Child Nutrition Program Meal Service During Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

On March 11, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Food and Nutrition (/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Food-Nutrition/Pages/default.aspx) (DFN) received waiver approval from the United States Department of Agriculture (https://www.usda.gov/) (USDA) that allows schools closed due to the coronavirus to serve meals to students through the National School Lunch Program's (https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp) (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in a noncongregate setting.

USDA released SP 08-2020, SFSP 04-2020, Child Nutrition Program Meal Service During Novel Coronavirus Outbreaks (https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19), which contains an initial question and answer document.

School Nutrition Program Sponsors interested in utilizing non-congregate feeding in the event of a school closure through SSO or SFSP must obtain approval from DFN prior to serving any non congregate meals during a school closure. Steps for obtaining approval have been shared with School Nutrition Program Sponsors.

Resources

Map: Meal Distribution Locations by County (https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Meals4Kids/Pages/default.aspx)

Emergency Meal Preparation and Service Resources and Toolkits (https://www.lunchassist.org/covid-19)

While Local Education Agencies have the option to choose to operate the waiver through SFSP or SSO, the most expeditious process for schools is the SSO.

On March 30, 2020, DFN announced it received another waiver from the USDA that creates flexibility around eligibility requirements for areas experiencing significant economic changes. Previously, schools qualified to offer meals to children age 18 and under through the SSO or SFSP based on the free/reduced percentages of school buildings or census data. This did not accurately reflect the current economic circumstances that quickly evolved due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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