

Memorandum

Date: April 7, 2020
To: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Organizations
From: Scott Clements, State Director
Subject: Waivers for CACFP During the Unanticipated School Closures due to COVID-19

The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* gives the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) authority to issue nationwide waivers to ensure child nutrition programs provide access to nutritious meals. As communities respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Child Nutrition/Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) wants to ensure that non-school and school aged children in the state of MS have access to meals. *Non-Congregate* meals may be provided by CACFP organizations to feed children who are enrolled in their centers and sites; The Mississippi Department Education/Office of Child Nutrition (MDE/OCN) has requested and received a waiver to implement the flexibilities afforded by this legislation. The following waivers have been granted by USDA:

- **Meal Service Times:** USDA has issued a nationwide waiver to provide flexibility to the meal service time requirements.
- **Non-Congregate Feeding:** This will allow CACFP meals to be provided outside of a congregate feeding setting.
- **Activity Requirement in the Afterschool Nutrition Programs:** The waiver eliminates the requirement to provide educational or enrichment activities when providing meals and snacks through CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Program.

Effective immediately, CACFP program operators of Child Care Centers, Adult Day Care Centers, and At-risk Afterschool programs may:

- Provide meals to participants enrolled in their center, even if the center is closed due to COVID-19.
- Provide *Grab and Go* meal services.
- Bundle meals to serve multiple meals at one time to limit exposure and maximize resources.
 - *Proper food safety protocols must be utilized by program operators.*
 - *Grab and Go meals must contain instructions regarding immediate consumption, storage, and disposal of meals.*
- Claim no more than two (2) meals and one (1) snack **or** two snacks and one meal per participant per day.
 - The MARS Site Application must accurately reflect the meal types that are being served during this time.

- Claim no more than one (1) meal and one (1) snack under the At-Risk Afterschool Program.
 - Those meals may not overlap with other meals being provided by the organization through CACFP or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- Waive At-Risk Afterschool Programs from providing education or enrichment activities during COVID-19 closures.

In addition to the above mentioned guidelines, the following requirements shall be met:

- Meal counts shall be taken by participant and meal type each day.
 - Meals may only be claimed for participants enrolled in the center.
 - Meals served to children not enrolled in the center may not be claimed for reimbursement.
 - At-risk afterschool program participants must be listed on the COVID-19 meal count sheets.
- Organizations may not claim meals for days the center was closed prior to April 7, 2020.
- Aside from the above-mentioned flexibilities, program requirements remain in place and shall be followed accordingly. If additional flexibilities become available, program operators will be notified by the State Agency.

All CACFP organizations are eligible. Pre-approval is not required to begin implementing the non-congregate meals. However, organizations **must** complete the *CACFP Non-Congregate Meal Form for COVID-19 Closures* in order to claim meals for reimbursement during this time. Claims will not be allowed for any organization that does submit the *Congregate Meal Form for COVID-19 Closures* form. **Organizations may only serve at currently approved sites.** New sites will not be approved at this time.

Organizations must update their MARS Site information to reflect the days meals will be provided to enrolled participants and updated the meal types served to enrolled participants.

Upload the *Congregate Meal Form for COVID-19 Closures* form into MARS no later than **April 15, 2020**. Once the form has been uploaded, press the **Submit for Approval** button. If you have any questions or concerns, please email susie.evans@mdek12.org.