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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*** |

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. 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 at cafeterias and outdoor spaces with social distancing. 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, are open. Staff and youth, including fully vaccinated, should wear a mask at the self-service food and beverage stations.
* While social distancing is encouraged, youth who are fully vaccinated or wear masks do not need to social distance. Hand sanitizers must be made 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.
* All tables and chairs are to be sanitized before and after meals regardless of utilization.
* All tables should be a least three (3) feet apart. Staff will ensure social distancing. Youth who are fully vaccinated or wear masks do not need to social distance.
* Fully vaccinated youth do not need to wear masks when dining with other youth who are fully vaccinated.
* Fully vaccinated youth (youth for whom 14 or more days has elapsed after the second of the 2-dose series) can dine together in small groups without social distancing. Unvaccinated youth are to be seated at separate tables. Group companions should be consistent across meals and days.
* If food need 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.
* Portable water will be provided with meals at cafeterias and other designated dining space.
* High-touched surface, shared utensils and containers, such as condiment containers, shall be cleaned and sanitized after every meal service.
* Staff must have a designated eating area away from the youth. This is the only time and place that staff may remove their masks. Masks are to be placed on a napkin or paper towel while eating, with the inside of the mask facing up. Guidelines for proper mask removal will be provided. Fully vaccinated staff may dine together in small groups without social distancing; however, no staff may not dine with youth.
* Staff and youth shall not eat anywhere other than designated areas. Staff may not eat their meal while supervising classroom instruction since they cannot adequately socially distance without appropriate use of mask.
* 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 their plates, 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 which includes, but is not limited to, the restrooms used during meal time. ( [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.