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Oklahoma State Department of Education

USDA approves Oklahoma's request for free meals for all students

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USDA approves Oklahoma's request for free meals for all students regardless of school free and reduced lunch percentage

OKLAHOMA CITY (March 30, 2020) – Oklahoma students statewide will soon be able to access two free meals a day following a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) waiver, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister announced today.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) applied for the waiver March 11 and March 25 to remove the requirement that school feeding sites be located in high-need areas under the Emergency School Closure provisions of the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Approved over the weekend, the waiver grants site-area eligibility to 31 states, including Oklahoma.

Prior to the waiver, districts could provide free meals only if 50% of students at a school met eligibility for the free and reduced-price lunch program.

Hofmeister said the waiver is welcome news as districts clamor for ways to get meals to students in the midst of distance learning necessary in the wake of the global pandemic.

“Amid such uncertainty and instability, we should not be asking our families or schools to worry over needless red tape,” she said. “This waiver means that, following a simple application, any district in the state can establish feeding sites for up to two free meals a day for every student who needs one.”

Oklahoma received a swift response to its multiple waiver requests after U.S. Sen. James Lankford intervened.

The waiver is in effect until June 30, 2020, or until the federally declared public health emergency expires.

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OKLAHOMA Education

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