

REOPENING SAFELY: FNDE GUIDELINES

TO IMPLEMENT THE BRAZILIAN
NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM
AFTER SCHOOLS REOPEN IN THE **COVID-19**
CONTEXT



The World Food Programme (WFP) is concentrating efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations and to promote programme continuity while the pandemic lasts. Considering that, the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil produced this short brief with the Brazilian Fund for Education Development (FNDE), aiming to showcase the government's main recommendations to implement the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) while schools reopen in the country. This information should assist partner countries in devising strategies to reshape their on-site school feeding operations, according to specific needs and contexts.

THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN BRAZILIAN SCHOOLS

In Brazil, over 20% of the population is enrolled in the public education system. This represents over 40 million students across all 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, who also benefit from daily school meals¹.

In observance of international health recommendations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as of March 19th, 2020, classes were suspended in all Brazilian public and private schools. In order to maintain PNAE running, the Brazilian government enacted Law No. 13,987 to authorize the distribution of foodstuffs purchased with PNAE resources directly to benefi-

ciary students. Then, the FNDE published guidelines for this distribution on a resolution, which also provides guidance for purchases from smallholder farming in this period. The FNDE requested budget supplementation to cover the payment of extra instalments to states and municipalities² in December 2020 and January 2021. Then, the food was immediately repacked and distributed to parents or guardians of students enrolled in public schools. In parallel, some Brazilian states and municipalities also implemented measures to assist families and children who depend on school feeding.

After months of school closures, a few units initiated a gradual return to classroom activities. Considering such scenario, FNDE devised a manual³ to support managers and the school community in guaranteeing a safe reopening process. The manual – based on scientific data and international experiences – offers safety and hygiene recommendations related to school meals delivery and food and nutrition education activities.

This brief summarizes a few of the main guidelines of FNDE's original manual, with the objective of sharing Brazil's experience with international partners and governments.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION AS A CROSSCUTTING STRATEGY FOR FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE

1. Advise students daily on school rules for on-site food consumption regarding hand hygiene and the use of masks;
2. Clarify the measures taken for safely handling food and delivering meals, including concerns about food handlers' health, sanitization practices, storage, and preparation;
3. School managers, teachers, and nutritionists can implement communication strategies

aimed at the school community and other audiences to disseminate adopted procedures. Examples: posters, leaflets, newsletters, informing parents/guardians, picture/video messages, social media posts, etc;

4. Encourage prior communication of symptoms related to COVID-19, such as fever, cough, respiratory distress, sore throat, body ache, altered taste or smell, diarrhoea, vomiting, conjunctivitis, runny nose, fatigue, and decreased appetite.

FOOD SAFETY IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

1. Place posters with guidance on preventing COVID-19 in visible places;
2. Guarantee maintenance of all ventilated areas, including cafeterias and classrooms;
3. Provide an accessible place for hand hygiene with running water, liquid soap, disposable and non-recycled paper towels, waste collector (trashcan) equipped with a lid activated with no manual contact and, as a complementary alternative, a 70% alcohol-based solution for hand hygiene;
4. Provide guidance on the correct use of masks;
5. Organize students' entrance to avoid crowding and keep the recommended social distancing in all environments;
6. Increase cleaning frequency of common areas and high contact surfaces, such as handrails, toilets, tables, and doorknobs;
7. Verify that the amount of disposable and non-disposable utensils to supply food during distribution shifts is adequate, in order to ensure that the sanitation is carried out properly.

¹ Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2019

(<https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/rendimento-despesa-e-consumo/17270-pnad-continua.html?edicao=28203&t=resultados>)

² Brazil has 27 States, with 5,570 municipalities. Local governments behave as autonomous entities to implement the school feeding budget and must follow the strict regulations from the ministry of Education. Budget can be decentralized from the Federal Government to either the state or municipal levels depending on local regulations.

³ <https://www.fn-de.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/pnae-area-gestores/covid-19-aulas>



GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SAFETY

PROTOCOL 1 SANITIZATION OF THE BUILDING, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE, AND UTENSILS

To increase the safety of the school community, facilities, equipment, furniture and utensils must be frequently sanitized before and after classroom and dining activities.

