

Best Practices: Transportation

Meal delivery through preorders allow families that simply do not have the time or ability to attend meal sites an opportunity to access school meals. While some districts have access to refrigerated vehicles, most do not and have turned to other options. Utilizing high quality coolers, any vehicle with storage space can be adapted for deliveries. This is especially true during the winter months, when outdoor temperatures are favorable for keeping food cold. Some districts borrow from less active school district departments, like special education or maintenance, while others collaborate with community organizations to complete deliveries. While it is most efficient for the majority of families to pick up meals in person, delivery can help you reach families that find pickup inaccessible, increasing access for families that cannot travel to meal sites on a regular basis.



Home Delivery

Meal delivery tends to be simplest for districts using their own vehicles, but this is not the only option. Some have found collaborating with community organizations essential for completing meal delivery. In **Holyoke**, for example, the **Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holyoke** completes deliveries at targeted households based upon recommendations from the public school district. **Sodexo** and **Holyoke Public Schools** have offered home deliveries to roughly 200 students since the beginning of the pandemic by partnering with Vanpool and their bus company.

There may also be other school personnel available to help transport meals. In **Milton**, the school district home liaison manages the delivery program to families where meals need to be delivered directly to the home, and combines the delivery with a wellness check. In March, the liaison transported the meals in her car and then moved to a school van when capacity in the car was reached.

Bus Routes

Bus routes have been most effective in reaching students, bringing meals to families as conveniently as possible. Districts that move away from in person learning, but still have access to bus contracts, have successfully leveraged these partnerships to deliver a huge number of meals. Schedules and stops must be effectively communicated to parents, as buses move from stop to stop rather quickly. This strategy works because it brings meals closer to home and organizes drop offs at locations families are already familiar with. While bus routes may require more food service staff, they are often more efficient than traditional meal sites. Volunteers or staff from other departments may also be available to drive buses while food service staff

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distributes and counts meals. Alternatively, underutilized bus company staff may distribute and count meals.

In **Marlborough** this spring, extensive bus routes were used to serve 15,000 meals weekly to students, ten times more than the district usually serves during the summer. Over the



closure period, the district served 205,000 meals via buses to students. Community and student feedback were fantastic and families loved seeing the buses and their drivers. This strategy works best for fully remote districts where buses are not being used to transport students for in-person learning. This fall, **Wareham Public Schools** uses buses to distribute meals at non-school sites convenient to families, including playgrounds, town common areas and apartment complexes, as shown in the photos. Also, a successful strategy that Wareham implemented was to connect with each principal to better understand the daily remote learning schedule at each school. Then they adjusted the bus stop schedule so that students and parents could pick up meals at a time that didn't interrupt their learning blocks.

At **Franklin County Technical School**, they served more than their daily enrollment this spring by utilizing bus routes. Their superintendent was a huge advocate for implementing bus routes at seventeen stops throughout their sending areas. Renegotiating their contract with the bus company so that both parties could benefit was critical to the program's success and at the peak of their program they were able to send out seven buses daily, reaching students in districts that were not serving meals. As participation grew, drivers doubled up on buses to pass out meals, leaving food service staff free to focus on preparing meals.

In the **Triton Regional School District**, seven buses distribute approximately 2000 meals every Monday in three communities. There are a total of 80 bus stops and the buses stop for approximately two minutes at each bus stop, between 7:30 and 8:40 am. The bus routes provide an alternative for parents or guardians who may be working from home and can't drive to the school Grab & Go site and for students to walk to the bus stop and get their meals before the remote academic day starts.