations). Consider codifying the steps taken during the 2019-20 school year to ensure continuity of services as a road map on strategies to utilize again and those in need of improvement.

III. Best Practices

Provide Meal Benefit Applications at Multiple Opportunities

SFAs are encouraged to provide applications to families for free and reduced price meal benefits on numerous occasions to promote the service. As the economic conditions have shifted due to the novel coronavirus, more families may now qualify for benefits. A family can submit a new application at any time during the school year. SFAs should consider multiple avenues for families to access these applications, such as:

- Use the meal delivery services under SSO as an opportunity to attach meal benefit applications to meals already being delivered;
- Make applications available online and at front office of each school site;
- Ensure nutrition staff or other team member is present in office or via phone to assist families in completing the application.

Check-in with Suppliers and Vendors

As conditions return to normal, there may still be disruptions in the supply chain and/or delivery schedules. SFAs may need to adapt cycle menus to meet any changes in food or product availability. This is not limited to food supplies, as the availability of cleaning supplies and paper goods have also been stressed during the coronavirus outbreak. Some services may be procured outside of the nutrition program (e.g. custodial services) but have implications on the programs ability to relaunch. To ensure that meal services may resume standard operations, nutrition directors should be in contact with both suppliers/vendors and other district operations on which they rely to provide services.

IV. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Overall, each SFA will need to review finances, staffing, and any operational concerns, contact appropriate stakeholders for needed follow up. All SFAs will need to advertise free and reduced price meal applications to parents and guardians. Each SFA will need to ensure all SSO claims have been submitted during the school closures and will need to transition into normal NSLP and SBP operations as schools re-open. Please refer to Section V of this document for more detailed safety guidelines regarding schedules and procedures for implementing preventative measures upon reopening. Please refer to Section VI of this document for more detailed guidelines regarding schedules and procedures in the event of future school closure.

Close-Out Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Operations

Operating under the SSO program, along with additional waivers, school food authorities (SFAs) will need to close out programming, including:

Action Items	Complete
Determine end date of SSO meal service.	
Communicate to staff and families (see below).	
Identify staff needed and relocate any shifted equipment or equipment used for meal delivery back to original sites.	
Conduct inventory of supplies and equipment to validate sites have resources that may have been used elsewhere during SSO operations.	
Ensure all appropriate SSO claims have been submitted in the allocated time period for claims within the TMAC system. (Once school resumes, all claims will be submitted under NSLP.)	
Review financials to identify any issues or concerns that have been uncovered during COVID-19 and to address all concerns with appropriate parties. This should be done prior to transitioning back to normal NSLP and SBP operations.	

Communicate with Families

As standard NSLP meal service resumes and waivers expire, nutrition programs should communicate the end of specific flexibilities afforded under the SSO program and waivers due to COVID-19.

Action Items	Complete
Develop key communication points to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End date of SSO service and beginning date of NSLP service ○ Key program changes 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 ○ Points of contact to assist with questions and meal benefits applications 	
Use SSO meal service delivery and other communication strategies (including the same used to communicate SSO services being launched) to message any changes.	
Provide additional supports on meal benefits applications, including phone options and in-person supports at school sites to assist families in completing forms.	

Launch NSLP Services

While SFAs should complete the same annual launch process steps as in any other year, local nutrition teams should also prepare for standard NSLP operations by reviewing the following:

Action Items	Complete
Check-in with Staff: Contact nutrition staff members to check-in on status to begin work with the launch of NSLP services. The SFA should validate staff’s intent to return and make any needed hires to resume services by the start of the school year.	
Check-in with Vendors and Suppliers: Contact representatives of any vendors or suppliers used in the nutrition program. The closures may have impacted supply chains or availability of certain services, and it will be important to account for any of these changes prior to the start of standard operations. For commodities and DOD Produce, contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture/delivery contractor and advise of changes to usage, delivery times, and delivery locations.	
Plan Meals Accordingly: In alignment with any implications identified above, adjust as needed in developing the meal cycle.	
Administrative Reviews (AR) & Procurement Reviews (PR): If an SFA was slated to have either an AR or PR conducted during the unexpected closure period, please note guidance will be provided by regional consultants on when the reviews will be rescheduled.	

