Taking Care of Your Team During COVID-19

Leadership Checklist

Daily

- Check-in with each site lead at the end of the day.
- Check-in with each member of your support team.
- Spend time helping at a site (rotate sites).
- Thank your staff for their hard work.

Weekly

- Visit as many feeding locations and prep kitchens as possible each week.
- Spend at least 30 minutes training site leads on safety precautions, updating staff on recent developments, and discussing strategies for keeping staff safe.
- Plan ahead for anything that may affect meal service in the next 2 weeks.
- Surprise and delight your team with words of affirmation and acts of gratitude.
- Communicate with District Office Administration. Update them on what is happening. Ask for help where you need it most!

Helpful Tips

- Delegate administrative tasks.
- Adjust your schedule... plan the next day's itinerary in advance. Even if you don't stick to it, this will give you a game plan for the next day.
- Allow your team to shine while keeping them as safe as possible.
- Remind staff their safety is more important than the speed at which they serve.

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Details & Support

Daily

1. Check-in with each site lead at the end of the day via email, phone, or video conferencing. Questions to ask may include:
   - How did meal production go?
   - How did meal service go?
   - Any unexpected challenges?
   - Any anticipated shortages coming up?
   - Do any staff have signs or symptoms that indicate possible illness?
   - Have families expressed any concerns or questions I should be aware of?
   - What are the teams concerned about most today?
   - How can we support our teams this week?
   - What safety precautions did you review with the team today? (Optional: provide Site Leads with sign-in logs for daily staff reminders. See Daily Care Check-in form)

2. Check-in with each member of your support team every day via email or phone, at minimum. Questions to ask may include:
   - What are the status updates on ______.
   - Are there any district updates that may impact Nutrition Services?
   - Any unexpected challenges?
   - Have families expressed any concerns or questions I should be aware of?
   - How can we support our teams this week?

3. Spend time helping at a site (rotate sites and work areas daily). Aim to visit every meal service site and kitchen each week, or as often as possible depending on how many sites you have. A sample schedule may look like this:
   - **Monday**: Site 1 - Kitchen Prep (wash produce, etc.)
   - **Tuesday**: Site 2 - Production (assemble bags, etc.)
   - **Wednesday**: Site 3 - Meal Service (hand out meals, etc.)
   - **Thursday**: Site 4 - Kitchen Prep (wash dishes, etc.)
   - **Friday**: Site 5 - Meal Service (support social distancing, etc.)

   **Note**: This is an opportunity to work hands on with your kitchen teams. The appreciation, respect, and insight gained by doing this is invaluable. This is also a good way to identify gaps in staff training
and opportunities to improve the flow, safety and efficiency of your operations. Be the fearless leader they need right now!

**Working from Home?** If you are working from home, all of the other steps outlined in this checklist become even more important. Consider different communication methods (i.e. photos, videos, FaceTime) to ensure you have a clear picture of how the operation is set up, and how your staff is implementing the safety procedures.

4. **Thank** your staff for their hard work. During these unprecedented times, your teams are working harder than ever in risky environments and under new procedures. Take a moment each day to verbally show your gratitude for their commitment to the school nutrition program. Thank your people individually and show random acts of kindness and appreciation as often as possible. We can’t give hugs or high fives, but we can show our love and appreciation in many other ways.

**Weekly**

1. **Visit** as many feeding sites and prep kitchens as possible over the course of the week. This allows you to get a full perspective of how your program is operating. Take note of any differences you notice between sites and opportunities for training and extra support.

2. Spend at least **30 minutes** training Site Leads on safety precautions each week, updating staff on recent developments, and discussing strategies for keeping staff safe. Safety guidelines are changing rapidly during this crisis. Frequent training is critical to ensuring your staff is implementing current safety recommendations appropriately. Consider hosting group calls on Zoom or Google Hangouts in lieu of in person meetings.

   **Tip:** Subscribe to the LunchAssist ListServ to stay up-to-date on everything you need to know about staff safety. Join the Community of Practice call (or listen to the recording) hosted every Thursday morning at 9am by LunchAssist and Center for Ecoliteracy for a discussion about the week’s updates and examples of what other programs are doing to support their teams during the COVID-19 crisis.

3. Plan ahead for anything that may affect meal service in the next **2 weeks**. Some questions to consider may include:

   - **What else is going on at the schools that could impact meal participation?** (i.e. Is the district distributing iPads or books next week? Hint--this will likely increase your participation that day.)
   - **What shortages are we seeing in my region? What will we do if a key item on our menu becomes unavailable?**
   - **Do we have enough shelf-stable back-up food?**
   - **Do we have enough back-up staff, in the event someone becomes ill?**
   - **What are the team’s concerns this week?**
   - **Look at the weather forecast. Are there any weather conditions that need to be addressed? Do we need to purchase anything to help support our team during inclement weather?**
4. Surprise and **delight** your team with acts of gratitude. Actions speak louder than words. In addition to verbally thanking your team, aim to show your gratitude in creative ways. Some examples might include:

- A handwritten note
- A certificate of appreciation from the Superintendent and Board
- A small gift, such as chocolates, tea or coffee
- Lunch for your team, such as pizza delivery or salads from Panera
- Picking up a box of bagels and carafe of coffee for the morning crew

**Helpful Tips**

1. **Delegate** administrative tasks as much as possible. Your presence in the field is extremely valuable at this time. Make time to be with your teams by delegating tasks like ordering, scheduling, or menu planning to your office staff.

2. Adjust your schedule... plan the next day’s itinerary in **advance**. Even if you don’t stick to it, this will give you a game plan for the next day. With so much to do right now, it’s easy to get buried in the busy-work and miss out on accomplishing all of your high-priority tasks and goals.

   - Make a plan for the next day and decide in advance what will be delegated, and by whom.
   - Consider shifting your normal schedule to work earlier or later in the day.

3. Take time to speak with your staff about prioritizing safety over speed. The goal during this time is to ensure that families progress through lines as **safely** as possible, not necessarily as **quickly** as possible. Staff may struggle to slow down, so frequent reminders are recommended.

4. Allow your team to **shine** while keeping them as **safe** as possible. When helping at sites, try to let the site teams do their jobs as usual--you are there to help and show support, not micromanage. Let them shine and lead. Take notes about things to follow-up with them about and recap with everyone before you leave.

   **EXCEPTION:** If you see an immediate food safety or COVID-19 safety violation, communicate this to the site lead and take action immediately to keep people safe.

5. **Remind** staff their safety is more important than the speed at which they serve. The bell won’t ring for kids to go back to class, people will wait. Be safe!
Working from Home?

Working remotely can present its own set of challenges. But that doesn’t mean you can’t still be an effective leader for your team. Here are a few tips to help you manage from afar.

- Create a list of tasks that **must** be completed daily. Assign these tasks to one or more members of your team.

- Consider creating a shared Google Drive or Dropbox folder, or District Share Drive. Add any tools, printouts, menus and checklists that your team might need to accomplish the tasks you’ve listed in the bullet above. Share this folder with the person you assign to takeover the tasks that cannot be completed remotely.

- Check in with your Site Leads and administrative support teams daily via phone, email, or video conferencing. Try to be available during all working hours, to answer questions and help troubleshoot challenges that may arise.

- Send a weekly email to your team, highlighting updates and recognizing team members who have shown great teamwork. Include photos from your sites for extra impact and value (request that your site leads send photos when possible). Send this email to all staff—even those at home, to foster inclusion, teamwork and communication.

- New to video conferencing? Check out [this tutorial](#) from Zoom about how to schedule your first meeting!

**Note:** You will need to create an account on Zoom. [Click here](#) to create a free account.