



## School Nutrition COVID-19 Back to School Food Safety Resource

*The Iowa Department of Education Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services and the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals collaborated on development of this resource as of **August 12, 2020**.*

School Nutrition Programs are required to follow the same restrictions as restaurants or other food establishments. View Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) resources below:

- [Frequently Asked Questions for Food Businesses](#)
- [Iowa Food Business Opening Criteria During COVID-19](#)

### Guidance that is specific to school nutrition programs is outlined below:

**Food Code:** All meals provided for consumption in the cafeteria, classroom, or for remote consumption are subject to all food safety practices as outlined in the Iowa Food Code and all Food Establishment regulations as declared by the Department of Inspections and Appeals, Department of Health, and the state of Iowa.

**Cleaning, Sanitization, and Disinfection:** Increase cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfection frequencies for all areas of the establishment, especially high-contact surfaces such as door handles, tables, chairs, and restroom fixtures. Ensure disinfecting and sanitizing agents are effective for COVID-19.

- [EPA List of Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19](#)
- [Association of Food and Drug Officials Coronavirus Resource Page](#)

**Employees Diagnosed with COVID-19:** When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, the local public health agency will follow-up with the employee and provide guidance for them and their household members.

- Employers are encouraged to review their leave policy with employees and remind staff to stay home when they are ill.
- [Food Industry Recommended Protocols when Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19](#)
- [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) - COVID Information for the Public
- [Iowa Department of Inspections & Appeals](#) - Iowa Food Business Operating Criteria

**Social Distancing:** School Nutrition Staff should stay six feet apart from each other when possible while preparing and distributing meals. Classes or groups eating in the cafeteria should maintain six feet of distance from other classes or groups, if possible.

**Certified Food Protection Manager:** There must be an assigned Person-in-Charge on-site who can demonstrate knowledge of food safety practices and provide guidance to others assisting in the production.

**Meal Production:** Meals must be produced in a licensed food service establishment. Foods served may be made from scratch, heat and serve or pre-packaged as long as they meet food safety guidelines. Staff preparing the meals should have food safety training and follow food code requirements.

**Visitors in the Kitchen:** Access to the kitchen should be limited at all times to authorized personnel per FDA Food Code 2-103.11(B).



**PPE Equipment:** Providing staff the proper personal protective equipment and supplies is vital for ensuring the well-being and safety of employees. Most places of business require some degree of PPE to reduce the risk of injury and keep workers as protected as possible from potential hazards.

- As always, gloves should be worn when handling ready to eat foods. Change gloves when changing tasks, they become torn, or otherwise become contaminated. Hands should always be washed prior to putting on clean gloves.
- Local decisions or policies related to facial coverings are made in collaboration with the school's local public health, current proclamations issued by the governor, and legal counsel. If electing to wear facemasks, a SOP and training on proper use is needed. Resources are available from the CDC, FDA, and EPA which outline proper use of PPE and points to consider including in your SOP.

**Point of Sale Operations:** All meals served under NSLP/SBP must be recorded to the student receiving the meal. An accurate counting system must be in place. Consider touchless options or frequently disinfecting of the keypad.

**Meals in the Cafeteria:** Schools may utilize cafeterias and serving lines. It is the discretion of the local district to use regular lunch trays or disposable dinnerware. Per FDA Food Code 3-306.11, Food on display shall be protected from contamination by the use of packaging, food guards, display cases, or other effective means.

**Self-Serve Stations:** Use of pre-packaged items (i.e. baby carrots, milk cartons, etc.) in a self-serve station/area is allowable. Self-service of unpackaged food from salad bars, buffets, or other stations that meet Iowa Food Code requirements is allowable, however food service staff should also ensure the following:

- Adequate sneeze guards or barriers are installed;
- Students do not congregate around the self-service area;
- Plates shall only be used once and new plates are required for each trip;
- Self-service equipment is cleaned and sanitized frequently;
- In the event self-service operations are contaminated by bodily fluid discharged through cough, sneeze, or other method, the self-service station needs to be immediately closed, discard exposed food and beverages, and thoroughly clean and disinfect the station.

**Potable Water:** Staff can fill unused cups with water for student consumption. Refilling cups or water bottles from common containers (e.g. pitchers, thermal jugs, carafes, etc.), from a tap, or from a beverage-filling machine by students is strongly discouraged.

**Share Tables:** Schools are allowed to have a share table with pre-packaged shelf-stable items and whole fruit (rewashed), however it is not recommended at this time. Additional COVID-19 provisions must be considered and standard operating procedures updated to reflect changes. The Iowa Department of Education has not resubmitted the state-level waiver for TCS (time temperature control for safety) foods (i.e. milk, cheese, and yogurt). TCS foods will not be allowed on Share Tables until further notice.



**Meals in the Classroom:** It is recommended that local school districts develop standard operating procedures that encompass personal hygiene, proper disinfectant, handwashing, and monitoring of time and temperature of food. Nutrition staff, school administration, teachers, and custodial staff should all be included in this conversation.

- No food preparation, serving of unpackaged food, or share tables that include items that require rewashing (e.g. whole fruit) will be allowed outside of the licensed kitchen facility.
- School nutrition staff can prepare individual trays with unpackaged food and properly deliver them to the classroom. The teacher/school staff can distribute the trays of foods to students, as long as proper handwashing takes place.
- Family style meal service in the classroom or the lunchroom is strongly discouraged. If implemented Food Code 3-306.12 states that suitable utensils shall be provided for effective dispensing methods to protect the food from contamination and self-service should be monitored by a food employee trained in safe operating procedures.

**Classroom Snacks:** It is the discretion of the local school district to continue or discontinue classroom snacks. It is recommended that the district develops a policy and procedure which is communicated to their staff and households for the 2020-2021 school year. Districts may consider connecting this practice with the local wellness policy.

**A La Carte and Vending Machines:** Schools may allow students to purchase a la carte items and use vending machines. This practice is at the discretion of the local district. If utilized, it is the responsibility of the school to implement reasonable measures to ensure students do not congregate around the machine and that increased hygiene practices, and other public health measures are followed. Items may be made from scratch or be pre-packaged items.

**Other Internal Food Sources:** All school cafes, school stores, on-site coffee shops, and all other points of food distribution on school property must continue to comply with USDA Smart Snacks standards as well as food safety regulations and local pandemic protocols.

**Concession Stands:** [Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals Concession Stand Guidance](#)

- Concession stands that are located on school property are allowed to operate, effective August 24, 2020. This includes concessions operated by an entity which independently holds a food establishment license separate from the school's food license (e.g. a school booster organization or other independent contractor) and concession stands licensed as Temporary Food Establishments and Mobile Food Units providing concessions. Concession stands located on school property must comply with the requirements in the DIA Concession Stand Guidance.
- Concession stands that are located on school property or at a school-sponsored event operated by a nonprofit organization that would otherwise be exempt from licensure as a food establishment must comply with the requirements in the DIA Concession Stand Guidance.
- Concession stands at private or professional facilities located off of school property that are used to host high school athletic events are allowed to operate under the same provisions as a restaurant or a bar and the requirements in the DIA Concession Stand Guidance. This includes concession stands licensed as Temporary Food Establishments and Mobile Food Units providing concessions.