V. Safety Guidelines for Re-opening

SFAs should ensure appropriate standard operating procedures (SOP) are in place to address the guidelines below regarding preventative measures upon re-opening school nutrition programs. Please refer to Section VII of this document for more detail regarding things to consider for various re-opening scenarios.

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends limiting exposure to large groups of people. Use spacing strategies to create a six-foot distance between people. Consider altering the staffing schedules and physical workspace to accommodate distancing. This could involve staff members working at different workstations. It could involve innovative meal delivery systems when providing meals to children.
- Avoid one-on-one contact with individuals (hugs, handshakes, high fives, etc.).
- Ensure nutrition program employees are trained on any district expectations related to daily health screenings and that employees showing symptoms of COVID-19 are directed to immediately be tested and to self-isolate for the recommended 14 day period. Districts should establish protocols in collaboration with the health departments to set guidance on when a staff member may return to work.
- Maintain social distancing during meal service or meal delivery.
 - Meals served on-site should be placed on a counter or tray line for quick pick up.
 - Meals for curb-side pick-up should be placed on a table or placed in the trunk of the vehicle to minimize person-to-person contact.
 - Limit social interactions to speed up service and minimize contact time.
- Comply with all policies for reporting notifiable illnesses to administrative personnel and/or public health departments.
- Cross-train program staff to perform essential activities in the event of key absences or emergency situations.
- Reinforce and closely monitor personal hygiene practices.
 - Wash hands properly and frequently. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. Refer to the [Hand Washing SOP](#)
 - Apply the “no bare hand contact” rule. Wear single-use food gloves when handling ready-to-eat foods. As a best practice, wear single-use gloves when handling or delivering all foods.
 - As a best practice, wear a disposable apron when handling or delivering foods.
 - Strongly reinforce health and hygiene activities. Refer to the [Personal Hygiene SOP](#).
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - Follow appropriate coughing and sneezing etiquette. Cough or sneeze using a disposable tissue or elbow, followed by proper handwashing at all times.

- Allow only program staff, custodial staff, and approved volunteers to enter program areas.
- Routinely clean and disinfect high-touch nonfood-contact surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, phones, keyboards, tray slides, etc. Disinfectants are chemical products that destroy or inactivate germs.
 - Use properly diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and/or EPA-registered disinfectants.
 - Disinfecting solutions can be transferred to the spray bottle for easier application to areas that need to be disinfected.
 - Allow the disinfectant to remain in contact with the surface for the appropriate amount of time. Follow manufacturer's instructions for contact time.
 - Diluted household bleach disinfecting solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Prepare by mixing 1/3 cup bleach per gallon of warm water, wearing glove and eye protections and mixing in a well-ventilated area. Contact time for a chlorine bleach solution is about 5 minutes.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces before and after each use. See the [Cleaning and Sanitizing Food Contact Surfaces SOP](#).
- Handle program wastes properly.
- Discontinue use of share table options temporarily (e.g. practices of collecting unconsumed food and beverage items to reduce waste and encourage consumption of food served).
- Consider alternative serving methods and logistics entailed for alternative schedules and rolling closures.
 - Serve all or some meals and snacks in the classroom.
 - Students could take meals from cafeteria to classroom.
 - Develop meal counting procedures for meals served outside of the cafeteria. Procedures will depend on eligibility determinations – CEP, Provision 2, or Free/Reduced/Paid status.
 - Alternate between meal service in classroom and cafeteria – by grade, classroom, hallway, A/B schedule. All students should have an opportunity for a dining room experience.
 - Teachers take meal orders in classroom and send order to the kitchen via email, Google Docs, SharePoint, etc.
 - Students could pick up meals at building entrances or security checkpoints.
 - Longer meal service times will be required for any meals served in the cafeteria to promote social distancing protocols.
 - Offer Versus Serve (OVS) must be considered for grades 9-12 for lunch.
 - Seek an OVS waiver for grades 9-12.
 - Lunch in the Classroom can be implemented in grades k-8 without OVS.
 - The 3-7-day meal pattern should be used for long and short weeks.

