



A Union of Professionals

COVID-19 Resources

Best Practices for Support Staff Performing Essential Services

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While you are doing your part to keep your community running during this outbreak, it is extremely important that you know the best ways to stay safe.

We're all grappling with an unprecedented public health crisis. This is a time to be creative about staying safe as we do our jobs. **If you have found innovative ways to work safely or have ideas for keeping yourself and colleagues out of harm's way, please send them in an email to: PSRP@aft.org.** We'll collect the best suggestions and share with your colleagues across the country!

What is social distancing, and why is it important?

Social distancing is the practice advocated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and most public health experts. Its purpose is to reduce close contact with other people. This means staying in your home as much as possible and keeping six feet of distance between yourself and other people when you are out in public. It also includes avoiding large gatherings and leaving home only for essential trips.

- Social distancing is crucial because it prevents the spread of COVID-19 through droplets in the air caused by sneezing and coughing.
- Social distancing can be difficult—both emotionally and physically. But while we remain at a safe distance from one another, we can find other ways to bridge the gap: Keep in contact with your friends and family outside your home by phone, email and social media—and develop routines that help keep you calm and relaxed.

Find these resources and more at www.aft.org/coronavirus

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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General guidance and best practices for all support staff still working:

1. Keep six feet apart from other people. If you must interact with co-workers or the public, find creative ways to keep social distance.
2. Talk to the building engineers. Ask them to increase the air exchanges in mechanical systems (heating, ventilation, air conditioning). Open windows when possible. It is important to get as much ventilation as possible inside buildings, so take steps to increase air circulation and clear the air.
3. Use physical barriers where appropriate. If possible, put up barriers between yourself and the public. Consider clear plastic “sneeze guards,” drive-through operations for food or meal distribution, and tables used at food pickup sites can also function as distancing barriers.

Work with your union and employer to bargain and discuss:

1. Sending instructions to parents about food distribution procedures, including the practice of social distancing between staff and community.
2. Establishing alternating days or extra shifts to reduce the number of workers within a building or work site at any given time. This will help with social distancing while still maintaining a full on-site work schedule. This is especially important in small kitchen operations and bus depots.
3. Providing all employees with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene best

practices, procedures for food distribution, and accommodations for vulnerable populations, etc.).

4. Providing necessary supplies such as tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfectants and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.
5. Providing proper training for those who need to use protective clothing and equipment—how to use it, including how to put it on, wear it and take it off correctly, with instruction on proper use in the context of employees’ current and potential duties. Training materials should be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for all workers.

Bus Drivers

1. Make sure the bus you are using has been thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before it is used for any purpose. During cleaning, bus windows and doors should remain open; the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals are strong and may cause respiratory issues. See AFT’s fact sheet on best practices when cleaning the bus ([go.aft.org/covid19-bus](https://www.aft.org/covid19-bus)).
2. After each use, disinfect all surfaces touched by riders. Deeper cleaning is not necessary unless a person who has been on the bus becomes sick.
3. Be mindful about how you structure service that puts you in contact with others.
 - a. For bus deliveries in the community, consider distributing meals from the back door of the bus.
 - b. For bus deliveries to a drop-off location, ensure that there is an orderly line with six feet of space between individuals and that the worker putting the meals out for

collection is at least six feet away from the public. Cones or other barriers may be useful to establish that distance.

- c. It is a good idea to limit a team operation to two people on the bus—the driver and the food distribution worker.

School Nutrition Service Workers

1. Maintain six feet of social distancing. Use tables to separate yourself from parents and students picking up meals. And remember: You should also be six feet away from any co-workers who are serving or giving out food.
2. Work with your union and district to try to organize bulk food pickups and deliveries—this means larger-volume food distribution, fewer times per week. This will help limit the contact employees have with others.
3. Have some hand sanitizer dispensers on the table for all to use as they come in.
4. Be mindful of changing your gloves frequently, especially if your hands come into contact with surfaces, another person, or if you touch your face. Make sure to wash your hands after discarding gloves.
5. If possible, work with your union and district to get an open tent for food distribution outside. Being in the open air reduces the amount of disinfecting and sanitizing custodians have to do, and the virus is less transmittable in the open air while practicing social distancing.
6. If outdoor distribution is not possible, open as many windows as you can.
7. Take frequent breaks to wash your hands.

School Custodians— Maintaining a Safe Work Site

1. Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails and doorknobs.
2. Clean dirty surfaces with a detergent or soap and water **before** disinfection.
3. For disinfection, most common Environmental Protection Agency-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at **bit.ly/EPA-disinfectants**. Follow the manufacturers' instructions for all cleaning and disinfectant products (e.g., concentration, application method, contact time, etc.).
4. Discourage employees from using co-workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
5. Ensure that disposable wipes are available so that surfaces used in common (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.