



## Indiana State Department of Health

### Back to School Resources, School FAQs Cafeteria/Food Service

**Q: I've been told by another director that the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has said we need a barrier like Plexiglass to shield our staff and students. Could we wear face shields while serving instead of using plexiglass shields? I also want to know if my staff is required to wear face masks while preparing meals if they spread out during that time.**

A: Some recommendations include:

- Provide boxed lunches and options that do not require students to move through the traditional lunch line and pick up their selections
- Have an adult provide the access to/handoff of items to avoid students reaching in to pick up food
- Use Plexiglass panels if students are moving through a traditional line
- [Reinforce](#) no sharing of food, utensils or drinks
- Add tables in the café and practice 6 feet of distancing between students in any food lines and at tables.

There are multiple options. Think through ones that best fit your situation.

For workers preparing food, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends maintaining 6 feet of social distance, if possible. Masks should be worn to help prevent the most common method of transmission, respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or does similar things. People who are sick but show no signs can spread COVID-19, which is why masks are so important. [Here's more guidance from the CDC.](#)

**Q: Water fountains should be turned off, but what is the guidance for water bottle filling stations?**

A: The ideal is to have an adult use gloves and fill the water bottles to decrease touch points. An option would be to have an adult monitor the filling station(s) (this option increases touchpoints). Preference would be to obtain water bottles through food service for breakfast and lunch distribution.

**Q: If students are eating in the cafeteria, do they need to be seated facing the same direction, or can they be seated across the table from other students?**

A: Facing the same direction and spacing them out to ensure social distancing is the preferred approach. If the cafeteria has round tables, and students who sit across from each other will be 6 feet apart, then they should be staggered so they are not directly facing one another.

**Q: I've seen guidance that says concessions may be sold at athletic and fine arts events if:**

- food handlers and cashiers use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and
- only prepared, prepackaged food is available

**Q. Would our concession stand workers with gloves and masks on be able to "prepare" hamburgers and hot dogs and wrap them in foil to be served?**

A: These items would be considered prepackaged if they are individually wrapped, and condiments are included with the food. Bottles of ketchup, mustard or other condiments should not be placed in a buffet style, where they will be frequently touched. Classroom items should also be prepackaged.

**Q: What specific policies and/or procedures are being discussed to address students with life-threatening allergies and the proposal of eating lunch in the classroom, especially at the elementary level? Will this policy increase workload of classroom teachers?**

A: Both Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) and the CDC recommend allergen-free classrooms. Schools should consider food allergies as they make and adjust their plans.

**Q: How is lunch handled where students will not be wearing masks, and it would be hard to get 6 feet of separation?**

A: The CDC recommends that students bring their lunches or that schools provide prepackaged items, box lunches and disposable food items whenever possible. When possible, having younger children eat in their classrooms can help students in cohorts and reduce potential exposures. Assigning seats at lunch can help identify close contacts of a student who tests positive. Students should wash or sanitize their hands thoroughly and often, and any surfaces they will touch should be disinfected before and after use, whether in a classroom or lunchroom.