Maine DOE Newsroom

PRIORITY NOTICE: Maine DOE Celebrates Extension of 9 USDA Waivers that Provide Maine Children with Better Access to Food

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) received confirmation on Monday, August 31st that 9 waivers from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be extended, allowing continued flexibility in the way that school districts and other non-profit, community organizations can offer meals to children 18 years of age or younger.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Maine DOE, in partnership with Maine schools, has sought continued flexibility in federal school meal programs so that schools can continue to provide Maine children with easy access to food, even when they are not at school.

The 9 waivers all apply to the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which was established as a way to ensure that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer months, when school is not in session. Throughout the pandemic however, flexibility in this program, granted by the USDA, has allowed schools to provide meals to children while they are learning remotely.

Through the flexibility of the SFSP, school nutrition teams across the state have partnered with community organizations, prepared and packaged food, set up food delivery service with school transportation teams, and created community pick-up locations, among many other methods, to ensure families have safe options for receiving food. The 9 waivers will allow schools to continue providing meals with this same flexibility as the school year begins.

The first round of waivers began in March of 2020 when COVID-19 started spreading throughout the United States, and schools switched to emergency remote learning. The waivers have been extended numerous times throughout the summer, with word of the most recent 9 happening early this week.

The 9 waiver extensions, which apply to all 50 states and U.S. territories, became effective on Sept. 1, 2020 and will extent to Dec.31, 2020.

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option – EXTENSION 4 (#54)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children – EXTENSION 4 (#55)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option – EXTENSION 7 (#53)

1. Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the Summer Food Service Program – EXTENSION (#50)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program – EXTENSION (#51)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program – EXTENSION (#49)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option – EXTENSION (#48)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program through December 2020 (#56)

1. Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers – EXTENSION 2 (#52)

Maine schools are excited about their ability to continue providing more meal flexibility to all children in their communities. The DOE Child Nutrition Team has been working with school nutrition teams and district leaders across the state to ensure they have the most updated guidance for school meal programs as the 2020/2021 school year begins. The team

also continues to process SFSP applications on an ongoing basis. **View an interactive map of schools providing meals through SFSP.**

Districts interested in applying for the SFSP can do so by contacting the **Maine DOE's Child Nutrition Team.**

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Posted on **September 4, 2020**

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