

# Shut down by coronavirus, schools scramble to feed students

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All Northshore public schools closed up to two weeks in response to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, on March 5, 2020, in Bothell, Washington. The district is operating a remote learning program to continue instruction and is distributing meals daily at several sites around the district. Photo: Karen Ducey/Getty Images

The coronavirus is causing more and more schools to close. School leaders must now address another problem. If schools shut down, their students may not get the meals they need.

There are many different types of coronaviruses. These viruses usually cause colds. But some coronaviruses cause deadly outbreaks.

Millions of students get free or discounted meals from school. Some people are worried. As more schools close, more children may go hungry. They depend on these meals to eat during the school week.

Joel Berg is the leader of Hunger Free America. He said these school meals are very important. Almost 30 million kids a day need them, he said.

As of March 9, 507 schools throughout the United States were closed or about to close. These school closings affect 363,357 students.

Health officials are saying social distancing can help limit the spread of the disease. Social distancing is when you stay away from crowds. This helps prevent the spread of a disease. This is why schools are shutting down. This is also why people are being told to stay at home.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is a government group. It oversees the nation's school meal programs. It is telling schools how to feed students during these closings. That does not mean it will be easy, though.

### **Access To Food**

The Agriculture Department has a program that can feed children while schools are closed. The program says children must be fed in groups, though. Because of the coronavirus, people should not be meeting in large groups. It could make more people sick.

The School Nutrition Association is a group that works to put good meals in schools. It wrote a letter to the Agriculture Department. It asked to make some changes. Meals should be given out in more places, it said. That way children would not have to meet in large groups.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a government group. It works to keep people in the U.S. healthy. It is called the CDC for short. The CDC said schools should give out "grab-and-go" lunches in bags. Schools can also deliver meals, it said.

### **"A Basic Need"**

Coronavirus has caused the most problems for schools in Washington state. Bothell is a city in Washington state. Its Northshore School District closed all of its schools on March 5. They may be closed for up to 14 days. Kids are taking online classes instead. "Grab-and-go" meals are offered at 17 school sites.

Juliana Fisher is in charge of the district's food services. She said that students need nutrition in order to learn. So the school delivered meals to 17 different sites.

If students showed up, they received a meal, Fisher said. They did not have to order ahead. Situations like this show how important school lunches are for some families, she added.

## Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-7] explains why health officials want people to practice social distancing?
- (A) If schools shut down, their students may not get the meals they need.
  - (B) Almost 30 million kids a day need them, he said.
  - (C) This helps prevent the spread of a disease.
  - (D) It is telling schools how to feed students during these closings.

- 2 Read the paragraph from the section "Access To Food."

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a government group. It works to keep people in the U.S. healthy. It is called the CDC for short. The CDC said schools should give out "grab-and-go" lunches in bags. Schools can also deliver meals, it said.*

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) What ideas does the CDC have for school meals?
  - (B) Who is in charge of the CDC during the coronavirus outbreak?
  - (C) When did the CDC tell the U.S. government to close schools?
  - (D) How many schools now deliver meals because of the CDC?
- 3 Why did the School Nutrition Association write to the Agricultural Department?
- (A) to tell them to close down schools right away
  - (B) to tell them to stop delivering meals to students
  - (C) to ask them to give meals in large groups
  - (D) to ask them to hand out meals in more places
- 4 How did school meals at Northshore School District change because of the coronavirus outbreak?
- (A) Students order their meals online ahead of time.
  - (B) Students can get "grab-and-go" meals now.
  - (C) Students no longer have a way to get meals.
  - (D) Students are getting their meals in the same way.