

Back-to-School: We'll Keep Feeding Those Kids!

September Updates

The COVID-19 pandemic has school districts across the nation practicing a variety of learning models. School meals will continue to be an indispensable contribution to children's lives, maintaining their food security and supporting learning and a healthy weight. This resource builds upon the learnings from spring and summer 2020 and provides tools and tips for providing students with nutritious meals and running successful and sustainable nutrition programs when moving "back-to-school."

Best Practices Moving into SY 20-21

Planning templates, reopening protocols, and additional resources that support school nutrition programs in return-to-school planning efforts during COVID-19

Back-to-School Planning Tools

Center for Ecoliteracy [COVID-19 Return to School Planning Resources](#)

LunchAssist [Reopening Checklist](#)

LunchAssist [Waiver Toolkit](#)

No Kid Hungry [Meal Service Options for SY 2020-2021](#)

Resources for Food Service

LunchAssist [Sample 5-Day Meal Kit Tip Sheet](#)

USDA [Providing Multiple Meals During Coronavirus](#)

LunchAssist [Bulk Produce Calculator](#)

Farm to School Network [Local Food in COVID-19 Response and Recovery](#)

What are top-of-mind issues?

Meal service

- Keeping participation high and steady
- Providing enough staffing for non-congregate, on-site school meal service
- Maintaining quality and innovation in menus despite ongoing challenges and disruptions
- Distributing some foods in bulk – or re-packaging foods – when individually-wrapped items are unavailable or undesirable
- Navigating regulatory changes in USDA waivers

Safety

- Keeping employees safe from COVID-19 exposure

Costs

- Managing additional costs related to operating during COVID-19 despite potential reductions in revenue



Photos: North Monterey County Unified School District (CA) weekly meal kit distribution

Resources for Food and Nutrition Education

FoodCorps [Video Lessons](#) and [COVID-19 Resources](#)

Action For Healthy Kids [COVID-19 Resources: Physical Activity Nutrition and More Vermont Harvest of the Month](#)

[Montana Harvest of the Month Videos](#)

Center for Ecoliteracy [Abundant California](#) and [Nourishing Students](#) resources

The Edible Schoolyard Project [Edible Education for the Home Classroom](#)

LunchAssist [Healthy Plate Coloring Sheet](#) and [Family Mealtime Recipes](#)

Other Resources for School Nutrition Programs during COVID-19

[School Nutrition Association's COVID-19 Resource Page](#) Clearinghouse of school nutrition resources, including policy updates, COVID-19 back to school resources, SNA Back to School webinars (free to all), and industry and allied partner resources.

[Back-to-School Meal Service Toolkit](#) Feeding Students During the 2020-2021 School Year Amidst the Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic. Meal service options. (No Kid Hungry – Share Our Strength. Released July 23, 2020)

[School Reopening Plans](#) FRAC Tracker. An overview of available state plans for reopening schools in the fall with a focus on meal services. (Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). Ongoing updates)

Calling all Districts! USDA Summer Meals Can Keep Kids Healthy. Best practices for SSO/SFSP meal service. National version: [Fact Sheet](#) and [Modifiable Template](#). California version: [Fact Sheet](#) and [Modifiable Template](#). (Nutrition Policy Institute, University of California & Stanford University. Updated June 20, 2020)

[Resources for Schools to Support Healthy Menu Development](#). A collection of healthy school meal cookbooks and recipes. (Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). June 2020)

[Considerations for Schools](#) includes general recommendations for COVID-19 mitigation strategies when schools are open. (Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Ongoing updates)

Participation Builds Bottom Line – Tips from Districts

Community outreach

- “We called every FRPM household to let them know that free meals were once again available for all kids.”
- “We put up multi-language posters all over town.”
- Continue to collect meal applications with outreach via phone, text, social media, email. Include the FRPM application with other forms, in parent and child packets.
- Attend school PTA meetings to highlight meal programs.

Good food that’s easy to access

- Change it up and keep it fresh using the Food Service Resources provided above.
- Survey families for preferred meal pick up days, times and locations.

Develop vending services

- “We are vending food to our local Meals on Wheels program.”

Weekend meals

- Weekend meals are permitted as a normal part of SSO, SFSP and CACFP – check with your state agency.

Overview of Federal Child Nutrition Programs

- The National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP) provide meals for all children enrolled in participating schools. Children may be eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. All children attending schools that participate in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 receive breakfast and lunch at no cost.
- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) provide meals and snacks for children at eligible sites.
- The CACFP At-risk Afterschool Program and NSLP Afterschool Snack Program may be used to provide snack/supper at eligible schools.
- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides an extra serving of fruit or vegetable to every child in participating schools.

USDA Waiver Status – Child Nutrition Programs

USDA’s waivers provide school meal programs with numerous flexibilities in order to navigate circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to [Summary of Waivers and Memos](#) (from No Kid Hungry - Share Our Strength) for the latest updates, details and hyperlinks for waivers.

- **Waivers in Effect until December 31, 2020 for SFSP and SSO**
 - SFSP and SSO Operations
 - Meal Service Time Flexibility
 - Non-congregate Feeding
 - Meal Pattern Flexibility
 - Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children
 - Area Eligibility Waiver Extensions
 - Allow Offer vs. Serve Flexibilities for SFSP
 - First Week of SFSP Site Visit Flexibility
- **Waivers in Effect until June 30, 2021 for NSLP, SBP, and CACFP**
 - Meal Service Time Flexibility
 - Non-congregate Feeding
 - Meal Pattern Flexibility
 - Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children
 - Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for High Schools in the NSLP
 - Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs
- **Waivers in Effect until September 30, 2020**
 - Food Service Management Contract Duration in the NSLP and SFSP
 - Waiver of Annual Review Requirements for State Agencies in the CACFP

Effective through 12/31/20,

- Schools are permitted to operate under SSO/SFSP in lieu of NSLP/SBP during distance, hybrid, or in-person learning.
- Under SSO/SFSP, school may use a tally sheet or other method of meal counting and may claim all meals as free under the area eligibility waiver.

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