

Salad Bars and other COVID issues for School Year 20-21

Information given out at the Back to School workshops at the end of July and into August, asked school nutrition professionals to contact their local health inspectors about the use of salad bars in the school meal programs for the coming school year.

North Dakota Department of Health recently updated their guidance for Food service and School meals to model the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s recommendations as follows:

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) has provided guidance for school administrators and food service staff to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during school meal service. The current recommendations are as follows:

- Staff should wear masks at all times during meal preparation and service, and during breaks except when eating or drinking.
- Students should wear masks when moving through the food service line.
- Maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors). Using additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime seating such as the gymnasium or outdoor seating can help facilitate distancing. Students should not be excluded from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement, including during mealtimes.
- Given very low risk of transmission from surfaces and shared objects, there is no need to limit food service approaches to single use items and packaged meals.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals.
- Promote hand washing before, after, and during shifts, before and after eating, after using the toilet, and after handling garbage, dirty dishes, or removing gloves.
- Improve ventilation in food preparation, service, and seating areas.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued several [Child Nutrition COVID-19 Waivers](#).

Based upon this guidance, self-service salad bars and beverage stations do not need to be limited during school meal service.

The following was also sent from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction newsletter "The Weekly Blast" sent out last Friday (August 13th). This notes that the requirement for mask wearing is solidly with the local school board and the local health authority.

Are Masks Required?

The NDDPI and the state superintendent of schools, Kirsten Baesler, are prohibited by state law from imposing mask mandates.

Local school boards are empowered to set policy on mask wearing by students and teachers, with guidance from public health authorities. This year, the Legislature approved [HB1323](#),

which bars any statewide elected official or the state health officer from imposing a mask mandate. (The governor vetoed this bill, but the Legislature overrode his veto.) This bill is listed in the North Dakota Century Code (the state law books) as [NDCC 23-07-12.1](#).

