



# Illinois State Board of Education

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## **Question and Answers: Child Nutrition Program Meal Service During COVID-19 Outbreak**

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP) and institutions participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) that may be/are dismissed or closed due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) are encouraged to continue to provide meals to their students. Under these circumstances, school food authorities (SFAs) and other eligible community organizations (COs) may continue to serve meals to children affected by school or child care closures through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO).

### **Is it mandatory to provide meals during a COVID-19 dismissal?**

No. However, school districts are encouraged to ensure that the needs of low-income children are met during extended school dismissals.

### **How does a school food authority or community organization continue to provide meals during a COVID-19 dismissal?**

School districts can either participate in Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO). For a comparison of the programs, visit <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/SSO-SFSP-comparison.pdf>. Community organizations (CO) wanting to offer reimbursable meals would need to participate in SFSP.

### **If our school food authority or community organization wishes to seek reimbursement for meals provided during COVID-19 closures, what is required?**

If the closure is specific to COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved a waiver to eliminate the requirement to serve meals in a group setting. To access the waiver, participating school food authorities and community organizations would complete a simple form, the [Unanticipated School Closure Non-Congregate Meal Form](#), and submit to ISBE ([cnp@isbe.net](mailto:cnp@isbe.net)). This form allows the SFA to detail their locally developed plans to ensure program meal content, counts, and food safety comply.

### **Can our district serve meals during e-learning days?**

Only if the e-learning day(s) are due to a COVID-19 response. Sponsors could implement alternative distributive methods to provide reimbursable meals to students/children during unanticipated school closures, distance and/or e-learning school days, and any other situation in which students are not physically present at school in relation to COVID19.

## **How does a school district receive approval to operate during COVID-19 conditions?**

Once the completed form is submitted to ISBE, a Nutrition Department staff member will be in touch with the contact person designated on the Unanticipated School Closure Non-Congregate Meal Form. Approval will be granted to the maximum extent allowable by USDA. Once approved, ISBE staff will assist the school food authority or community organization complete the WINS requirements. The approval to receive meal reimbursement may occur prior to the completion of the WINS application. Continue to monitor [ISBE's School Health Issues webpage](#) for the most up to date Coronavirus updates and resources.

SFA's are encouraged to apply in advance of a COVID-19 school dismissal.

## **If our school is closed, where do I serve the meals?**

Since the school building or child care center may be closed to children (social distancing), your school food authority or community organization determines the best distribution method to meet your community needs. Some possible suggestions include home delivery of meals, Grab-N-Go at select locations, curbside pick-up, etc.

## **How many meals per child may be offered each day? May supper be provided? Can meals be distributed for more than one day?**

The maximum number of meals that may be offered remains the same as under SFSP or SSO: up to two meals, or one meal and one snack, per child, per day, in any combination except lunch and supper. ISBE may approve a distribution approach that includes meals for multiple days.

## **What are the requirements for the meals?**

The meals must meet the regular menu planning requirements of the SFSP or SSO. Offer versus serve (OVS) will not apply and all meals must be unitized, meaning a complete reimbursable meal that meets the requirements of the menu planning method used, including milk, must be distributed. Shelf-stable milk may be used. USDA commodity foods may also be used. If availability of milk or other meal components becomes an issue, ISBE will work with you on any additional flexibility needed.