

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### EHS Circular Letter 2020-62

To: Local Directors of Health  
Certified Food Inspectors

From: Lori J. Mathieu, Branch Chief

Handwritten signature of Lori J. Mathieu, dated 2020.

Date: August 14, 2020

### Subject: Guidance for School Lunch Programs

On Monday, June 29, 2020, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) released guidance to inform local school boards of requirements and guidance necessary to safely open public schools in the fall. The complete guidance can be found at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>. Within the guidance, the agency has provided information related to meal requirements for those schools who operate under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Whether the school system engages in in-person learning or distance learning, the school is required to provide food (breakfast and/or lunch and possibly snacks) and milk to students, especially those who are eligible for free or reduced meals. While local school boards have flexibility to develop their individual reopening plans, the Food Protection Program (FPP) is providing the information below to assist local health departments (LHDs) who may receive inquiries from their local school boards prior to implementing their meal plan.

- Schools may develop plans for on-site meal service that includes typical lunch waves in the cafeteria (with proper social distancing), eating in classrooms with delivery of meals from the cafeteria to the classroom, pickup of grab-n-go meals by students or staff at the cafeteria, etc.
- Schools may develop plans for off-site meal service for students who are continuing distance-learning or in the event schools/classes must cease on-site instruction due to health/safety reasons. These plans may include parent pickup of meals or delivery of meals to students' homes by bus service/school vehicle.



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Should local school boards contact the LHD for guidance regarding compliance questions, the LHD should review the meal plan proposal and determine whether the plan provides for safe service of food. Items to consider include:

- **Measures to implement temperature control of Time/Temperature Controlled for Safety foods during preparation, storage, transportation, and service**
  - a. LHDs must consider risk when assessing plans that involve pick-up or delivery of foods to classrooms. Short durations outside of temperature control may be acceptable in order to deliver meals to the classroom or package meals in the cafeteria and gather for pick-up by staff or students. The use of time as a public health control measure may be well suited for these situations.
  - b. If meals are going to be delivered to student's homes, adequate temperature control must be maintained using coolers with ice packs, Cambro units, etc.
  - c. Cafeteria staff need to follow the Sector Rules and wear masks and gloves while preparing foods in the kitchen
- **Proper disinfection of areas used for meal service including the cafeteria and kitchen, classrooms, delivery vehicles, etc.**
  - a. Schools should refer to the Sector Rules and the EPA N-list for appropriate disinfectants. Food contact surfaces and cafeteria tables (if used) must be properly disinfected or sanitized according to proper procedures.
- **General food protection measures during transport of meals to classrooms or student homes and while being consumed in the classroom**
  - a. Foods must be prepackaged, wrapped, or covered when being delivered to classrooms.
  - b. Individual student lunches may be packaged in paper bags, to-go containers, etc.
  - c. Serving of foods "family style" in the classroom should be avoided.
  - d. Foods not eaten by one student may not be shared with another student.
- **Instructions for parents (if picking up meals for remote-learning students) to properly refrigerate or reheat foods upon returning home.**

Please contact the Food Protection Program at [DPH.foodprotprog@ct.gov](mailto:DPH.foodprotprog@ct.gov) if you have questions regarding this letter.

c: Tracey Weeks, Coordinator, Food Protection Program, DPH  
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