Maine DOE Newsroom

MEDIA RELEASE: Maine DOE Increases Flexibility to School Meal Programs Feeding Children in Need

Maine –With the approval of yet another waiver to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and additional bulk packaging options, the Maine Department of Education has been able to add significant flexibility to its school food service programs, enabling schools to provide meals to students all over Maine, increasing the potential to reach even more hungry children in a more meaningful way.

The first waiver obtained by the Maine DOE expanded the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) allowing school districts and community partners to provide meals to students during extended remote learning due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Today Maine DOE received approval for a waiver to the requirement that National School Lunch Program participants must have a population of at least 50% who receive free or reduced- meals. Maine DOE requested flexibility to locate meal distribution sites in areas that do not meet the 50% criteria to ensure that any child can receive the meals they normally would on a regular school day during unanticipated school closures related to COVID-19. To maintain children's access to meals, and to support families experiencing financial hardship, Maine DOE requested to waive the area eligibility requirements under 7 CFR 225.6(c)(2)(i)(G). This was approved by the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

The Maine DOE has also been granted flexibility to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, allowing schools and community partners to prepare meals in bulk – multiple meals for several days in one package for children up to the age of 18.

Advanced planning of bulk meals is required to ensure that the meal pattern is met, and food will be stored and prepared in a safe manner. Bulk provisions would be provided for in home meal preparation.

Schools and community partners can now request approval from the Maine Child Nutrition team at the Maine Department of Education. For more information or to submit a request for an approval. Child.nutrition@maine.gov

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Written and submitted by Debra Butterfield and Lori Gingras, MSAD 11. Rie Kittredge, English Department…
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Jun 26, 2020

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