Products should be purchased ready to use, without the need for dilution or mixing – except for dilution in water, routinely recommended by manufacturers. If this is not possible, dilution and mixing of products must not be carried out on the premises of the school unit, as it requires specialized professionals to manipulate. Regarding the use of alcohol as a sanitizing agent, this product can be found in

gel or liquid forms, ethylic or 70% isopropyl. Its purpose is to disinfect objects and surfaces potentially contaminated by viruses (knobs, handrails, desks, telephones, elevators, keyboards, etc.).

Alcohol solutions used for hand disinfection should be specific for this purpose, as it has moisturizing components. This product should be different from the alcohol used to clean environments and surfaces. Such information may be easily verified on product labels.

Special attention must be paid to sanitary facilities for food handlers. These facilities must be equipped with washbasins and products intended for hand hygiene (odourless antiseptic liquid soap, trashcans, and non-recycled paper towels or other equipment for hand drying). Trashcans must have a lid that can be activated without manual contact. Having posters indicating the correct hand hygiene procedure is also advisable.

Prioritize increased ventilation and mechanisms to prevent insects and pests from entering the kitchen.

PROTOCOL 2 WATER SUPPLY – SANITATION OF THE WATER TANK

During the pandemic period, with no regular water consumption in schools, the hygienic and sanitary conditions of pipes and water reservoirs might have been compromised. Therefore, before using water for consumption, food preparation, and personal hygiene, it is necessary to clean water reservoirs.

Overall, water reservoirs must be washed and disinfected when installed, every 6 months, and in the event of accidents that may contaminate the water.

PROTOCOL 3 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The collection of waste within the school environment requires some specific measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19:

- The trashcan should have a lid and a pedal, to avoid touching it with one's hands;
- Trashcans must be sanitized daily;

- The removal of waste must be carried out in the absence of students, at least twice a day;
- If the school carries out selective waste collection, attention must be paid to avoid the disposal of tissues and masks in containers for recyclable waste;
- After removal from the can, waste must be placed in resistant bags, well closed and in a specific place for such storage, which is sanitized daily;
- The employee responsible for waste collection and handling must wear rubber gloves with long sleeves, a plastic apron (exclusive for waste handling), a mask, and a face shield or goggles.

PROTOCOL 4 **FOOD HANDLERS**

The information available so far indicates that the new coronavirus is transmitted from person to person through direct contact. Therefore, the guidelines for food handlers intend to reduce or avoid this type of transmission and protect them in their day-to-day work. Food handlers are people who come into direct or indirect contact with food in the places where they are processed.

Food handlers must redouble attention to their personal hygiene, to the hygiene of the workplace, and to food hygiene. Workers infected or suspected of having COVID-19 must notify management or their superiors and will be removed from work until the end of symptoms (a minimum of 14 days). In addition, it is important to ensure the disinfection measures of the environment, equipment, and surfaces of the food handler's workplace with diagnosis or suspicion of COVID-19. Please note that other workers who kept close contact with the sick employee during this period could be contaminated. Therefore, they need attention in the following days (observing and monitoring signs and symptoms).

Overall recommendations for food handlers:

- Stay at least 1 meter away, if possible, from other employees;
- Wear face masks. The mask must be changed whenever it falls on the floor, tears, becomes wet/humid or visibly dirty;
- Always keep the work environment clean;



- Sanitize hands often and after coming back from the bathroom, coughing, sneezing, scratching or blowing the nose, scratching the eyes or touching the mouth, when changing tasks or the type of food to be handled, after touching objects such as cell phones, keys, doorknobs, money or garbage cans, whenever returning from breaks;
- Do not talk unnecessarily, do not sing, whistle, cough, sneeze, yawn, chew gum, or eat while preparing meals;
- Maintain frequency of hand hygiene at intervals of maximum 1 hour.

PROTOCOL 5

THE USE OF MASKS FOR FOOD HANDLERS

- Food handlers must use respiratory protection masks during the entire working day and change at the required frequency;
- Masks should be changed when they become a source of exposure – when they fall on the floor, tear, become wet/humid, visibly dirty, or damaged;
- Each employee must have a sufficient number of masks for each day of the week;
- Masks must be for individual use and cannot be shared. They must be well-fitted to the face, fully covering the manipulator's mouth and nose, leaving no spaces in the sides;
- The placement and removal of masks must be done carefully. When putting it on, the handler must hold the elastics and accommodate the entire chin, mouth, and nose. For removal, the process must also be done by holding the straps, without touching the front of the mask;
- Food handlers may use polymer face shields during food preparation and transport as an additional measure of protection, that is, in addition to the use of masks.