- If an SFA is considering school to be in session and wishes to continue offering National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) during such building closures, *the SFA may request an NSLP and SBP waiver* which would allow schools to offer non-congregate meals when school buildings are closed, but children continue to attend classes online. In this situation, schools would continue to claim and be reimbursed for meals based on the eligibility status of the individual student. All other NSLP and SBP requirements would apply.
- Consider limiting the sale of second meals and a la carte items to the cafeteria – no sales when meals are served in the classroom.
- As part of overall emergency preparedness, maintain an updated contact list of key partners at the state and local levels.
- Keep staff, customers, parents, and other stakeholders informed with current and reliable information.
- Work in cooperation with school administration and media to communicate importance of preventative measures, such as handwashing, for all school staff and students.

VI. Safety Guidelines for Potential Future School Closures

In the interest of public health, agencies could make decisions that affect normal program operations. During a pandemic, school closures may be ordered by local, county or state health officials. Schools are not required to provide meal service during school closures, but willingness to continue meal service operations ensures children receive nutritious meals during a public health crisis. Schools should review their implementation of the emergency feeding programs from the spring of 2020 to codify and leverage the strategies that worked well and determine improvements in areas that presented challenges. SFAs should take into consideration recommendations and guidelines listed below and should ensure appropriate SOPs are in place regarding safe meal service in the event that schools should close.

- Defer to federal, state, and local agency protocol and guidance during crisis situations. Agencies are able to assist when conditions disrupt the day-to-day routine on a large scale. Agencies can work with schools in collaborative efforts to maintain a safe food supply and keep program staff safe.
- If available, seek waivers that allow meal flexibilities.
 - Check with the state agency for a non-congregate waiver that allow for serving bulk foods.

- Schools may send meals for Same-Day Service and Multi-Day Service with an approved USDA waiver. For meals designated for additional days, a school could send shelf-stable, individually packaged foods that meet USDA's meal pattern requirements or send ready-to-eat foods.
- Codify pre-emptive plan for meal service during emergency periods should closures occur.
 - Determine service methods that can be used, such as grab and go, curbside pick-up, and/or meal delivery systems. Remember meals must be prepared in advance and ready to eat off-site.
 - Plan service locations. Meals may be served in unconventional places, such as parking lots, bus routes, multi-purpose rooms, libraries, parks, etc.
 - Determine meal accountability procedures.
 - Identify ways to communicate meal availability.
 - As part of social distancing measures, the number of people arriving at one time to pick up a meal should be staggered, and social interactions limited.
 - Strongly reinforce that staff should avoid touching their face (mouth, nose, eyes) during preparation and service of meals.
 - Plan for proper hand hygiene for the type of service planned.
 - For remote sites with no working sink, provide hand hygiene capabilities using a portable handwashing station. A portable handwashing station can be set up using a thermal container, soap, paper towels, and a discard bucket.
- The type of meal offered will depend on the resources and capacity of the site. Those sites, that are able to prepare ready-to-eat meals and have the capacity to deliver meals daily in a way that meets state or local food safety requirements, may do so. Home-delivered meals still have to meet all meal pattern requirements for the designated program. If emergency conditions prevent a school from obtaining a certain food product, such as milk, the state agency may approve the service of meals without the required menu item during the emergency period.
- Meals served must comply with relevant requirements, including documented accommodation requests for children with special dietary needs (e.g. food allergies). Communicate with families in need of special dietary accommodations to make plans for when and where they can obtain special meals.
- Purchase and keep on hand, sufficient quantities of:
 - Chemicals used to make a sanitizing solution
 - Disinfectant approved for use in a foodservice facility
 - Single-use food gloves in several sizes
 - Disposable service ware suitable for unconventional delivery systems
 - Shelf-stable foods
 - Face coverings/masks

