# SNP Memo #2020-2021-33


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: October 30, 2020

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: Promoting Wellness among School Nutrition Staff

The purpose of this memo is to share resources related to the health and wellness of school nutrition staff during the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

Leading your team through the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) was a task no one could have predicted. Not only are there many new operational challenges to master, but team members may be experiencing high stress levels due to the economy, social distancing, additional hygiene practices, and thoughts of family and friends staying healthy. After months of nutrition staff members on the front lines serving meals to children, it is important to maintain team morale and promote a positive culture throughout your program.

Make sure to encourage and thank your team for all they have done these past few months and the work they do every day. Here are some tips for supporting staff wellness during COVID-19:

* Schedule small team building events monthly.
* Encourage and reward creativity and positive attitudes.
* Keep acts of kindness and gratitude flowing even in stressful situations.
* Try using this [Leadership Checklist](https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts-production/sites/91734/themes/2204453/downloads/xfHMfLfSS6ak1Z3sNU2y_Leadership_Checklist_4_.pdf) for taking care of your team.

The following resources are designed to benefit the mental health of nutrition staff through daily challenges at work:

On July 15, 2020, the School Nutrition Association (SNA) hosted a Back to School Series webinar entitled *Building Resilience and Promoting Mental Health during Challenging Times* that promoted the mental health and wellbeing of staff with proven strategies from cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness practices. The webinar provides encouragement and practical tools for school nutrition professionals to better manage stress while experiencing the unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The recording can be found on the [SNA Training Zone webpage](https://www.pathlms.com/sna/courses).

* An additional SNA webinar titled [Taking Care of Yourself and Your Students: Coping with Pandemic Crisis and Loss](https://www.pathlms.com/sna/courses/23305) provides practical advice on how school nutrition professionals can help students cope with the current COVID-19 pandemic and prioritize professional self-care.
* Building a sustainable gratitude practice requires you to choose strategies that reflect the various cultures and backgrounds of your staff and integrate them into current practices. This step-by-step guide from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s website entitled [*Building a Sustainable Gratitude Practice in Your School Community*](https://api.healthiergeneration.org/resource/706) encourages staff to create and implement a regular culture of gratitude at their schools. Create a free account to access the guide.
* The Alliance for a Healthier Generation has a free four-part on-demand training series packed with tools and resources to help school staff focus on their own wellbeing. The training, [*Filling Your Cup: Comprehensive Self-Care Strategies*](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/)*,* will teach participants how to build a healthy and resilient school staff. Create a free account to access this training.

Most importantly, remember to thank your staff for their hard work and dedication. If you are interested in additional resources or information related to staff wellness during COVID-19 please email the Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs (VDOE-SNP), wellness policy specialist, Laura Burns, by email at laura.burns@doe.virginia.gov.

SCC/LB/cc