

Best Practices: Promotion

Communicating with families is one of the most important aspects of meal service. This has always been true but is even more critical for Grab & Go meals. As communities adapt to local conditions, meal programs must do the same, communicating these changes as they go. Especially in this more virtual setting, consistent touchpoints are critical to ensuring that families have all the information that they need to access meals.

Signage

Promoting your program at physical meal sites and on the ground is the most basic way to drive participation. You can [order free signage from Project Bread](#), or make your own posters at locations where families can pick up meals. Not only do vibrant banners, posters, and lawn signs illustrate where meals are being served, they also create a more welcoming and approachable environment for folks picking up meals. Project Bread offers signage in multiple languages and can work with communities to target the languages most commonly spoken in your community. Aside from meal sites, it may be useful to advertise at community centers, libraries, housing properties, or even businesses like grocery stores. You can download [premade](#) or [customizable flyers](#) from Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program website (meals4kids.org/COVID19) or create your own for printing and posting or delivery via email. To maximize effect, be sure to post translated materials in the languages most commonly spoken in your community.

Social Media

Social media is an incredible and increasingly relevant tool for communicating with families in real time. Its primary use is as a powerful promotional tool, but it can also improve staff morale by focusing on the immense effort and care that goes into serving meals. While districts have most often used Facebook and Twitter for social, applications like TikTok and Instagram are options for those hoping to try something new. These platforms facilitate storytelling and encourage posting often, allowing programs to maintain contact with their students. You can get started with more general [sample posts](#) and follow with staff highlights, menus, cooking videos, and announcements, just to name a few.

Springfield Public Schools does this particularly well, with regular posts and longer format videos, like this one of their [ziti and meatballs](#). Another [example highlighting staff](#) comes from **Lawrence Public Schools** while **Nashoba Regional School District** does a fantastic job [promoting meal sites on Twitter](#). Pictures of [staff](#), [meals](#), and [extras](#) work well for Instagram, where vivid images and videos are best. While menu promotion is recommended

Remember to come pick up Breakfast and Lunch tomorrow for your little ghouls and goblins from 11:30-1 or 2:30-4 pm at Nashoba High School! Big THANK YOU to [@projectbread](#) and [@Meals4KidsMA](#) for these new bright lawn signs!



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through all communication channels, posting your scheduled menu on social is particularly effective. Announcements that are text-heavy, like holiday announcements, can also be posted on social media and may save time if used for multiple channels. **Waltham Public School** has over 1000 Facebook and Instagram followers and produces content that is creative and visually



captivating, including photos of [meals](#), [food items](#) and promotion efforts like the decorated Grab & Go carts shown here. If your district already has social media accounts, you will likely reach more families by posting through established avenues. Make sure that you check with your district to leverage social accounts that may already have a strong following (district, school, wellness, PTO, etc.). Some districts may even have a dedicated communications staff member or intern who handles social media and can assist the meal program by posting to social media and highlighting the meal

program prominently on the district website. Collaborating with local government social accounts and community based organizations may also be a useful tool, especially for open sites, allowing your information to reach a larger audience. Social media is a powerful tool that can be used effectively by anyone!

Other Promotion Strategies

Families also love hearing directly from you through traditional channels! Communicate with families through [robo calls](#), [texts](#) and [letters](#), which you can customize for your school community. Make sure to include specific location and time information. When communicating with your district, be sure to reiterate that if students don't live close to your meal sites, there are hundreds more across the state that might be accessible to them. Families trust school communications and incorporating information about meal sites into regular contact, or sending out meal site specific information through these communication channels, can be a great way to help more families learn about the program. Co-promotion among other school-related things (like including info about meals along with schoolwork packets) can be great as most families need to see information multiple times before acting on it. The more ways you can promote your program the better!

Superintendents, principals, parents, and teachers can help promote your meal program far and wide. Teachers, for instance, can encourage students to pick up meals during remote teaching or in communications to parents. In **Spencer-East Brookfield**, some teachers attended meal sites with their own children, encouraging students to do the same. Parent groups can share information among their networks and may have additional ideas around how to promote with families. In some cases it may be effective to have school administrators or

If you have any questions or would like additional materials or resources, please reach out to Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at cnop@projectbread.org or visit www.meals4kids.org

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principals send out messages on behalf of the food service department, as parents are more accustomed to receiving information through these channels.

Engage other groups in your community to help share information, making sure that information is prominently available on city websites and public-facing resources. Investigate other opportunities, like promoting on local access stations or local radio stations and other media.