

Important Waiver Information from the USDA

As Illinois schools and community organizations continue to provide nutritious meals to children enrolled in school or all children aged 18 years and younger during these COVID-19 closures, the Illinois State Board of Education is pleased to share some nationwide waiver information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding those efforts. These waivers are pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) and based on the exceptional circumstances of this public health pandemic.

1. Meal Pattern Flexibilities (Extended to July 31,2020)

Schools and community organizations operating USDA-funded Child Nutrition Programs at this time (Non-Congregate COVID-19 closure waiver) are required to follow the meal pattern of the program in which they are operating. If, however, there are extenuating circumstances that do not allow a specific requirement of the meal pattern to be met, the USDA has allowed state agencies an option to offer a waiver on a case by case basis. ISBE has heard of some challenges to date and will offer this case by case waiver option via a [simple online form](#). Please maintain documentation of the meal components as offered (menu, production records, invoices, etc.) and continue to provide children meals to the best of your ability. This waiver is effective immediately and remains in effect until April 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. The USDA will reevaluate the continued need for this meal pattern flexibility waiver as the situation continues to evolve.

2. Parent/Guardian Pick Up of Non-Congregate Meals for Children (Extended to Aug. 31,2020)

Schools and community organizations operating USDA-funded Child Nutrition Programs at this time (Non-Congregate COVID-19 closure waiver) may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take reimbursable meals home to their children. This provision is allowable due to the requirements of social distancing and the Shelter in Place order for the state of Illinois. Schools and community organizations need to develop and maintain a plan that enforces the message that meals distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children are for the children. In addition, the plan should provide information on how the school district is making an attempt to not distribute duplicate meals to any child. This waiver is effective immediately and remains in effect until June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

3. School Nutrition Program Sponsors – Community Eligibility Provision Application Process School Year 2020-21

National School Lunch/School Breakfast Program sponsors evaluating the possibility of Community Eligible Provision (CEP) election will have extended time to evaluate. Data used to calculate the identified student percentage (ISP) may be from anytime between April 1, 2020, and June 30, 2020. The CEP application period is also extended through Aug. 31, 2020

(previously, June 30, 2020). State Agency publication of eligible and near eligible schools for CEP will be posted no later than June 30, 2020.

The USDA has published these [COVID-19 memos](#).

Please continue to share questions with ISBE at covid19@isbe.net or specific questions related to the USDA funded Child Nutrition Programs at cnp@isbe.net.

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