

Good afternoon SFSAs:

We have a new information to share with you about the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during Unanticipated School Closures. This email addresses funding and school closures.

Also, we know many of you are interested in utilizing newly announced USDA waivers. The Office of Child Nutrition (OCN) is communicating with USDA on the practical implementation of the waivers. Our goal is to provide these flexibilities as quickly as possible while maintaining required program integrity and accountability. In other states we have seen waivers implemented hastily, rules changed, and the potential loss of reimbursement for schools. Our goal is to implement these waivers in manner that does not lead to negative consequences for SFAs later by acting in haste now. Below is a brief update on waivers with more information to follow as quickly as possible:

- **Expanded Site eligibility** – Currently some sites under 50% F/R are operating through an exception provided in previous USDA guidance. The new waiver formalizes eligibility for these sites and provides for a simplification of requirements. The new procedure requires a request from the SFA and brief justification, a recommendation from MDE OCN, and USDA approval. New and existing sites under 50% F/R will operate under this waiver. We will provide the USDA template as soon as we receive it.
- **Meal Pattern Flexibility** – This waiver is for supply chain disruptions, of which we have seen none so far. This does not allow for changes for convenience or other factors. A method for requesting waivers, should they be needed, is in development.
- **Parent Pick-up of Meals** – We are working with USDA to determine the requirements of the accountability component of this waiver. We have been informed that this has been executed incorrectly in other areas. We must develop options that best serve the community, do not restrict meals from children/students not enrolled in the school serving the meal, nor cause undue burden in the process of serving of meals, all while ensuring reimbursement to schools. Guidance on this will be forthcoming as we continue to discuss potential barriers with USDA.

We hope the information below on funding and school closures will be helpful. If you have questions afterward, please direct them to Charles Crawford, he is serving as the OCN clearinghouse for sorting questions and replies: [ccrawford@mdek12.org](mailto:ccrawford@mdek12.org)

### **Funding**

As a reminder, we have transitioned from NSLP/SBP to SFSP. As such, please begin using Fund code 2130. Per USDA, Child Nutrition (CN) program funds may be comingled. In consultation with the MDE Office of School Financial Service, we recommend transitioning to 2130 as of April 1 and using transfers from 2110 to support the SFSP as needed.

Normally, inventory would be taken before moving from NSLP to SFSP. With the timing of the school closure announcement and the need to mobilize quickly, we understand this may have not occurred. SFAs will not be cited for lack of a beginning inventory when reviewed.

We strongly recommend that you communicate with your District's Superintendent and Business Officer immediately to review CN finances. Unlike other programs that may receive annual funding, CN funding is based on reimbursement for meals served. Most CN programs are expected to see a decrease in revenue due to a smaller number of meals being served, lack of extra food sales, and no adult sales. Meanwhile, labor costs will not decrease and the cost of producing a meal may rise from the need for single serve items, paper goods, etc. To help mitigate these increased costs, OCN has

approved all MS schools to operate the SFSP and not the Seamless Summer Option. The SFSP provides higher reimbursement rates while lowering food costs through a simpler meal pattern.

Please remember, with labor costs fixed, SFAs may consider the option of opening additional sites to reach as many students as possible. Increased reimbursement will allow you to continue to serve the community for a longer period before the need for outside funding support is required.

### **School Closures**

A small number of sites have closed due to concerns regarding the spread of Coronavirus within their community. The health and safety of students, staff, and the community is paramount at all times, but highlighted even more during this emergency situation. Nutrition is also an important part of the health of our students. In many areas, the local school may be the only site operating and the school may be the only site with the capability to serve students in a town, community or neighborhood. Balancing these two factors, the need to provide meals to nearly 465,000 students, many of them underprivileged, and the concern over containment, is a difficult decision for schools.

As a reminder, the CDC has guidance for minimizing the risks of Coronavirus. Also, schools have reported a number of methods for practicing social distancing. Some examples are:

- Moving work tables to the unused cafeteria space for the assembly of meals to provide for social distancing
- Using a cart to roll meals to cars and avoiding contact with children and parents
- Placing warmers and coolers inside the doors at the bus loop to minimize staff transporting meals and decreasing staff interaction accordingly
- Not rotating staff between sites to prevent possible cross infection

Our office has received a small number of questions asking if a site should close due to positive test in the community or from district employees outside of Child Nutrition. We strongly recommend that SFAs contact the MS State Department of Health for guidance on whether a school should be closed.

Mississippi Coronavirus Hotline (available 24/7): **877-978-6453**

[https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/14,0,420.html](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Thanks again for all of your hard work to make sure MS children continue to remain healthy by providing nutritious meals.

Stay safe!

Scott Clements, **State Director**  
Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools