

TO: All Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program

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

DATE: March 27, 2020

SUBJECT: COVID-19 National Waivers for Parent/Guardian Pickup of Meals for Children and Meal Pattern Flexibility in Child Nutrition Programs

MESSAGE:

On March 25, 2020, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued two waivers:

- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick-up Meals for Children
- Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs

The waivers apply to all Child Nutrition Programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has notified USDA that PDE will be taking advantage of these waivers. It is imperative that sponsors read the information below and the waivers posted on PEARS Download Forms, COVID-19 Section of the respective Child Nutrition Program.

Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick-up Meals for Children

Pre-approval from PDE to allow parents and guardians to pick up meals for children and parents is **not** required.

Sponsors are responsible for ensuring Program accountability and integrity and must have a plan in place to ensure that meals are distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children, which are children that would be eligible to come to the site and obtain a meal. Sponsors must ensure that duplicate meals are not distributed. In a small school district, summer programs, or childcare programs, sponsors may be more familiar with families and therefore it may be less challenging to ensure that meals are provided to eligible Program participants and duplication of meal service is not occurring. In larger programs, families, parents, or guardians may not be as easily identified. In either instance, there are a number of ways a sponsor may accomplish this. Examples include, but are not limited to; presenting student identification cards at pick up, recording the names of students on rosters, recording names on a “meal pickup sheet”, etc. Sponsors must determine a method that works best in their situation that results in ensuring Program accountability and integrity and maintain the documentation to support all meal counts.

This waiver applies to Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). It also applies to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP); however, those Programs are not in operation at this time due to mandatory school closures (with the exception of Residential Child Care Institutions that still have children in their residency).



This waiver remains in effect until June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs

Sponsors may request from PDE meal pattern flexibility **if** there is a disruption in the food supply chain that prevents the sponsor from meeting the meal pattern requirements of the respective Program.

Sponsors **must obtain pre-approval** from PDE prior to implementing meal pattern flexibilities using the COVID-19 Meal Pattern Flexibility Request Form. This form and instructions for submitting a request for meal pattern flexibility is available on PEARS Download Forms, COVID-19 Section, for each respective Program. Requests will be reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis. Sponsors will be notified by e-mail upon approval of a request. The request must indicate the specific disruption in food supply chain, efforts that have been made to meet the meal pattern requirements for the respective Program prior to requesting meal pattern flexibility, and how the sponsor intends to ensure nutritious meals are provided if the waiver is approved. Sponsors are expected to document the steps they took prior to requesting meal pattern flexibility.

This waiver applies to SSO, SFSP, and the CACFP. It also applies to the NSLP and SBP; however, those Programs are not in operation at this time due to mandatory school closures (with the exception of Residential Child Care Institutions that still have children in their residency).

This waiver remains in effect until April 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

The COVID-19 Meal Pattern Flexibility Request Form, as well as questions, should be emailed to RA-EDCOVID19MPTNFLEX@pa.gov.