



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

DATE: March 20, 2020

Braddock  
Metro Center

CODE: COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #2

1320  
Braddock  
Place  
Alexandria  
VA 22314

SUBJECT: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the  
Child Nutrition Programs

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

Pursuant to the COVID-19 Child Nutrition Response Act (the Act) (H.R. 6201, Title II), and based on the exceptional circumstances of this public health emergency, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is establishing a nationwide waiver to support access to nutritious meals while minimizing potential exposure to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This waiver applies to the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program (the Child Nutrition Programs).

Section 2202(a) and (b) of the Act permits the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a waiver for all States for the purposes of providing meals under the Child Nutrition Programs, with appropriate safety measures, as determined by the Secretary.

Under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act at 42 U.S.C. 1753(b)(1)(A) and 42 U.S.C. 1761(a)(1)(D), and Program regulations at 7 CFR 225.6(e)(15) and 7 CFR 226.19(b)(6)(iii), Child Nutrition Program meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site. However, FNS recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the congregate meal requirements is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures for the purpose of providing meals and meal supplements.

Therefore, FNS waives, for all States, those requirements at 42 U.S.C. 1753(b)(1)(A), 42 U.S.C. 1761(a)(1)(D), and 7 CFR 225.6(e)(15), to serve meals through the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program in a congregate setting. FNS also waives, for all States, requirements at 7 CFR 226.19(b)(6)(iii), to serve meals through the Child and Adult Care Food Program in a congregate setting.

This waiver is effective immediately, and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

Consistent with section 2202(a)(2) of the Act, this waiver applies automatically to all States that elect to use it, without further application. State agencies must inform their Regional Office if they elect to be subject to the waiver. State agencies should inform local Program operators of the flexibilities provided by this waiver as quickly as possible, and work in partnership with local operators to provide meals to all participants in a safe and accessible manner.

As required by section 2202(d), each State that elects to be subject to this waiver must submit a report to the Secretary not later than 1 year after the date such State received the waiver. The report must include:

- A summary of the use of this waiver by the State agency and local Program operators, and
- A description of whether and how this waiver resulted in improved services to Program participants.

FNS stands ready to provide assistance to areas impacted by the coronavirus and intends to continue supporting access to nutritious meals during this public health emergency.

FNS appreciates the exceptional effort of State agencies and local Program operators working to meet the nutritional needs of participants during a challenging time. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Kline  
Director  
Policy and Program Development Division