

School Meals

In-Person Learning Resources for Parents and Caregivers at Chicago Public Schools — A Resource Created by Healthy Schools Campaign for Parents and Caregivers in Chicago Public Schools

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School Meals

Students should continue to receive access to nutritious meals from their schools and have the opportunity to safely eat these meals at designated times throughout the day. Many schools have adapted in-classroom mealtimes to limit travel throughout the building and exposure to other people throughout the day.

What Experts Say

Public health experts agree that, when possible, students should eat meals in the classroom and avoid large crowds in school cafeterias. Best practices for school meals include:

- In place of holding lunch in a traditional cafeteria, students may eat lunch in their classrooms. School-provided lunches may be repackaged and brought to the classroom to prevent crowding in the cafeteria.
- School meals should be held outside whenever possible.
- If the cafeteria must be used, students should maintain physical distance or be separated from one another using plexiglass shields to reduce transmission during a time when masks must be removed.
- Some schools may allow students in the same class or cohort to eat together but should maintain distance between classes or cohorts.

What CPS Says

Students will eat lunch in their classrooms, or if space allows, eat lunch in the lunchroom on a staggered schedule. Students will wash hands before and after eating. Students will use hand sanitizer every time they re-enter the classroom.

Parents and Caregivers Should Know

Parents and caregivers will want to ask more questions about how meals will be handled safely, such as:

- Where will my student be eating their meals?
- Will school meals be adapted, such as will the school be serving pre-packaged foods?
- What is the school meal schedule to limit exposure to students outside of my student's pod?
- How many students will sit at one table together and how far apart will they be seated?
- What will the mask-wearing rules be in the cafeteria?
- What type of contact will my student have with cafeteria personnel and in which manner?
- Who will be supervising students in the classroom during lunch, and how many other pods will this supervisor have contact with?
- What will student responsibility regarding cleanup at the end of meals?

The best practices in this document are based on guidelines provided by the Harvard [T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).