

MEAL SERVICE CONSIDERATIONS

Before the academic year begins, New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) school nutrition leaders will have to decide how to serve meals in new ways that account for social distancing and the COVID-19 pandemic. The following considerations can be discussed with your superintendent and business officials when determining the best meal service model for your school nutrition program.

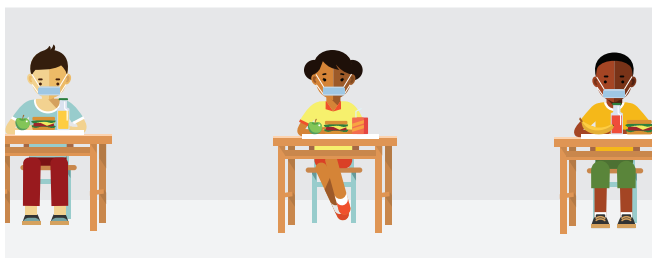
FOUR MEAL SERVICE MODEL OPTIONS

Each district has the flexibility to determine the model that provides the best fit for their operations. The following are four models that may work.



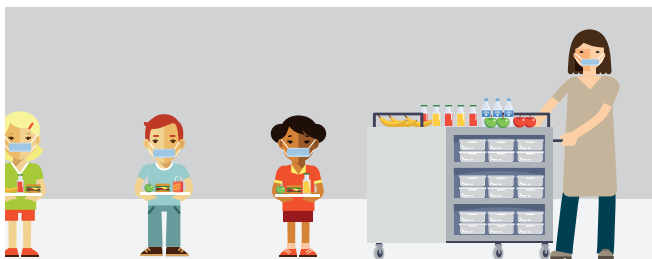
Socially Distant Cafeteria

Meals are served to students in the cafeteria with additional safety, distancing and sanitation practices implemented.



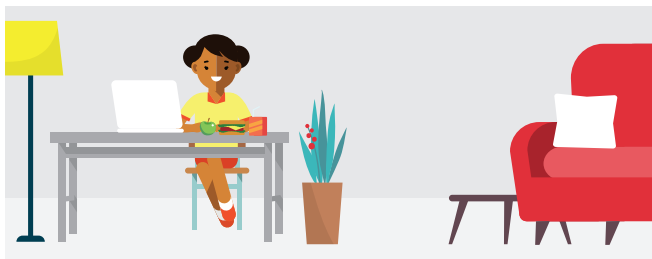
Meals in the Classroom

Meals are served to students in the classroom.



Mobile Cafeterias

Meals are served on mobile food carts located throughout a school's campus.



Offsite Meals

Students that elect to continue distance learning are provided meals through delivery or a grab-and-go model.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECIDING ON A MEAL SERVICE OPTION

FINANCIAL - School districts and charter organizations should assess their financial needs in relation to each meal service model. Any of the meal service models will likely impact child nutrition department revenue in different ways; these meal service changes may require general funds to ensure continued operation of the cafeteria.

PLANNING - Each meal service model brings unique meal planning needs. Considerations include how much time the child nutrition team will need to create the menu that works for the model. Additional consideration should be made to the time necessary to place food orders. Currently, many distributors in New Mexico project they will need an estimated 8-week lead time to procure food items once an order has been placed.

STAFFING & SAFETY - Different models will require different staffing levels and training implementation. Training time required for existing staff to learn new processes and the possibility of changes in staffing should be considered for each option.

CUSTOMERS - Job loss due to COVID-19 may increase the demand for school meals as more students become eligible for free and reduced-priced meals. Consider ways you can promote and streamline participation in meal programs.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR EACH MEAL SERVICE MODEL

SOCIALLY DISTANT CAFETERIA

- Fewer children in the cafeteria may impact overall revenue for the child nutrition department.
- Increased safety and sanitation practices will require additional materials and staff training.
- Lunch serving times may need to change to allow for fewer students in the cafeteria at one time.
- Serving lines may be longer based on the number of lunch periods and students allowed to be served at once.
- This may be closest to business as usual.
- Districts may be eligible for increased reimbursement percentages under federal programs such as CEP.

MEALS IN THE CLASSROOM

- A la carte sales and paid meals may be impacted.
- Increased safety and sanitation practices will require additional materials and staff training.
- Menus may need to change for this delivery model.
- Additional transportation equipment such as carts and coolers will need to be planned for and procured.
- Manufacturers and food distributors are projecting a shortage of individually wrapped products. Sufficient child nutrition staff or other resources may need to be in place to individually wrap items.
- Meals in the classroom may increase overall reimbursement for meals served. Districts may be eligible for increased reimbursement percentages under federal programs such as CEP.
- Teachers and classroom aids may need additional training.
- May allow for longer meal times compared to other models.

MOBILE CAFETERIAS

- Meal planning and additional equipment procurement (such as carts and coolers) require significant planning time before implementation.
- Increased safety and sanitation practices will require additional materials and staff training.
- Manufacturers and food distributors are projecting a shortage of individually wrapped products. Sufficient child nutrition staff or other resources may need to be in place to individually wrap items.
- May allow for longer meal times compared to other models.
- Meals in the classroom may increase overall reimbursement for meals served. Districts may be eligible for increased reimbursement percentages under federal programs such as CEP.

OFFSITE MEALS

- Manufacturers and food distributors are projecting a shortage of individually wrapped products. Sufficient child nutrition staff or other resources may need to be in place to individually wrap items.
- Increased staffing will be needed if preparing for offsite and onsite meals.
- Increased logistical planning is necessary to determine how students will receive and/or take home their meals for virtual learning.