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NCDHHS

Governor's Working Group Getting Food to Children Who are Out of School; Connecting Families to Child Care

More than 1.2 million meals and 6,500 snacks served.

Raleigh

Mar 23, 2020

With schools closed to in-person instruction, many children across North Carolina are getting their daily meals from school districts and community partners. All 115 public school districts – many working with community partners such as food banks and faith-based entities – have approved plans to serve meals to children in North Carolina. As of March 22nd, more than 1,165 schools had already served 1.2 million meals and 6,500 snacks.

"Many children rely on schools for their meals, so we have acted quickly to make sure our children have enough food each day," said Governor Roy Cooper. "This is the kind of collaboration, action and creativity we will continue to need across our state in the weeks ahead. Together, we will come through this stronger."

School districts have flexibility on how to distribute food and have implemented a variety of innovative methods for meal pick-up and delivery. Most sites began serving meals March 16th. All children in the family who come to a school-sponsored site to receive meals, regardless of age,

are fed. Economically disadvantaged areas were prioritized for locations. Many of the participating schools also are serving as nutrition hubs where families can pick up additional food that has been donated.

The work is one focus area of the North Carolina COVID-19 Education and Nutrition Working Group, co-chaired by the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Department of Public Instruction. The Working Group has submitted multiple waivers to the US Department of Agriculture to maximize federal resources to provide food to children in North Carolina.

The Working Group is also finalizing a plan to ensure that those working to keep our communities safe and healthy as part of the state's COVID-19 response have access to child care. Child care will be prioritized for first responders, emergency management staff, hospital staff, frontline healthcare providers, nursing and adult group home staff, child care program staff, food service staff, and others providing critical support, as well as children who are homeless or in unstable or unsafe living arrangements.

The Working Group was established in Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 117, which ordered the statewide closure of K-12 public schools to allow time to further understand the impact of COVID-19 and develop a plan for continued learning for students. It is a collaborative effort between the NC DHHS and DPI focused on providing:

- frontline workers with access to safe, affordable child care and out-of-school-time care options,
- children with access to nutritious food while schools and child care programs are closed, and
- children with opportunities for structured learning while schools and child care programs are closed.

To provide for children's ongoing educational needs while schools and child care programs are closed, NCDPI has published a set of resources for educators and families, including on Remote Learning instruction and recommendations for leadership. NCDPI is also working with internet service providers who are offering free and affordable options for high-speed internet while schools are closed and has launched an interactive map for families to find free and affordable internet service offerings across the state.

To stay up to date on COVID-19 in North Carolina, visit ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina) or text COVIDNC to 898211. Call 2-1-1 (or 888-892-1162) for general questions or for help finding human services resources in your community.

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