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## Food Services Guidance for Schools

This guidance outlines infection control recommendations and strategies for Maricopa County K - 12 schools<sup>1</sup> providing food services as they respond to community spread of disease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance is supplemental to the Arizona Department of Education's [Roadmap to Reopening Schools](#) and is not limited to the contents within. The guidance can be expanded upon as necessary to provide additional safety measures.

### RECOMMENDATIONS – Physical Distancing:

- Decrease the number of students congregating for meals
  - Create groups/cohorts who eat together daily to decrease the number of people each child is exposed to
  - Explore the use of alternate dining spaces that allow for 6 feet distancing between students (classrooms, outdoors (if weather permits), multipurpose room, library)
- Reduce the maximum occupancy of cafeterias to no more than 50 percent
  - Close off seats/sections to ensure adequate spacing of students
- Arrange chairs so all persons face in the same direction when eating
- Create one-way flow for thoroughfares, including cafeteria lines or areas where lines may form
  - Consider visible reminders, such as floor decals placed 6 feet apart, in areas where students line up to receive food

### RECOMMENDATIONS – Hygiene:

- Post highly visible signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, [including how to properly wash hands](#), avoid touching face, nose or eyes, and how to wear a mask near the cafeteria entrance and on or around tables
- Provide handwashing and hand sanitizing stations
  - Have students wash hands with soap and water before and after eating
  - Allow for hand hygiene before removing and applying masks
- Allow for mask hygiene and establish protocols for when masks are removed to consume food (i.e., proper storage)

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<sup>1</sup> Preschools associated with K-12 schools should follow the [guidance for Child Care Centers](#)



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- Ensure [cleaning and disinfection](#) of tables and chairs between uses
    - Designate staff responsible for cleaning and disinfection
    - Determine frequency of need
    - Have designated staff sign-off when process completed
  - Train all staff monitoring students at mealtimes of the proper hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer stations for themselves and students

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS – Food Service:**

- Have students bring their own meals, if possible, or serve individually plated/package meals
- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes)
  - If disposable items are not possible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher
- Ensure Food Service staff have access to and properly wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for their position (cloth face mask, disposable gloves)
  - Be sure to remove gloves between duties to prevent cross contamination
  - Practice hand hygiene after applying or removing gloves
- All staff should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items

#### **CONSIDER:**

- Installing a plexiglass barrier in front of workers and cashiers
- Using cash-free systems for purchasing to eliminate the need to handle money

#### **FOOD ALLERGIES:**

For student with food allergies- create an environment that is as safe as possible for students with food allergies

- Staff should be aware of students with food allergies and follow the [safety of children with food allergies.pdf](#)
  - Create a safe eating space for students with food allergies
  - Follow cleaning and disinfecting guidelines
    - Use separate cleaning equipment from the general eating area to clean tables dedicated for students with food allergies
- Reinforce hand washing after food contact
- [Clean and disinfect](#) surfaces after food contact is made
- Have a “do not share” food rule in place