

Good evening SFSAs,

We have received some questions about Governor Reeves' issuance of Executive Order (EO) 1466 earlier today. The order is for MS citizens to shelter in place and for non-essential business and operations to cease.

Executive Order 1466 does call for "Essential Business or Operations to Remain Open". EO 1466 allows for meals to be served by drive thru, curbside, or delivery methods. Further, EO 1466 references EO 1463 which defines essential businesses/operations. **EO1463 specifically names the preparation and delivery of school meals as an essential function.** School meals programs may and should remain open whenever possible to aid the community in this emergency.

Mississippi has a high percentage of students who are eligible for Free or Reduced meals and rely on the nutrition provided by school nutrition programs. We strongly encourage each of you to continue to provide this essential service to this vulnerable population, Mississippi's children. We understand concerns about protecting staff and worries that schools might be a source of spreading the virus. We recommend that you to discuss any concerns with the MS State Department of Health, especially if considering closing sites. Please see the School Closures section below from our March 27<sup>th</sup> guidance for more information.

Thanks for all you do to keep MS children safe and healthy,  
Scott

**Executive Orders:**

<https://www.sos.ms.gov/Education-Publications/ExecutiveOrders/1466.pdf>

<https://www.sos.ms.gov/Education-Publications/ExecutiveOrders/1463.pdf>

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

Scott Clements, **State Director**

Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools