# Flexibility for families picking up meals for children during COVID-19 school closures

**Date:** Thursday, March 26, 2020

DES MOINES – In an effort to ease the burden on Iowa families and get food out to the students who need it at this critical time, the Iowa Department of Education has received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides flexibility for schools and organizations distributing meals through the Summer Food Service Program during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Effective immediately, children do not have to be present when caregivers pick up meals at Iowa's 303 approved Grab and Go meal sites.

"First and foremost, we want to ensure the health and safety of Iowa's students," said Iowa Department of Education Director Ann Lebo. "We want to get healthy meals into the hands of students while minimizing the potential exposure to COVID-19. We understand that it isn't practical for all children to accompany their parents and caregivers at meal sites."

Under the new USDA guidance, children do not need to be present at the meal sites. Parents and caregivers will be asked to share the school name where each child attends, if they are of school age.

The USDA's Summer Food Service Program, administered by the Iowa Department of Education, was made available during this national health crisis. The program aims to remedy childhood food insecurity by providing nutritious meals and snacks to children age 18 and under in low-income areas during school closures due to COVID-19.

The waiver is available on the USDA Food and Nutrition Service COVID-19 website.

For more information, visit the Iowa Department of Education's COVID-19 Guidance and Information webpage.

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