



DOE PRIORITY NOTICE

The following guidance is provided by Maine CDC and Maine DOE in response to questions about school-based services, including limited use for food service or other essential programming.

Child Nutrition

Many Maine children depend on the food they receive during the school day. At this time, U. S. CDC guidance estimates school closures may last between 8 and 20 weeks, once community transmission is happening. This makes it even more important for schools to try and continue, to the best of their abilities, to provide consistent food services. The U.S. CDC has asked schools to ensure continuity of meal programs for students. The U.S. CDC is not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow [good hygiene practices](#) (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.

We are encouraging schools to continue their food service programs during this time. Practicing normal sanitation procedures for food service will help to keep all staff as safe and healthy as possible. Use the following information to assist you in your work:

- Follow the three W's: WASH HANDS, WASH HANDS, WASH HANDS.
- While hand sanitizers can be helpful they are NOT as effective as washing your hands. When hand washing be sure to use warm water. Dry hands using disposable paper towels.
- Wear single use, disposable gloves when serving meals from any location, whether on site at your school or from a mobile unit. Remove and dispose of gloves after delivering meals to each mobile location.
- If distributing meals, be sure to take hand sanitizer with you to use as needed.
- If the school cafeteria will be open to distribute meals, follow normal sanitation

practices.

- [Environmental Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidance](#)
- [USDA Guidance on Food Service during COVID-19](#)

Coolers will be required since “offer vs serve” is no longer an option and the cold items, especially milk, must be kept cool. A suggestion is to place the coolers in the freezer or cooler overnight to help them maintain temperatures. Only take out of the coolers the meals needed for distribution. When returning from delivering meals be sure to clean and sanitize the coolers used.

Supplies

Supplies such as hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and masks are in short supply nationwide. Our state does have a supply for emergencies such as this, but even that supply is expected to run low. The highest priority for fulfilling requests from this supply is for the healthcare setting such as hospitals, long term care facilities, emergency medical provider and other similar agencies. Since schools are no longer full of children, they are not even on the tiered system of distribution. Because of this, we request that you refrain from completing any “Resource Requests” at this time. Washing your hands with soap and water is the best prevention. And surfaces can be wiped down with other cleaning solutions rather than disposable wipes.

Reminders

We understand that many schools are still open and have staff in them preparing distance learning for students. The halting of classroom-based instruction is to increase social distancing, which is difficult to do in hallways, classrooms and cafeterias filled with children. The school building itself is not unsafe, and adults can occupy this space if they follow the basics. While staff are in your buildings, please enforce the general social distancing rules:

- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Maintain distance of 6 feet when in the same room with others
- Avoid congregating in spaces with 10 or more people

Practice good hygiene:

- Clean hands at the door and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly

- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

The best thing that Maine people can do to protect their health is to practice social distancing and take the same preventive measures that avoid catching a cold: Wash your hands often for 20 seconds. Cover coughs and sneezes. Stay home if you are sick. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, shortness of breath, and lower respiratory distress. Call ahead to a health care professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness.



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