

# MEAL SERVING OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS WHEN RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Each school needs to have a plan for each phase of the Governor's [MI Safe Schools Roadmap](#) to feed students while minimizing exposure to disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people stay at least 6 feet apart to practice **social distancing**. [Local health departments](#) should be contacted to ensure compliance with local rules and regulations and for additional guidance.

There are many items to consider when deciding **how to serve** and **where to eat meals** in the 2020-21 school year. The State of Michigan requires lunch and breakfast be served as stated in the [Michigan Revised School Code Act 451 of 1976, Section 380.1272a](#). This information was collected from a group of food service directors around the state and is intended for use in creating a safe plan for feeding students. When considering feeding students **the [risk level](#) of the community should be considered and the [phase](#) of the region**.

## [General Guidelines from CDC](#) to consider when planning for the 2020-21 school year:

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

## USDA Regulation Waivers:

- Submitted to USDA, but not approved: Potable water waiver would only require water when lunch is eaten in the cafeteria.
- USDA approved [Mealtime waiver](#) to allow meals served outside of 10 am - 2 pm for social distancing or take-home meals.
- USDA approved [Offer Versus Serve](#) is not required at Secondary School level.

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

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## Menu Considerations for all Service Models

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

## Safety Precautions for all Service Models

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

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## SY 20-21 Food Safety Resources

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### Communication

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

### A La Carte Considerations

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

### Financial Considerations

- Increased food cost due to individually wrapped items and packaging.
- Decreased participation and revenue is likely.
- Increased labor costs due to higher staffing needs (lower meals per labor hour).
- Consider working with other directors for consolidating purchases and maximizing consortia membership.
- Maximize use of entitlement for high price or center of the plate items. Do not leave entitlement money on the table.
- Explore Community Eligibility Provision.

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# Considerations for Cafeteria Service

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## Mealtimes

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

## Staffing

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

## Pre-ordering Meals

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

## Food

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

## Equipment

- Stanchions to direct students to maintain social distance while in line.
  - See resource section for examples
- Floor graphics to assist with social distancing.
  - See resource section for examples.
- Plexi glass divider at cashier station and other sneeze shields as needed.
- Ability to have cashless system.
- Hand sanitizer at beginning of line.

## Keeping Students with [Food Allergies Safe](#)

- Continue with current protocols to keep students safe.

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# Considerations for Classroom Service

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## Mealtimes

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

## Staffing

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

## Ordering Meals

- Accurate order system in place to have the correct number of meals for each classroom.
  - Free resources like Google Docs or an add on to your POS system
- System for late students to order meal.
- Consider “milk only” students when establishing order system.

## Food

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

## Equipment

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

## Student Hygiene

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

## Keeping Students with [Food Allergies Safe](#)

- Create a plan for each student based on their food allergies.
- The person who is supervising meal service should be trained in food allergies and choking prevention.
  - [Red Cross Choking poster](#)
- Avoid cross contamination on classroom surfaces.
- Do not discriminate against students who have allergies.

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# Considerations for Hallway Service

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## Mealtimes

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

## Staffing

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

## Equipment

- Point of sale for counting and claiming meals (mobile POS or card system).
- Use what you already have – mobile breakfast carts, unused salad bars or mobile shelving.
- Space on cart to transport all menu items.
- Speed racks with covers.

## Student Hygiene

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

## Keeping students with [Food Allergies Safe](#)

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

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# Other Serving Locations Considerations

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- Food truck in the parking lot.
- A la carte or concession stand window.
- Serving from carts outside.

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## Links Used in Document:

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI\\_Safe\\_Schools\\_Roadmap\\_FINAL\\_695392\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_Safe_Schools_Roadmap_FINAL_695392_7.pdf)

<https://www.malph.org/resources/directory>

<https://www.mistartmap.info/>

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(vjct4zxvcht0bl30t2grm4u0\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-380-1272a](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(vjct4zxvcht0bl30t2grm4u0))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-380-1272a)

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

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-meal-times-nationwide-waiver>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nationwide-waiver-offer-versus-serve-flexibility-senior-high-schools>

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/COVID-](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/COVID-19_Food_Safety_Resources_Web_Page_Document_693639_7.pdf)

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

[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-66254\\_50144\\_97639-518074--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-66254_50144_97639-518074--,00.html)

[https://mdoe.state.mi.us/GEMS/training/fmwiszip/presentation\\_html5.html](https://mdoe.state.mi.us/GEMS/training/fmwiszip/presentation_html5.html)

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