



Feeding in COVID-19 Non-Congregate Shelters

Purpose

This job tool describes how to conduct feeding operations in non-congregate shelters opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. For guidance on providing meals in congregate shelters, please review the [Feeding in Congregate Shelters Job Tool](#). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Red Cross has adapted standard procedures for how to provide meals, snacks, and beverages in order to:

- Ensure the safety of all workers;
- Limit the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Procedures

The Shelter Site Manager or designee is responsible for ensuring the following procedures are followed.

Social Distancing

- Maintain a 6-foot distance when talking with clients and offering food or other supplies.
- When offering masks, food, or supplies, use the “set it down and step back” method:
 - Place the item down on a table or other surface.
 - Step 6 feet away so client can safely pick up the item.
- When delivering meals to clients, use the “drop and go” method. For example, at a hotel being used as a shelter, place the meal at the client’s door, knock on the door, and step at least 6 feet away.
- Do not interact with staff or clients in a confined space, such as a vestibule or small room.
- Wash hands before and after each meal service.
- Wipe off cell phones and devices with a disinfectant wipe every 4 hours.
- Do not enter isolation care areas.
 - Only Disaster Health Services staff is authorized to enter isolation care areas.
- Refer to: [SAMHSA Tool: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation](#)

Personal Protective Equipment

- All staff handling food and beverages must wear:
 - Masks
 - Food-safe disposable gloves
 - Hair nets or hats
 - Beard nets (if you have facial hair)

Enhanced Sanitation

- Clean all surfaces with sanitizing spray, wipes, or bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water) every 2 hours during feeding times, focusing on:

- Areas where food is served;
- Areas where eating is taking place;
- Entry and exit touch points into feeding area (like doorknobs and trash cans).
- Place portable handwashing stations near snack area, meal serving area, and eating areas, when available.
- Provide hand sanitizer to clients using the following strategies:
 - Use motion-activated hand sanitizer stations when possible.
 - Give every client their own small bottle of hand sanitizer when available.
 - When providing individually wrapped hand sanitizing wipes (like Wet Naps), lay them out in a single layer. Do not place them in a box or other container where people have to reach in and get them.

Meal Requirements

- **Do not use bulk food in Cambros or any large container that requires food to be transferred to a clamshell or other container at the shelter to be consumed.**
- Use individually packaged meals. Examples include:
 - Boxed meals (as with sandwich, fruit, and chips) completely contained in a box or bag;
 - Complete meals from a caterer, vendor, or restaurant that are delivered already sealed in containers and labeled with the contents;
 - Frozen thaw-and-serve sandwiches.
- Use shelf-stable, single-serve, ready-to-eat food items procured through nationally or locally contracted suppliers. Examples include:
 - Heater meals (also known as meals-ready-to-eat or MREs);
 - Follow instructions on the box for using heater meals.
 - Demonstrate to clients how to safely heat their meals.
 - Instruct clients with children to heat the meals for them.
 - Meal bars;
 - Tuna and chicken in pouches;
 - Fruit cups;
 - Peanut butter packets.
- Provide bottled water with every meal.

Food Safety

- Ensure all food is delivered at safe temperatures.
- When placing food orders, confirm that the establishment being ordered from follows local health department food safety rules.
- If meals are being delivered by a caterer/vendor and the driver is not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), provide it to them if they help with distribution to clients.
- If necessary, check food temperatures upon delivery.
 - Hot foods must stay hotter than 140°F and cold foods must stay colder than 41°F when held for more than four hours.
 - When checking sealed meals:
 - Follow guidance in the *Personal Protective Equipment* section above.
 - Open one edge of container, sandwich wrapping, etc.

- Insert thermometer.
 - Reseal container, wrapping, etc.
1. Deliver meals to clients quickly to ensure food safety.
 - Double-bag and discard unused prepared food.

Serving Snacks and Beverages

Consider available resources, such as staff, storage, and layout of the non-congregate shelter site, and choose the strategy that fits the needs of the operation. The strategies below are examples. The operation may use a different strategy that meets the needs of clients to maintain social distancing and food safety. **Remember to practice social distancing as outlined above.**

Strategy	Method
Clients pick up snacks and water at a designated area daily.	Create bags of snacks with at least 2-3 snacks per person for each family. Set up an area for clients to pick up snack bags using the “set it down and step back” method. Choose a set time each day for snack pick-up. Inform clients of pick-up times.
Deliver snacks and water to clients once per day.	Deliver at least 2-3 snacks per person for each member of the family and deliver to clients once a day. Communicate the daily snack delivery time to clients by hanging signs if allowed by facility or other viable method.
Deliver snacks and water to clients multiple times per day.	Deliver at least 1 snack for each person in the family 3 times per day. Communicate snack delivery times to clients.
Deliver snacks and water to clients with each meal.	Deliver at least 1 snack per person for each family member with each meal.
Deliver snacks and water with first meal.	Deliver at least 3 snacks per person for each member of the family with the first meal being delivered.

Strategies for Serving Meals to Clients

Consider available resources, such as staff, storage, and layout of the non-congregate shelter site, and choose the strategy that fits the needs of the operation. The strategies below are examples. The operation may also use a different strategy if it meets the needs of clients and maintains social distancing and food safety. **Remember to practice social distancing as outlined above.**

Strategy	Method
Clients pick up meals at designated area at set times.	<p>Set up an area for clients to pick up meals using the “set it down and step back” method. Steps to set up a meal pickup area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use tape to mark spots on the floor 6 feet apart. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct clients to stand on the tape and move to next tape when the client ahead of them has moved forward. 2. Spread out boxed/bagged meals and shelf-stable food on tables. 3. Make sure boxed/bagged meals are labeled with the contents. For example, for boxed sandwich meals, label with the main meat component (like ham, turkey, or vegetable) so clients do not open the boxes. 4. Place items with nutrition information visible to the client when possible. For example, place canned items so that labeled nutrition information is visible. 5. Allow clients to take their meals one at a time and maintain a 6-foot distance. 6. Instruct clients to take what they touch. If they touch an item, they must take it and consume it or discard it.
Deliver meals to clients multiple times per day.	Deliver each meal to clients. Communicate the daily meal delivery times to clients. Knock on the door and leave the meal at the door, stepping at least 6 feet away before the client opens the door to collect their meal.
Deliver breakfast with dinner.	Deliver shelf-stable breakfast items to clients with the dinner meal. Knock on the door and leave the meal at the door, stepping at least 6 feet away before the client opens the door to collect their meal.
Caterer/vendor provides direct meal delivery.	Contracted caterer/vendor delivers meals directly to clients. Instruct the caterer/vendor to knock on the door and leave the meal at the door, stepping at least 6 feet away before the client opens the door to collect their meal.