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| SEAL_Revised, Brighter Letters_crop_compressed | **Commonwealth of Massachusetts** |
| ***Executive Office of Health and Human Services*** |
| **Department of Youth Services** |
| ***Guidelines for Youth Meals in Residential Settings***  ***Updated 7.1.2022*** |

This Guidance establishes the guidelines and procedures that all Department of Youth Services (DYS) state and contracted provider staff must follow when providing meals to youth in residential settings. DYS reserves the right to revoke or modify this protocol and these procedures at any time, if it determines that the public health and/or safety of youth and staff are at risk, or to comply with state and federal guidance.

**All meals are to be served in cafeterias and outdoor spaces with social distancing to the extent possible**

The following guidelines must be adhered to when preparing, serving, and consuming meals.

* All residential programs should return to cafeteria-style dining.
* Service food and beverage stations, including salad bars, shall be open consistent with licensing entity requirements. Hand sanitizers must be readily available to both youth and staff in cafeterias and next to the self-service stations. Proper hand washing or sanitizing is required before and after eating.
* Serving utensils for self-service stations must be cleaned and sanitized after every meal service.
* If food needs to be pre-portioned for youth in quarantine, all components including entrée, side dishes, salad, fruits, and milk shall be provided. The meals for youth with food allergies or who require special dietary accommodation will be clearly marked and transported to avoid cross contamination.
* High-touched surface, shared utensils, and containers, such as condiment containers, shall be cleaned and sanitized after every meal service.
* Staff can eat with youth at the same table. Staff and youth shall not eat anywhere other than their designated areas. Staff may not eat meals while supervising classroom instruction.
* Once mealtime is completed, staff will supervise youth disposing of any food not consumed and ensure that it is placed in the proper receptacle. Staff will also ensure that youth place all items used, including, but not limited to plates, cups, utensils, and trays in a designated bin for proper cleaning and disinfecting by the food service staff.
* All tables and chairs are to be cleaned and sanitized before and after meals regardless of utilization. Daily cleaning and disinfecting will continue for “high touch” areas including, but not limited to, the restrooms used during mealtime. ( [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html)).
* Outdoor air ventilation is encouraged. Open windows and doors if feasible and safe. Fan boxes may be used to increase outdoor air circulation in program settings where applicable and safe to do so.