

Additional USDA Flexibilities/Waivers for School Year 2020-21

The U.S. Department of Agriculture extended four nationwide waivers for School Year 2020-21, giving key flexibilities to school districts to provide meals to students with appropriate safety measures. When the new school year begins, school districts will return to participating in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program with the following initial flexibilities. The Illinois State Board of Education will continue to work with USDA for any additional flexibilities needed to provide meals to students.

- [Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs](#): Under this waiver, sponsors can provide non-congregate meals during COVID-19 related operations. This will allow school districts to provide meals for students utilizing remote learning. Under normal circumstances, NSLP, SBP, and CACFP meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site.
- [Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program](#): Under this waiver, program operators may establish meal service times that support streamlined access to nutritious meals. This works in conjunction with the non-congregate feeding waiver to allow multiple meals to be picked up at one time. It also provide flexibility for serving meals due to scheduling issues (such as busing schedules due to number of riders, etc.) related to social distancing while learning on-site.
- [Nationwide Waivers to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children](#): Under this waiver, program operators may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take home to their children without the children being present in non-congregate delivery methods.
- [Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs](#): Sponsors should continue to make every effort to serve meals that meet the meal pattern requirements and the nutrition standards to the greatest extent possible. However, the USDA and the Illinois State Board of Education recognize that sponsors may experience challenges in meeting those requirements. Sponsors that are unable to meet the meal pattern requirements must [submit a form](#) to ISBE to report their circumstances and request a waiver. Waiver requests must be submitted on a weekly basis as needed. ISBE will approve use of this waiver on a case-by case basis.

The USDA also issued a [Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve \(OVS\) Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the National School Lunch Program for School Year 2020-21](#). Generally, NSLP participating schools that serve grades 9-12 are required to implement OVS allowing older students to have a choice in the number of meal components selected for a reimbursable meal. This USDA waiver provides flexibility for all schools to package complete reimbursable meals for ease of distribution in non-congregate settings as well as altered on-site methods such as meals in the classroom or other locations. This allows schools flexibility on how best to offer meal services to students.

ISBE Nutrition Department staff is available to assist with questions and concerns from our districts/sponsors. Please reach out to us at cnp@isbe.net. Thank you for all you're doing to feed students in need during these challenging times.

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