

Distributing Paper-Based Packets and Other Materials During the COVID-19 Health Crisis

To support the ongoing education of Michigan students while they are at home, districts are using a variety of options:

- Distributing devices for online learning (e.g., laptops, hotspots)
- Distributing paper-based packets for families without access to the Internet
- Communicating through email, online platforms, and frequent phone calls with students and/or parents/guardians

It is essential that districts establish processes that protect individual and public health when distributing paper-based packets and devices for online learning. This document has suggestions for reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 while still providing instructional support for all students. Please consider these suggestions, along with any local public health guidance available in your community.

Key Risks

There are several different COVID-19 transmission risks to consider when using paper-based packets and other materials. These include:

- From school personnel to school personnel
- From school personnel to the family
- From the family to school personnel
- From family to family

Package Preparation

There is still much to learn about COVID-19. Although there are no reported cases of transmitting the virus through the mail¹, preliminary evidence suggests the virus can live on surfaces like cardboard for 24 hours, and on plastics for 48-72 hours². Based on this preliminary evidence, the following actions are recommended to minimize the risk of transmission when preparing packages for distribution:

- Do **not** allow school personnel with any symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19 to prepare or distribute packages.
- Do **not** allow school personnel who have had known close contact with an individual who has COVID-19 or symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19 to prepare or distribute packages.
- Implement screening protocols that minimally include daily temperature checks given to all school personnel preparing packages. Staff members with any symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19 should self-quarantine, contact their doctor, and follow [CDC guidance to help prevent the spread of the virus](#).
- Use [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting](#) for all spaces in the school used to prepare packages.
- If you use envelopes, select those that do not require moistening to seal.



- For paper-based materials only, wait 24 hours after preparing the package before distributing to families.
- For materials that include plastic, disinfect the materials with EPA-approved household cleaners according to package directions.

Package Distribution Options

Schools generally have two ways to get the packages to their students:

- Direct delivery
- Central pick-up

Recommended measures for safety while using these options are similar to those outlined in MDE's [Best Practices for School Food Service Providing Meals During the Response to COVID-19](#).

Direct Delivery

U.S. Postal Service: This is a good first option to consider. The postal service is already transmitting materials daily and there have been no cases, to date, of infection caused by this process. Districts should document costs associated with mailing in preparation for possible reimbursement through COVID-19-related federal appropriations.

District Staff: Districts choosing to deliver directly to families should instruct school personnel to:

- Avoid close contact with all people during the delivery process by maintaining a minimum six-foot distance.
- Leave packages at doorways or on porches.
- Use gloves and cloth face coverings as appropriate.
- Perform regular [hand hygiene](#).

Central Pick-up

When parents and/or students are asked to pick up packages from a school location, minimizing virus transmission and maximizing physical distancing must be considered.

Options include:

- Establishing a pick-up location outside of the school building. For example, a table protected from the elements with clearly marked bins by classroom.
- When communicating about the pick-up, tell parents, *"DO NOT COME if you are symptomatic. Call or email us to discuss alternate options."*
- Spreading out pick-up times to limit the number and flow of people in the pick-up location at one time.
- Encouraging parents to maintain distance from other parents while picking up packets. They should stay six feet away from anyone. Consider placing markers on the ground to ensure six feet of separation.
- Using vehicle pick-up lanes to avoid having families enter the building. You may ask parents to display a sign with their child's name and teacher on the dash of their car.



- Taking all necessary measures to clean the pick-up area after each pick-up cycle.

Submission of Work

Teachers will need to periodically review student work. When electronic submission of work is not available, a paper-based exchange may be used. Like package distribution, actions to minimize virus transmission and maximize physical distancing should be used.

Package Return: U.S. Postal Service

Districts may choose to put self-addressed, stamped envelopes in the distribution packages for students to submit their work back to school. When using this option:

- Select envelopes that do not require moistening to be sealed.
- Provide appropriately sized envelope(s) to accommodate the work to be returned.
- Pre-print envelopes with *no-postage required* business reply mail indicators (or put postage stamps on them if waiting for business reply mail permitting). Schools can contact the U.S. Postal Service to set up the business reply mail address processes: <https://faq.usps.com/s/article/Business-Reply-Mail>

Package Return: Drop-off

When parents and students are asked to drop off completed work at a school location, the following actions can minimize virus transmission and maximize physical distancing:

- Establish a drop-off location outside the school building (e.g., a table protected from the elements, with clearly marked bins by classroom).
- When communicating about the drop-off, tell parents, “DO NOT COME if you are symptomatic. Call or email us to discuss alternate options.”
- Spread out drop-off times to limit the number and flow of people in the pick-up location at one time.
- Encourage parents to maintain distance from other parents while dropping off packages. For example, they should remain six feet from anyone else while dropping off packages. *Consider placing markers on the ground to ensure six feet of separation.*
- Use vehicle drop-off lines to avoid having families enter the building. You may ask parents to display a sign with their child’s name and teacher on the dash of their car.
- Taking all necessary measures to clean the drop-off area after each drop-off cycle.
- For paper-based materials only, wait 24 hours after the package is dropped off before opening it.
- For materials that include plastic, disinfect the materials with EPA-approved household cleaners according to package directions.

Recommendations adapted from:

- 1- <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/usps-statement-on-coronavirus.htm>
- 2- <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200320192755.htm>
- 3- Texas Education Agency, *Logistical Considerations for Paper-Based Packet Pickup to Mitigate Public Health Risks*