Maine DOE Newsroom

PRIORITY NOTICE: USDA Extends School Meal Flexibilities Through 2020/2021 School Year; Webinar Available 10/14 at 1pm

The State of Maine has accepted 12 waiver extensions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) allowing for continued flexibilities in the federal Summer Food Service Program/Seamless Summer Option (SFSP/SSO) programs through the 2020/2021 school year. Originally set to expire on December 31, 2020, the waiver extensions will allow schools and other local program operators to continue to leverage SFSP/SSO federal food service programs to provide no cost meals options to all children through June 30, 2021.

The waiver extensions allow school nutrition teams across the state to continue partnering with community organizations, to prepare and package food, set up food delivery service with school transportation teams, and create community pick-up locations (among many other methods) to ensure families have safe options for receiving food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We are really pleased that USDA continues to extend these necessary waivers to assist school nutrition programs across Maine with the funding and options they need to feed Maine kids during the pandemic,” said Walter Beesley, Maine Department of Education (DOE) Director of Child Nutrition. “We continue to work closely with district and school leaders to ensure they have the resources and state-level support needed to continue their work.”

The Maine DOE is hosting a Child Nutrition webinar tomorrow 10/14/2020 at 1:00pm. School and district leaders, and school nutrition staff can **register to attend this webinar here**.

The first round of USDA waivers for school meal programming began in March of 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when schools around the country switched to emergency remote learning. The waivers have been extended numerous times throughout the summer and **again this fall**, with the most recent extension coming in late last week, that allows the flexibilities to continue through the end of the current school year.

The waivers include:

1. COVID-19 Response #59 – Nationwide waiver to allow SFSP and SSO operations through SY 2020-21 – extension
2. COVID-19 Response #60 – Nationwide waiver to extend area eligibility waivers – extension #3
3. COVID-19 Response #61 – Nationwide waiver to allow non-congregate feeding in SFSP/SSO – extension #5
4. COVID-19 Response #62 – Nationwide waiver to allow parents and guardian to pick up meals for children – extension #5
5. COVID-19 Response #63 – Nationwide waiver to allow meal pattern flexibility in SFSP/SSO – extension #8
6. COVID-19 Response #64 – Nationwide waiver to allow area eligibility for closed enrolled sites in SFSP/SSO – extension #2
7. COVID-19 Response #65 – Nationwide waiver to waive first week site visits in SFSP – extension #2
8. COVID 19 Response #66 – Nationwide waiver of meal service time restrictions in SFSP/SSO – extension #2
9. COVID 19 Response #67 – Nationwide waiver to allow OVS flexibilities in SFSP – extension #2
10. COVID 19 Response #68 – Nationwide waiver of area eligibility in the CACFP at risk afterschool care component – extension
11. COVID 19 Response #69 – Nationwide waiver to allow reimbursement for meals served prior to notification of preapproval and provide flexibility for preapproval visits in SFSP – extension
12. COVID 19 Response #70 – Nationwide waiver to allow meal pattern flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs – extension #5

All Maine children 18 and younger can apply to have a breakfast and lunch at no charge through the school in their community. Families interested in applying can do so by contacting their local school to complete a **meal benefit application**. The data from this form also supports other opportunities for local schools/districts such as educational grants and additional state subsidy for educational purposes.

Maine DOE's Child Nutrition team 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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