PROTOCOL 6

MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND FOOD HANDLERS

Training should take place to make managers and food handlers aware of the need to imple-

ment preventive measures for COVID-19 and to clarify which are these measures.

Suggested topics to be addressed with food managers and handlers:

- Distance and physical space between employees;
- Respiratory etiquette during food preparation;
- The use of masks;
- Hygiene and personal health;
- Hand hygiene;
- Hygiene and sanitation of surfaces and spaces;
- Adequate measures for receiving, preparing, and distributing food.

PROTOCOL 7

FOOD SANITIZATION AND PREPARATION

The process of cleaning fruits and vegetables must include the following steps:

- Sanitize hands;
- Select deteriorated parts and units and remove them;
- Select sprouted units, with dirt, pests, and vectors and remove them;
- Wash thoroughly in running and potable water: leaf by leaf, vegetable by vegetable, bunch by bunch, fruit by fruit;
- Disinfect as recommended by the manufacturer of the sanitizing product used;
- Immerse all foods at the same time. Confirm that all foods are completely immersed. If necessary, place a weight (such as a dish, for example) to aid in the immersion;
- Leave the food immersed for 15 minutes or as directed by the manufacturer;
- Rinse thoroughly under potable running water.

To prepare food:

- Make changes to the menu, simplifying some preparations, but without leaving the context of healthy eating aside;
- Food must be well cooked and kept at the proper temperature until serving (60°C for a maximum of 6 hours);
- Foods that will be eaten raw, such as salads and fruits, must be sanitized according to protocol;
- During food preparation, measures should be taken to minimize the danger of cross contamination. Avoid direct contact or indirect between raw, semi-prepared, and ready-to-eat foods.

PROTOCOL 8 **FOOD CONSUMPTION AND THE CONSUMPTION ENVIRONMENT**

School cafeterias are more than a space for meals. They also serve as a place for socialization, with a prominent role in child education. It is important to remember that sanitary measures are key in dealing with COVID-19 but providing a welcoming environment to students is also relevant for general wellbeing.

Recommendations to adapt cafeterias and other eating spaces:

- Provide hand washbasin with running water, neutral liquid soap, disposable paper towels, and 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer for students and staff to sanitize hands before meals;
- Avoid using self-service systems with collective contact with utensils, such as serving spoons and cutlery;
- Preferably designate an employee to serve students;
- Check the possibility of delivering dishes to students directly to their table;
- Prevent access by family members to the cafeterias, restricting its use to the school community;
- Guide students to keep wearing their masks until mealtime and to carefully remove them to eat, touching only the side straps. Masks should be put in a plastic bag and not placed directly on the table;



- Replace and sanitize service cutlery every hour;
- Cutlery (forks, spoons, and knives) for students: keep them protected or offer them directly placed on plates or bowls. Do not make cutlery available for students to pick up themselves;
- Organize students into shifts, make mealtimes flexible in order to maintain distance in the cafeteria and sanitize surfaces such as tables, and chairs before and after each shift;
- Change the arrangement of tables and chairs to ensure minimum distancing between them and reduce the number of people per table – with one empty chair space for each occupied chair, placing visible directions and markings;
- Classrooms and outdoor areas may be spaces for meals, provided that all hygiene measures are adopted;
- When transporting food and utensils to the classroom or outdoor area, it is necessary to ensure that meals are properly protected;
- Make markings on the floor to indicate safe distance between students when queuing to get meals;
- Remove tablecloths, placemats, and table decoration objects;
- Remove garbage from the kitchen right after the end of the distribution and consumption;
- Maintain visual guidance for these measures, with an appropriate approach to early childhood education.

All reference documents used for the original publication can be found on this link:

<https://www.fnnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/pnae-area-gestores/covid-19-aulas>

Link to original publication in Portuguese:

<https://www.fnnde.gov.br/index.php/centrais-de-conteudos/publicacoes/category/116-alimentacao-escolar?download=14192:cartilha-pnae-volta-as-aulas>

