

Schools and PTOs Quick Guide: Getting Food and Essentials to Families Sheltering at Home

1.0 purpose of this quick guide

Provide schools and PTOs with information to help get food and essentials to families sheltering at home. It includes:

1. What makes this situation unique
2. Key support roles
3. Challenges and emerging solutions
4. What you can do ahead of a crisis
5. Appendix: tools from the front lines

2.0 what makes this situation unique

This emergency differs from other events. The **realities of impacted families** include:

- Families hiding in their homes due to fear of detention.
- Families unable to travel to stores or aid locations.
- Families with few trusted friends outside of the impact community.
- Families' and supporters' fear of being observed receiving or providing support.
- Families' and supporters' fear of names and addresses being disclosed.
- Language barriers that limit outreach options and hinder trust building.

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3.0 key support roles

The typical food safety net (e.g., food shelves) doesn't work in a crisis where trust is crucial and hard to secure. The most critical gap is the last mile, getting food and essentials to impacted families' homes. Making this work requires 3 unique support roles:

Role	Definition
Family Liaisons	<p>Highly trusted individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact families to offer help • Are trusted by the families to connect them with the Family Support Coordinators or Family Supporters <p>Most often principals, schools social workers, Spanish-speaking teachers, English language teachers, school cultural liaisons, school counselors</p>
Family Support Coordinators	<p>Highly trusted individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are well connected to other individuals in the community • Know other parents who will support discretely helping immigrant families, and can find trusted Family Supporters • Ideally not a school employee due to information privacy rules <p>Most often a parent who is already active in schools and knows a lot of other parents</p>
Family Supporters	<p>Highly trusted individuals in the community who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct, in person support to impacted families. • Understand and are trusted to follow security protocols to protect impacted families <p>Most often teachers and parents personally recommended by the teachers or Family Support Coordinators.</p>

Most parents and community members who want to help **will not play** these roles. Instead, they should be assigned non-family facing activities like getting food from food shelves, shopping for fresh items, organizing food for distribution, and collecting money to offset grocery costs.

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4.0 challenges and emerging solutions

Challenge	Emerging Solutions for Schools and PTOs
Getting the right food close to the families	Working with food shelves to get needed food and essentials closer to the families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food shelves renting vans to bring food to schools • Food shelves creating packed bags for quick pick up • Parents getting food from food shelves and bringing to temporary storage at schools or community centers
	Temporary storage areas within the school or at community members' homes
	Donation and shopping lists based on known needs
Off-setting grocery costs for shoppers	Family support pods where multiple families contribute \$ to one shopper for one family
	Gift cards distributed to shoppers
	Donation QR code to collect money and allocating to shoppers when requested
Identifying families in need	<p>“Family Liaisons” call families directly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pre-existing relationship is ideal • Spanish-speaking is ideal • Written documents have not been effective • WhatsApp seems to be most used
Following school information privacy rules	<p>Impacted families contact a non-school “Family Support Coordinator”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Liaison will need to ensure families that this person is safe • Ideally Spanish-speaking or able to use translation apps
Connecting impacted families with Family Supporter	<p>Family Support Coordinator connects impacted family with Family Supporter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through WhatsApp • Coordinator stays on the chat chain to monitor
Risk of exposing impacted families through an information breach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using encrypted tools like Signal (communication) and Proton (document sharing) among volunteers instead of tools with less privacy protection • Do not maintain a central document with personal information
Risk of exposing impacted families by delivering to their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down directions before leaving home and then safely dispose of the address • Turn off location services and set map app to not save locations or track movement. • Monitor your surroundings to ensure you aren't being followed

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- Bring a trusted passenger who can monitor surroundings while you drive.

5.0 what you can do ahead of a crisis

Partner	What To Do Ahead of a Crisis
School Administrators	Talk with your district about how you will activate food support plans. Gain agreement that schools are the most effective direct connection to the impacted families. Ask the district for help if you believe your needs will be greater than your staff and PTO volunteers can manage, as need and available support is often mismatched, and districts can facilitate support across schools/neighborhoods.
	Talk with your city about available services/facilities.
	Build a food collection plan. Will you rely on a food shelf for shelf-stable foods? If so, which food shelf. Will you create storage on-site?
	Work with the PTO to define the role the school will play versus the PTO. What can parents do so that food collection stays off the teachers (who likely will be delivering food).
	Build an impacted family outreach plan. Who will be your Family Liaisons and how will they find families who need assistance? Can they reach out to families ahead of a crisis? Plan solutions that are aligned with regulatory obligations.
	Identify a trusted parent who can act as the Family Support Coordinator. Ask that person to discretely create a short list of other parents who could act as Family Supporters. Ensure the Coordinator understands the criticality of <u>personal</u> endorsements in selecting Family Supporters.
	Decide how you will message what the school is doing to help impacted families, recognizing that not all families will be aligned.
	Create a how-to for Family Liaisons, Family Support Coordinators, and Family Supporters so what they will do is already defined
	Create a communication, information sharing and safety plan and set up elements (e.g., signal groups, how to turn off location services)
	If you do not have many impacted families at your school, connect with other schools that do and offer to provide additional support
	PTOs
Contact local food shelves, non-profits and houses of worship within your community to understand available services and discuss ways to work together.	
Establish key roles and assign trusted leaders (e.g., food drive coordinator, shopper coordinator, financial contribution coordinator).	

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	Recognize that there are roles outside of getting food to families (see financial assistance and safe transportation quick guides)
	Create needed forms including volunteer sign up and family needs

6.0 tools from the front lines

Tool	Purpose	Link
Sample PTO mutual aid org chart	Establishes roles and assigns leader names	Link
Sample Volunteer Sign Up	Enables parents to sign up to volunteer and share preferences	Link
Sample Family Needs Form	Allows impacted families to share what they need in a consistent format	Link
Sample Family Needs Tracking	Captures what families need and assigns shoppers	Link