



CNP Meal Service During COVID-19

Questions and Answers

3-13-2020

NJDA's approved waiver request through June 30, 2020, allows the State Agency to approve sponsors in good standing to operate either the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) meal service at both school and non-school sites and in a non-congregate setting, during unanticipated school closures due to the novel coronavirus.

Please note, a school closure means closing the school and sending all the students and staff home. In a school dismissal, the school may stay open for staff while the children stay home. In this guidance, the term closure or dismissal is used to refer to schools that are closed or at which all students are dismissed.

The questions and answers below provide additional information regarding how approved SFAs may operate an SFSP or SSO under COVID-19 conditions.

Q. Are school districts required to provide meals to students during school closures or school dismissals?

A. No. However, SFAs are encouraged to ensure that the needs of low-income children are met during extended school closures or dismissals.

Q. Can School Food Authorities (SFAs) serve meals if schools are closed?

A. Yes. With New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) approval, meals may be served under SFSP or SSO during unanticipated school closures.

Q. Who can school meals be served to?

A. Children 18 and under.

Q. What meals can be served?

A. The maximum number of meals that may be offered remains the same as under SFSP or SSO: up to two meals, or one meal and one snack, per child, per day, in any combination except lunch and supper. Any additional meals will not be reimbursed by USDA.

Q. May schools place breakfast and lunch items in the same bag for ease of distribution and to keep crowds at a minimum?

A. Yes, but they must keep count of the breakfasts and lunches separately and maintain separate menu and production records for each meal served.

Q. May schools place a week's worth of food in bags so that distribution occurs once a week to limit exposure to students and food service staff?

A. Yes, but they must maintain separate menu and production records for each meal served, and maintain accurate counts.

Q. What are the requirements for the meals?

A. The meals must meet the regular menu planning requirements of the SFSP or SSO. Offer versus serve (OVS) will not apply and all meals must be unitized, meaning a complete reimbursable meal that meets the requirements of the menu planning method used, including milk, must be distributed. Shelf-stable milk may be used. USDA commodity foods may also be used. If availability of milk or other meal components becomes an issue, the State agency will work with USDA to provide the needed waivers or flexibility.

Q. Are we required to accommodate documented special needs?

A. Yes. This should be addressed in the SFA's SFSP or SSO application.

Q. Will there be any separate reporting requirements for meals served to children under the SFSP/SSO COVID-19 waiver or will the standard meal count reporting procedures apply?

A. Separate meal counts and records must be maintained for meals served under a COVID-19 waiver. To receive reimbursement, total meals must be reported to NJDA for submission to USDA.