

Hungry? CPS food pick-up sites provide relief in many ways for Cincinnati's children

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Teeyana Williams, 5, a kindergartner at Oyler School in Lower Price Hill picks up two days worth of lunches from the school, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Cincinnati Public Schools are handing out food from outside schools from 11 - 1 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. With the new coronavirus, schools and many other businesses are closed, but help is still there for children who depend on the schools for their daily mea *(Photo: Liz Dufour/The Enquirer)*

The strain of social isolation is building for families, but there's a bright spot to be had most weekdays at the two dozen Cincinnati Public Schools food distribution sites.

On Wednesday, 3-year-old Carlie Shaw ran toward a table in the parking lot of Oyler School in Lower Price Hill and hugged a uniformed Cincinnati police officer, telling her she missed her.

Next she chased her older sister, Calli Glover, 5, up and down the sidewalk.

Then she fished out a head of broccoli and a chocolate-milk carton from the plastic bags given to her family. They contained meals for two lunches and two breakfasts. The food is there for any child under 19 years old, regardless if they attend a CPS school or not. A child or children must be present in order to receive food at one of the 24 sites across the city.

The food is available through CPS for any family with children who may need a little help amid the novel coronavirus crisis.

Families can pick up food on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the sites listed in this story and on the [CPS website](#).

CPS distributed nearly 50,000 meals in the first week of the program.

Sinaca Wagoner, an entrepreneur, drove his two children to Oyler on Wednesday. His business began to suffer as Ohio's stay-at-home order took effect, and the food from his children's school takes a "big toll off the shoulders."

His partner, Renee Oliver, said the oranges, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, carrots and milk have helped keep her children healthy.



Renee Bates, mother of eight, leaves the Oylor Madhatter Pantry in Lower Price Hill, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Cincinnati Public Schools is handing out food to students from 11 - 1 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. During the same hours, the pantry is offering supplies, including school supplies to families, with or without children. Bates said not knowing how long this would continue is scary, but the pantry 'is a real good thing' for families. Due to the new coronavirus, schools and many other businesses are closed (Photo: Liz Dufour/The Enquirer)

Christina Helton, a mother of three, said the food assistance has prevented the family from facing hunger.

Picking it up serves another purpose, too. It allows children an opportunity to burn some energy outside.

"They need to go outside. They're going to tear my house down," Helton joked.

Carlie and Calli's mother, Madeline Gilker, said her children's days are brightened by seeing their teachers and other school staff.

Carlie and Calli, both Oylor students, miss their friends and are becoming anxious as isolation continues to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus and relieve the strain on the medical system as Ohio cases increase.

As of Wednesday, Ohio has 704 confirmed cases, 182 hospitalizations and 75 people in intensive care.

Ten people have died.



Brandi Borden, left, is the food service manager at Oylar School. She was coordinating the lunches given out to students. Cincinnati Public Schools is handing out the lunches from 11 - 1 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Emmalynn Mason, 9, a third grade, was picking up her two lunches, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Due to the new coronavirus, schools and many other businesses are closed. (Photo: Liz Dufour/The Enquirer)

But Gilker said the school has provided big relief amid trying times. She's received simple check-in messages from school officials and a call from a teacher who told her about the food distribution, encouraging her to check it out for the first time on Wednesday.

"School has been very helpful in making sure kids are getting what they need," Gilker said.

Federal law requires children to be present in order to receive food. But some of the distribution sites also have a nearby community partner where families can pick up more food and other supplies.

An adult woman who asked for assistance in the Oylar school parking lot was redirected by CPS staff to the Oylar House, located across Hatmaker Street from the school. A National Guard cargo vehicle had stopped outside the nonprofit community center earlier in the day to drop off dozens of boxes of goods such as Top Ramen, boxed pasta, pancake syrup and paper towels, among others.



The Ohio National Guard delivered food and other goods to the Oyler House on Wednesday. The House is a community pantry located across the street from Oyler School in Lower Price Hill. (Photo: Max Londberg)

Oyler Principal Amy Randolph helped unload.

Though Randolph misses sharing hugs with her students, whom she waves to when she takes neighborhood walks, she has been uplifted by the support from various people and organizations.

Lauren Marlow, a dietitian who works for CPS student dining services, said families have also received homework packets, coloring books and games while picking up food from the 24 sites.