

MEMO

TO: All Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs

FROM: Vonda Ramp, M.S., R.D.
State Director, Child Nutrition Programs

DATE: Aug. 4, 2020

SUBJECT: Nationwide Waivers for Meal Service for 2020-21 School Year

MESSAGE:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released the following waivers for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program as schools and childcare organizations prepare to re-open for the 2020-21 school year. These waivers are posted on PEARS Download Forms, COVID-19 section.

- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs – EXTENSION #2
- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program – EXTENSION #2
- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children – EXTENSION #2
- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs – EXTENSION #4
- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the National School Lunch Program for School Year 2020-21

At this time, meal programs will be required to operate through National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, or the Child and Adult Care Food Program for the 2020-21 school year. Eligibility determination for free, reduced, or paid meals will revert to the standard eligibility guidelines per program regulations. Meals may only be claimed for enrolled students for instructional days. As of the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) will no longer be an option. All waivers related to SFSP and/or SSO expire no later than Aug. 31, 2020.

USDA is expected to release a question and answer document with additional information. In the meantime, attached is an initial set of Frequently Asked Questions developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Division of Food and Nutrition (DFN).

**Pennsylvania Department of Education
Division of Food and Nutrition
School Nutrition Programs Re-Opening Under COVID-19
for the 2020-21 School Year**

1. Can I feed and claim all children for free as we did in the spring when schools closed?

No. In the spring students/children were permitted to be fed through the National School Lunch Program-(NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) due to the school closures being unanticipated. Schools were permitted to feed all children for free under regulatory area eligibility or through an area eligibility waiver. As of June 25, 2020, USDA has indicated that SSO and SFSP may no longer operate once schools re-open (virtually or in-person) for the 2020-21 school year. As a result, eligibility determination must resume back to normal determination. Likewise, meal counting and claiming must also resume back to normal point of service meal counts by student eligibility.

2. My school will be implementing a combination of in-person and virtual/online instruction. Can we provide breakfast and/or lunch to students on days they attend school virtually?

Yes, schools are permitted to send meals home (breakfast and lunch) with students or have students pick up meals on days when they will be instructed remotely. The days students are participating remotely must be considered instructional days under the definition established by the school board, with guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Students must be considered enrolled in the school district. Siblings and students that are not enrolled in the school district may not be claimed for reimbursement. The meals may be claimed through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program as described in Question 1.

3. Can a school serve meals only to free and reduced eligible students?

No, NSLP regulations require that meals be available to all students enrolled regardless of eligibility category.

4. My school will be closed one day a week (i.e., Wednesday) for deep cleaning. Are we permitted to claim meals through NSLP and SBP on those days?

Meals may be served and claimed for students on days the physical building is closed if the day is considered an instructional day. Specific prior written approval must be requested from the PDE Division of Food and Nutrition to claim meals for instructional days that fall on Saturday or Sunday.

5. May parents pick up meals for students?

Yes, parents may pick up meals provided the school has a plan for accountability and to protect the integrity of the Child Nutrition Programs that is in accordance with eligibility determination and meal counting and claiming as described in Question 1. The SFA's plan must include processes to ensure that meals are distributed only to parents or guardians of

eligible children enrolled in the LEA, and that duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.

- 6. Our school typically served pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) and Head Start students in the cafeteria. Because they were co-mingled with older students, our school utilized the NSLP and SBP meal pattern. Will this be permitted if Pre-K and/or Head Start students are served in the classroom to maintain social distancing?**

No, if Pre-K and/or Head Start students are no longer co-mingled in the meal service, the Child and Adult Care Meal Pattern must be followed for meal service to these students. Eligibility determination, meal counting and claiming still follow the NSLP requirements.

- 7. My school will provide breakfast and lunch to students during school on in-person instructional days and sending meals home with students for their virtual instructional days. How do we count and claim the meals?**

The Meal Time Flexibility Waiver and Non-Congregate Meal Waiver allow meals to be packaged and sent home with students for their virtual instructional days. A point of service meal count must still be taken and requires that meals are counted by student for each meal they are served at the time the meal is provided to the student. At the time of the exchange, the School Food Authority is responsible for ensuring the meal is a complete reimbursable meal and that no more than one meal is provided to each student for each approved meal type (breakfast and lunch) for each instructional day. Therefore, meals must be counted by student at the time they are served for the day the meal is intended to be consumed.

Example:

- School ABC has in-person instruction for students on Monday and Wednesday.
- Virtual instruction is provided on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
- At the end of the day on Monday packaged meals are provided to students for Tuesday's virtual instructional day. At the end of the day on Wednesday, packaged meals are provided for students' virtual instructional days on Thursday and Friday.

Since a meal count must be recorded for each day a meal is provided, in this example packaged meals provided at the end of the day on Monday must be recorded on point of sale records dated for Tuesday. Packaged meals provided at the end of the day on Wednesday must be recorded on separate point of sale records dated for Thursday and Friday. Regardless of the system the school uses for meal delivery due to the pandemic, meal counts must be taken by student at the point of service