- Production records must be completed for each meal.
- Document food safety training provided to newly hired staff and volunteers. Reinforce food safe practices for all program personnel and volunteers.
- Implement and communicate food safety rules as they apply to the planned meal service style.
 - Meals provided to children must be ready-to-eat. Frozen food items in packaging marked “fully cooked” may meet this definition but may only be served if accompanied by the manufacturer’s preparation instructions and clear instructions that the food must be consumed or refrigerated within 2 hours.
 - Adapt cycle menus to meet any changes in food or product availability. This is not limited to food supplies, as the availability of cleaning supplies and paper goods have also been stressed during the coronavirus outbreak.
 - Install plexiglass barriers at the point of sale.
 - Procure additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
 - Procure additional carts, bags, and containers to serve lunch in classroom, if necessary.
 - Consider the possibility for equipment shortages if lunch in classroom is implemented.
 - Consider the possibility of additional dumpsters due to increased use of disposable trays, cups, utensils, etc.
 - Revise delivery schedules and locations, and ensure appropriate receiving procedures.
 - Potentially hazardous foods must be held at proper temperatures or have time controls applied when serving reimbursable meals in unconventional ways.
 - If Time as a Public Health Control is used for a cold potentially hazardous food, the food shall have an initial temperature of 41°F or less when removed from cold holding. The food must be served to the customer or discarded within 4 hours.
 - If Time as a Public Health Control is used for a hot potentially hazardous food, the food shall be cooked to a proper internal temperature and have an internal temperature of 135°F or greater when removed from hot holding. The food must be served to the customer or discarded within 4 hours. Do not assume households have the means to properly cool food.
 - Refer to the SOP, “[Time as a Public Health Control](#)”, for more information on using time as the control measure instead of temperature to limit bacteria growth in potentially hazardous foods.
 - Label items packaged on site and made available for self-service with appropriate ingredient information to protect the health and safety of children who experience allergic reactions to specific foods.
 - As a best practice, communicate appropriate food safety actions for customer handling of menu items. For example, milk served as part of a reimbursable meal should be held cold until time of service or delivery and include instructions for consuming the milk within 2 hours. Milk or cold items designated for another day, should include

instructions for storing the milk under refrigeration in the household. A label template is provided here:

Keep Foods Safe – Same Day Service

Hot foods should be kept hot. Consume hot foods within 2 hours.

Cold foods should be kept cold. Consume or refrigerate cold foods within 2 hours.

Discard leftover foods within 2 days.

Keep Foods Safe – Multiple Day Service

Hot foods should be kept hot. Consume hot foods within 2 hours.

Cold foods should be kept cold. Consume or refrigerate cold foods within 2 hours.

Refer to Section VII for possible scenarios for additional considerations based on state or local board of education plans for returning to school after a closure.

VII. Additional Considerations upon Return to School After a Closure, or Closing After Re-opening

Additional Considerations

- Finances
 - SFAs should check their finances and see if there are any issues or concerns that have been uncovered during COVID-19 and address all concerns with appropriate parties. This should be done prior to transitioning back to normal NSLP and SBP operations.
 - Use correct revenue coding (Chart of Accounts) for each program – NSLP, SBP, Commodities, Seamless Summer Option, etc.
 - Due to unprecedented events and financial strains during the public health emergency, local funds may be needed in order to support the school nutrition program.
- Communication
 - Follow school district policies to communicate changes in school nutrition operations.
 - During the public health emergency, meal benefits have been available to many students that may not usually have access to free meals. As school returns, it will be important to communicate to families that all meals may not be available at no cost to all children.

- More families may now qualify for benefits than prior to public health emergency due to changes in the economy. Remind families that they can submit a new application for free or reduced-price meals at any time during the school year.
- Compliance
 - SFAs should reach out to their regional consultants if there was an Administrative Review or Procurement Review scheduled during the unanticipated school closure due to the public health emergency. The state agency will work with SFA to reschedule that review.
 - Submit all reports and claims for reimbursement to the state agency as required.
- Personnel
 - Create A/B staffing schedules - promotes distancing of employees and limits the total number of employees in the workspace at a given time.
 - Consider the use of temporary employees.
 - Discuss hourly pay, benefits, etc. with district human resources officer.
 - Determine protocols should a nutrition staff member be diagnosed with COVID-19 as it relates to operations and communications, both internally and to the broader school community, including families.
- Transportation
 - Discuss the possibility of bus routes in combination with emergency feeding/SSO operations.
 - Discuss the district transportation plan with administration.
 - Will buses run outside the required transportation area for each school?
 - Will students go directly to the cafeteria or classroom after drop-off?
- Food Safety
 - Revise SFA and site Food Safety Plan to include SOPs for meal service in classroom, additional meal service procedures in the cafeteria, social distancing and PPE during meal prep and delivery, and receiving and storage.
 - ICN Resources
 - Mark serving floor for distancing.
 - No self-service.
 - No salad bars.
 - Install plexiglass barriers at the point of sale.
- Eligibility
 - More families may now qualify for benefits than prior to outbreak of the public health emergency due to changes in the economy. Remind families that they can submit a new application for free or reduced-price meals at any time during the school year.
- Waivers
 - Refer to USDA and State Agency Guidance.

