**CNP Meal Service During COVID-19**

**NJDA Area Eligibility Waiver Questions and Answers**

**5-14-2020**

1. **I received notification that my school/district was changed from a closed enrolled to an open site through the Area Eligibility (AE) Waiver. What does this mean?**

Previously, School Food Authorities (SFAs) approved to operate a closed enrolled site were instructed to target the distribution of free meals towards those students who qualified for free or reduced price school meals. The flexibility granted to NJDA through the AE waiver allows SFAs to provide meals free of charge to all students enrolled in the school, regardless of eligibility status. Though not required, use of this flexibility is strongly encouraged.

The open site option maintains children’s access to COVID-19 Seamless Summer Option (SSO) meal service should families who may not have qualified for free or reduced price school meals prior to the public health emergency now find themselves struggling financially and experiencing food insecurity. Ultimately, it is a local decision for the districts to determine how to best meet the needs of their communities. The expectation of the Division is that no student who requests a meal during COVID-19 SSO meal service will be denied.

1. **Without knowing which students may be at risk, how do we target families who may be struggling?**  SFAs may send out district-wide e-mails and text messages, reach out directly to families known to be experiencing difficulties, and send robocalls to the entire district.   SFAs may also provide information on their website in addition to these methods.
2. **Should my school obtain an Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals from the families attending meal distribution?** Applications are not required for families to participate in COVID-19 SSO meal distribution. However, applications may assist families in the long-term by allowing the students to fall under the carryover period in the 2020-2021 school year and participate in the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program. A suggested approach is to distribute lunch applications at feeding sites should any new participants be interested.
3. **What are acceptable counting and claiming practices in an Open – AE Waiver site?** Since all meals will be claimed at the “free” rate, a tally method is acceptable.  Edit checks are not required for SSO sites during the period that the SFA is operating the sites under the SSO policies. However, SFAs must ensure that meal counts match actual participation and claims reflect the number of meals served.  Production Records and point of service documentation must be maintained.  Records must be maintained for a period of three years plus the current year.
4. **My school is currently delivering meals to students qualifying for free and reduced price school meals. Can we continue this current feeding model?** It is up to the individual SFA to develop a method of meal distribution that will best meet the needs of families while balancing staffing resources. SFAs may choose to deliver meals and/or staff one or more distribution sites in order to provide meals to students.
5. **We would like to set up a meal distribution site at a non-school site. Is this allowed?** SFAs may open a “community site” at a non-profit location accessible to the community.
6. **Students from other schools are coming to my Open – AE Waiver site. Can I provide and claim these meals?** Yes. For open SSO sites, any child age 18 years or younger at the start of the school year, as well as persons over 18 with disabilities as defined in the regulations, can be served meals, all of which can be claimed at the free rate.