



Feeding in COVID-19 Congregate Shelters

Purpose

This job tool describes how to conduct feeding operations in congregate shelters opened in areas affected by COVID-19. In this environment, the Red Cross has altered guidance for how to provide meals, snacks, and beverages in order to:

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

Procedures

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

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
 - See numbered steps in the *Serving Snacks and Beverages* and *Serving Meals to Non-Isolated Clients* sections for details.
- Do not interact with staff or clients in a confined space, such as a vestibule or small room.
- Wash your hands before and after interactions.
- Wipe off cell phones and devices with 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);
 - Instructions for using heater meals are on the box.
 - 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.

Food Safety

- Ensure all food is delivered at safe temperatures. Check food temperatures upon delivery.
 - Hot foods must stay hotter than 140°F and cold foods must stay colder than 41°F.
 - 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.
- Double-bag and discard unused prepared food.

Serving Snacks and Beverages

- All staff handling snacks and beverages follow guidance in the *Personal Protective Equipment* section above.
- Serve only individually packaged snack items and single-serve bottled water and beverages, such as juice boxes.

- Shelter staff control and serve snacks, water, coffee, tea, and other beverages:
 - Do not set snacks and other items out for clients to take.
 - Place these items in an area controlled by staff.
- Maintain social distancing when serving snacks and beverages by following these steps for the “set it down and step back” method.

Process for Snacks and Beverages

Step:	Staff member will:
1	Use tape to mark the floor 6 feet from the table.
2	Stand behind the table to maintain distance.
3	Ask the client to stand on the tape and ask for the items they want.
4	Place the items down and step at least 6 feet away.
5	For coffee and tea, ask the client what condiments they want and place them on the table with the coffee/tea. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ice out of reach of clients. Fill cup with ice and set it on the table for the client to take when ice is requested.
6	Ask the client to step to the table and take their item(s).
7	Clean the table area before placing food for the next client.

Serving Meals to Clients in the Isolation Care Area

- Only Disaster Health Services (DHS) staff serves clients in the isolation care area.
- Place meals and snacks in the donning area.
- Disaster Health Services staff follows the guidance in the [Isolation Care Areas for Clients and Staff During Disasters Job Tool](#) to bring food into isolation area.
 - Disaster Health Services staff delivers meals to clients at their cots.
 - Disaster Health Services staff delivers snacks and two (2) individual bottles of water with each meal.
 - Dispose of refuse from meals in the trash receptacles in the isolation care area.

Serving Meals to Non-Isolated Clients

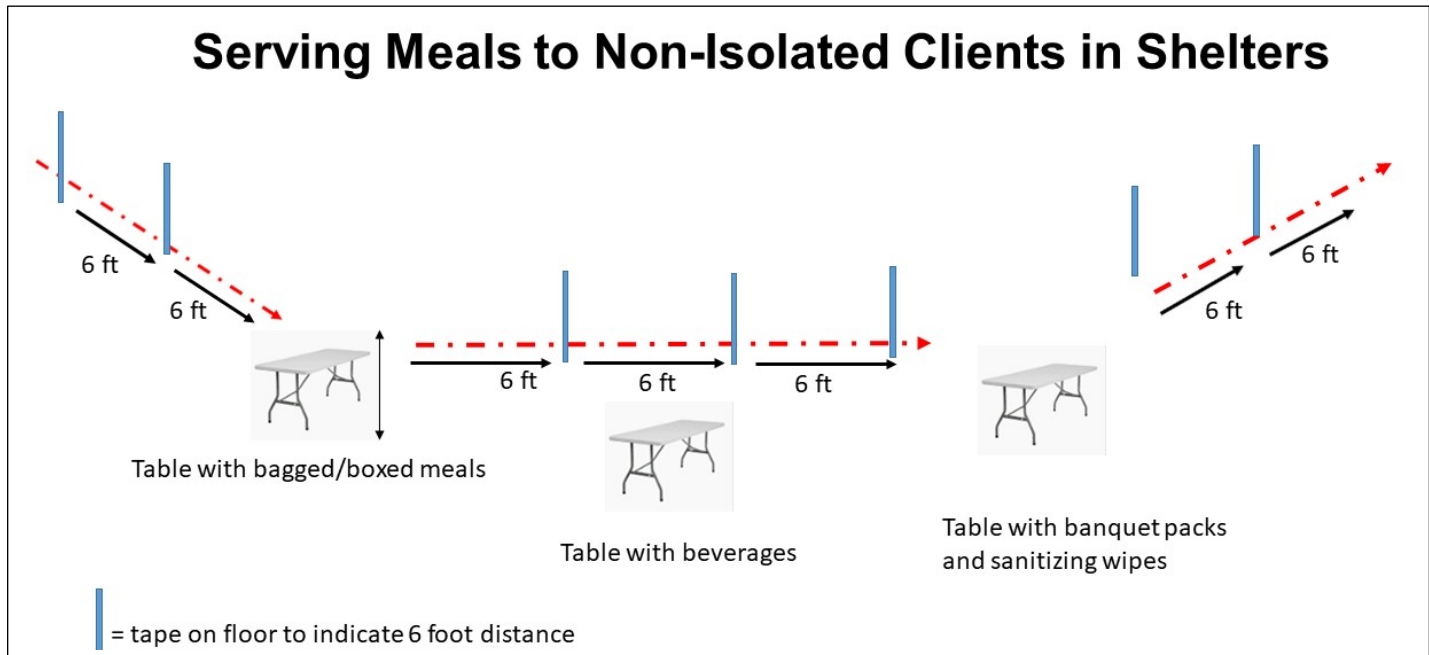
- All staff handling food and beverages wears PPE outlined in the *Personal Protective Equipment* section.
- Use the “set it down and step back” distribution method.

Process for Meals

Step:	Staff member will:
1	Use tape to mark spots on the floor 6 feet apart (see illustration below). <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.

Step:	Staff member will:
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 6 feet apart.
6	Instruct clients to take what they touch. If they touch an item, they must take it and consume it or discard it.

- Display signage reminding clients to read labels on food items and choose according to their dietary needs.
- Ensure that prepared meals are not left out for longer than 2 hours.
 - Discard hot and cold food sitting on a table for more than 2 hours.
- Discard all trash in trash cans.
 - Staff disposing of all trash wear disposable gloves.
- **If clients are unable to retrieve their own meals, deliver meals to clients at their assigned cot.**
 - Make a list of available meals, snacks, and other food items.
 - Ask the clients what they would like.
 - Retrieve the requested items.
 - Deliver the items to the clients at their cot.



Eating Areas for Non-Isolated Clients

- If available, use separate rooms. For example, at a shelter that is a school, use classrooms.
 - Set up tables with chairs 6 feet apart.

- Do not have more people in any room than is safe to maintain social distancing.
 - Count the chairs and only allow that number of clients into the room.
 - Place portable handwashing stations and hand sanitizer in eating areas.
- Clean all eating areas with sanitizing spray, wipes, or bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water) after each use.
- If separate rooms are not available, clients may retrieve their food to eat at their assigned cot.
 - Instruct clients to put all trash in garbage cans located away from the immediate vicinity of cots.