

# SAFELY OPERATING A SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM



## Before Starting a School Food Program

- Check with your local school board to understand any policies around food programs that are currently in place.
- Individuals preparing or portioning food for school programs should consider obtaining a safe food handler certificate:  
Middlesex-London  
Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas
- Ensure you have the proper equipment needed to safely store, prepare and serve food and beverages.
- Ensure you have the proper equipment and products needed to properly clean and sanitize surfaces and cooking equipment.

## Safe Food Handling Steps

### When serving food, follow these safe food handling steps:

1. Perform hand hygiene before distributing food.
2. Provide tongs for easy distribution of food to students.
3. Proper hand hygiene is sufficient. Gloves are not necessary or recommended.
4. Do not serve food if you are not well.

### When students serve themselves, follow these safe food handling steps:

1. Remind students to perform hand hygiene before taking food and beverages. If foods are left unsupervised, post a sign reminding students to wash their hands before taking food and to only touch food they plan to take.
2. Trays are preferred over bins as they allow easier access to items without touching adjacent items.
3. Trays or bins should be cleaned and sanitized before and after use.
4. Potentially hazardous foods such as yogurt, cheese, eggs, or cut fruit and vegetables must be kept at safe temperatures. If these foods are left out for 2 hours or more, ensure ice packs are used and temperatures are monitored. Potentially hazardous foods must not be above 4°C for more than 2 hours.

## Guidance for Food Premises

Food preparation spaces must meet the requirements of the Ontario Food Premises Regulation. This includes a requirement to have the space inspected before it is used. For more information review: [Food Safety in Schools](#).