- Programming
 - Seamless Summer Option
 - The NSLP/SBP and SSO cannot operate simultaneously.
 - Operate SSO during school closures.
 - After School Snack Program
 - Students could take a snack home if educational/enrichment requirement is waived for After School Snacks.
 - Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program
 - Operates as normal in Pre-K-6.
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
 - Encourage operation of At-Risk After School Supper Program through DHS.
 - Area Eligibility applies.

VIII. Resource List

- **Strategies and Considerations for Reopening School Nutrition Programs**

Attached below after resource list.
Provides school nutrition directors with additional guidance and considerations, including how to explore various service models relative to school scheduling.
- **NSLP Start-Up Forms**

Startup Documents
Series of documents and forms for the launch of NSLP each year.
- **Regional Consultant Contact Information**

Regional Nutrition Consultant List
Regional consultant information per district.
- **Free and Reduced-Price Application Instructions**

Meal Benefits SFA Application Instructions
Instructions for SFAs to provide families for how to apply to for free and reduce-price meal benefits.
- **Prototype Free & Reduced-Price Meal Application**

Sample Application
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>

CDC Recommendations and Guidance

Use the links below to access additional information from the CDC regarding school-related topics.

- [CDC Fact Sheet for School Nutrition Professionals](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Schools](#)
- Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting
 - [General Guidance](#) (Including Schools)
 - [Cleaning & Disinfecting](#)
- [Business and Employer Guidance](#)

Strategies and Considerations for Reopening School Nutrition Programs

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 in this document to help ensure their plans for reopening address solutions for the many important factors.

Considerations for Communicating with Families

As 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 on 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 assumptions or plans for services as school resumes.
- Even if free/reduced-price meal applications are on the rise due to high unemployment rates, do not assume that you will 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 specifications, 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 preparation 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 preparation.

Questions to Consider:

- What foods are readily available either through local sources or plentiful national supply?
- What is 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 specifications 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.

Please note these are only sample scenarios to consider.

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?
- What will be the best method for providing breakfast services to students in Group B?

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?
- How will you leverage transportation supports to provide meals for students not attending in-person?

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
- ✓ 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 sample 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 savings strategy. 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 prepare, 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.

Ordering, Preparation, and Serving Logistics

Since this service model will preclude batch cooking and restocking serving lines during meal periods, and since you may not be able to rely on production records from previous back-to-school seasons, you will have to think about how the team will prepare 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 estimate of meals needed. 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 each child has an opportunity at broader options during a cycle.

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 a paper document for meal orders that is provided to classrooms, distributed to students, collected by the teacher and delivered to the food service 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 prepare meals. 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 prepare

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 would not be offered in this model, 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. Nutrition programs may opt to not offer this option at the beginning of the year while additional logistics are being determined.

Preparation and Serving Logistics

If students are coming to the cafeteria to select meals, it is 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 is 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 point of sale (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, students, or parents? 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 did not 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 preparation staff into two teams: One team would be

responsible for preparing and serving meals for in-school dining, while the other is charged with preparing, packing and serving meals for take-home. Many school site kitchens may lack sufficient facility space to manage these tasks simultaneously, 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 preparation 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 do not leave you with excess equipment you cannot 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.

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 less familiar with technology, may require language or other support accommodations, 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.

Consider simple solutions first to both increase likelihood of staff engagement and minimize financial burdens, 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 are not 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 fourteen 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](#).
- **Send safety reminders to staff regularly via email.** There are plenty of resources you can turn to for content, including information from School Nutrition Association (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 six 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?
- 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.

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 is 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 preparing 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 is simply not possible to keep employees six feet apart. 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 prepare 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?