



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
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DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES



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## Preparing Your School Cafeteria for Feeding Large Groups During a Pandemic

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### What Makes Schools a Good Place to Feed Large Numbers of People?

- Schools feed large numbers of people on a daily basis.
- Most schools have cafeterias, cooking and refrigeration equipment, access to hand washing facilities, as well as adequate dishwashing areas.

### Important Safety Tips for Feeding Large Groups of People

#### 1. Food Safety

- Keep Hot Foods Hot - 140° F or above. Use your thermometer!
- Keep Cold Foods Cold - 41° F or below.
- During preparation, food can be kept safely at room temperature for periods of up to 30 minutes. Otherwise, keep all perishable food in refrigerators (41° F or below).
- Do not serve foods such as ground meat or egg salad sandwiches, chicken or other fowl, potato salad, and cream-filled desserts and pastries because these items require special handling to ensure safety.
- In general, do not serve home-prepared meals or hot dishes.
- Appropriate meal items include peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, smoked meat or cheese, hot soup, and canned or peeled fruits and vegetables.
- Do not use food from damaged containers
- When in doubt throw it out!

#### 2. Drinking Water (If your water has been contaminated)

- Use only boiled or bottled water.
- Use only commercially packaged ice, from approved sources.

#### 3. Garbage Handling

- Garbage should be disposed of frequently.
- If regular garbage service is interrupted or community garbage facilities are not accessible, use a remote area in the school for temporary storage.
- Be sure to clean these temporary storage areas thoroughly - and dispose of your garbage properly when regular disposal facilities reopen.

#### **4. Sanitizing Your Cooking and Eating Utensils**

- Use disposable dishes and utensils whenever possible, unless garbage service is an issue.
- Follow appropriate sanitation procedures to sanitize your dishes and utensils; wash, rinse, and sanitize with 50-100 ppm chlorine solution or 200 ppm quaternary ammonium solution. Be sure to use a safe water source and to check solution concentrations using chemical test strips.
- Sanitize cooking utensils and containers before use.
- Wash and sanitize countertops before food preparation.

#### **5. Staff Hygiene**

- All persons volunteering/working in your mass-feeding center should be oriented to hygiene and safety procedures before they begin work.
- Food workers should wash their hands frequently - twice after using the toilet, after eating, smoking or taking a break, or after handling materials or equipment that may be contaminated.
- Staff should keep clothing clean. Aprons should not be worn out of the kitchen or food preparation area.
- People who are ill (such as with intestinal or respiratory illnesses) should not be allowed to work in a food service operation.
- People who are suspected to be ill with pandemic flu while at work should be sent home.
- No one with open cuts or wounds on their skin should be allowed to handle food.
- Encourage hand washing of people being served, and do not allow self-service of food unless it is in individual packages.

#### **6. Supervision**

- Consider having the mass-feeding center supervised by someone who has experience with large food service operations, such as a food service manager.

#### **References**

Minnesota Department of Health, Mass Feeding For Emergency Operations:  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/emergency/natural/feeding.html#Finding](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/emergency/natural/feeding.html#Finding)

Washington County, Oregon, Department of Health and Human Services Food Safety:  
[www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/hhs/env\\_hlth/food%20safety/fsmain.htm](http://www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/hhs/env_hlth/food%20safety/fsmain.htm)

Food safety information in different languages:  
[www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fsglang.html](http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fsglang.html)

*Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) for more information. For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please contact the NH DHHS Communicable Disease Control and Surveillance Section at 603-271-4496 (after hours 1-800-852-3345 ext.5300).*

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