

Good afternoon SFSAs,

USDA announced several highly anticipated waivers today that will assist in implementing Child Nutrition Programs for SY-2020-2021. These will allow for non-congregate meals (meals in the classroom), suspension of the OVS requirement for High Schools, and meal pattern flexibility if there are supply chain disruptions. Critical for Hybrid and Distance Learning, serving multiple meals at one time and parent/guardian pick-up (with OCN plan approval) will also be allowed, as during Unanticipated School Meal Closures. Below is a summary of each.

1. Meal Time Service Requirement Waiver

This waiver allows for the serving of meals outside of the standard meal times for the following child nutrition programs: National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. USDA has provided this waiver to ensure children are still being fed, while still in support of social distancing recommendations. This waiver is effective July 1, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2021.

(The waiver for the Summer Food Service Program remains in effect through August 31, 2020)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-meal-times-nationwide-waiver#>

2. Non-congregate Feeding Waiver

This waiver will minimize potential exposure to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), by allowing the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program to serve meals outside of the standard group setting. This waiver is effective July 1, 2020, and remains in effect through June 30, 2021.

(The waiver for the Summer Food Service Program remains in effect through August 31, 2020)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19/non-congregate-feeding-nationwide-waiver#>

3. Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-up Waiver

This waiver will minimize potential exposure to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), by allowing parents and/or guardians to pick up meals for their children, without the student needing to be present. This applies to the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This waiver is effective July 1, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2021.

Reminder: MDE/OCN must approve each district/school Parent Pick-Up Plan.

(The waiver for the Summer Food Service Program remains in effect through August 31, 2020)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19/parents-and-guardians-waiver#>

4. Offer Versus Serve Flexibility Waiver

This waiver removes the requirement for high schools to provide students the option to select some of the foods offered in a meal. While this practice, known as “offer versus serve” is encouraged, social distancing or meals-in-the-classroom models would make this regulatory requirement difficult. This waiver is effective July 1, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2021.

*Not yet posted by USDA

5. Meal Pattern Flexibility

This waiver allows for meal pattern flexibility with State Agency (MDE/OCN) approval to utilize this waiver. OCN will consider requests that are targeted and justified based upon disruptions to the availability of food products resulting from unprecedented impacts of COVID-19. USDA and MDE expect and strongly encourage SFAs to maintain and meet the nutrition standards for each program to the greatest extent possible. This waiver is effective July 1, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2021.

(The waiver for the Summer Food Service Program remains in effect through July 31, 2020)

Reminder: OCN must approve exceptions to the meal pattern before they occur.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-meal-pattern-flexibility-waiver#>

We hope these additional flexibilities will assist with your planning for School Year 2020-2021. Please continue to send in your questions and we will provide feedback as quickly as possible based on currently available information from USDA.

Stay safe!

Scott

Scott Clements, **State Director**