

**ZOOM Town Hall Meeting**  
**May 11, 2020**  
**Question & Answers for COVID-19**

**Q. When is the start date for SFSP?**

A. SFSP can start meal service when your application and COVID-19 Waiver Plan are both approved by State Agency for date granted in COVID-19 Approval Memo.

**Q. Will the Food and Safety Training be online?**

A. Arkansas Department of Health is over the Food and Safety Training. They are working toward an online version, but we do not have a release date.

**Q. What are you allowed to serve on CACFP Covid-19? (i.e. Breakfast & Lunch, or Supper and Snack)?**

A. All USDA Meal Patterns and number of meals allowed by programs has not changed. Application reflects the meals you are approved to serve per your program.

**Q. Will we be able to add new sites in the future?**

A. AR DHS is working closely with AR Department of Health on how new sites can be opened.

**Q. Does the meal flexibility waiver cover CACFP as it covers SFSP (i.e. serving the same meal for both programs)?**

A. Mealtime Flexibility Waiver covers all Child Nutrition Programs. Sponsors must place their meal service times in their COVID-19 Waiver Plan for States Approval.

**Q. How do we calculate food cost for CACFP when you operating both programs at the same time?**

A. Sponsors that are operating CACFP & SFSP will need to make sure they keep separate accounting processes, ledgers, documents, etc. for both programs. Records for both programs will be viewed separately and need to be documented clearly on all documents.

**Q. Due to food shortage, if we continue, can we substitute meals/snack that are not CN approved?**

A. USDA Meal Pattern requirements must still be maintained during COVID-19. Sponsors may submit a meal pattern flexibility request due to food shortage to the State Agency but is not allowed to substitute without State approval first.

**Q. Are there instructions on how to do a Waiver Plan?**

A. Each memo states some of the key items we are looking for in the waiver plans. We also sent out an example of a Standard Operating Procedure that can be used to create a more in-depth plan. To better assist you with developing a plan, we created a template to assist individuals in creating a basic plan which is located on the Resource Library. We encourage everyone to create a Standard Operating Procedure as well. For additional guidance on writing a plan, a please review the template located in the SNP Resource COVID-19 titled Guidelines for COVID-19 Waiver Plan.

**Q. How long will the summer and after school program run simultaneously?**

A. USDA released a COVID-19 Nationwide Waiver to Extend Unanticipated School Closure Operations through June 30, 2020.

**Q. Through the USDA on a Federal Level do they see the food chain getting stronger. Do they see it breaking?**

A. We've seen some slight delay in a few items being delivered by USDA vendors. Each State was given the option to have some orders expedited to an April 15<sup>th</sup> delivery date. Approximately 50% of those orders requested for expedited delivery were granted by the vendor and have been received. Food supply at the local level has increased and distributors are keeping up with demand. You may find that on a visit to the store, the store is out of a certain item. Most items have been replenished by the next day. We continue to monitor the supply chain and possible future needs daily.

**Q. Why are DHS staff available to conduct reviews, but not available to visit when cap increase is requested or pre-operations visits?**

A. DHS staff have not completed any reviews. We have only completed observations from a distance. These observations were designed to provide Technical Assistance (TA) to providers.

**Q. Can DHS provide sponsors with the CFR 225 That prevent organizations from adding sites?**

A. *Administration Guide SFSP: Page 9: Additional Eligibility Requirements*

**SFAs and CACFP Sponsors:** SFAs and other organizations currently in good standing in the NSLP, SBP or Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are not required to submit further evidence of financial and administrative capability when applying for SFSP participation. Typically, SFA and CACFP institutions participating in other Child Nutrition Programs have already demonstrated that they have the financial and administrative capability necessary to operate the NSLP, SBP, or CACFP. A CACFP institution is in good standing if it has no serious deficiencies declared in its most recent review cycle. However, the State agency has the discretion, and is encouraged, to deny the applications or, at a minimum, require additional evidence of financial and administrative capability from SFAs and CACFP sponsors that have had significant problems operating the NSLP, SBP, or CACFP (SFSP Memorandum 5-2012: *Simplifying Application Procedures in the Summer Food Service Program*, October 31, 2011, SFSP Memorandum 4-2013: *Summer Feeding Options for School Food Authorities*, November 23, 2012 and SFSP Memorandum 6-2014: *Available Flexibilities for CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Sponsors and Centers*, November 12, 2013).

**§225.14 Requirements for sponsor participation.**

(a) *Applications.* Sponsors shall make written application to the State agency to participate in the Program. Such application shall be made on a timely basis in accordance with the requirements of §225.6(b)(1). Sponsors proposing to operate a site during an unanticipated school closure during the period from October through April (or at any time of the year in an area with a continuous school calendar) may be exempt, **at the discretion of the State agency**, from submitting a new application if they have

participated in the program at any time during the current year or in either of the prior two calendar years.

(1) Demonstrates financial and administrative capability for Program operations and accepts final financial and administrative responsibility for total Program operations at all sites at which it proposes to conduct a food service;

(2) Has not been seriously deficient in operating the Program;

**Q. Why are instructions shared in DHS memos different than the USDA? COVID-19 memos?**

A. USDA allows for State Agencies to opt in or out of the National Waivers. The state agency is required, if they opt into the waiver, to plan the implementation of the waiver. The waiver grants the authority, the state provides the guidance and requirements for maintaining the integrity and accountability of the Child Nutrition Program.

**Q. Why do we have to record the race and ethnicity of the children when can't discriminate against any child?**

A: FNS Instruction 113-1 states “this data is used to determine how effectively FNS programs are reaching potential eligible persons and beneficiaries, identify areas where additional outreach is needed, and complete reports as required.”

Per CFR 7 225.7 Program monitoring and assistance (g) *Nondiscrimination*. (1) Each State agency shall comply with all requirements of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Department's regulations concerning nondiscrimination (7 CFR parts 15, 15a and 15b), including requirements for racial and ethnic participation data collection, public notification of the nondiscrimination policy, and reviews to assure compliance with such policy, to the end that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under, the Program.

**Q. In regards to the Mealtime Flexibility, I see that all limits on the amount of time that must elapse between the beginning of one meal and the beginning of the next meal and the duration of meal service has been waivers. Does this mean that breakfast and lunch can be served together? Furthermore, if offering grab and go breakfast and lunch at the same time, do both meals need to be prepared to serve or can instructions on prep be provided. For example, offering a non-heated pancake on a stick with other required components to fulfill breakfast meal pattern and giving heating instructions along with providing the prepared/heated lunch option.**

A. Mealtime Flexibility Waiver allows for meals to be served at the same time without having to wait the regulatory time lapse. For example, both breakfast and lunch can be served together for a Grab & Go. Meals need to be ready to eat for all Grab & Go meals. If your program is doing multi-day distribution or home delivery, then they must provide additional instructions for minimal preparation of meals and menu of what items are to be consumed per meal/per day.

**Q. Since our SFSP sites are open sites and do not require identification, how likely is it that children can visit multiple summer feeding sites on the same day to receive food?**

A: When approving sites, our Applications teams takes into consideration the distance between sites. We can't control if a child visits multiple sites, but we hope we can help eliminate that by not allowing sites to operate close in proximity.

**Q. When will SFSP sites be considered for meal service?**

A. SFSP can start meal service when your application and COVID-19 Waiver Plan are both approved by State Agency for date granted in COVID-19 Approval Memo.

**Q. As we are portioning food into take-out containers to comply with Grab-n-Go, we are unable to CLAD any remaining items for later use. Is it possible to donate leftover meals so that food does not go to waste? In years past participation has been predictable but now that there are so many social distancing restrictions, we are uncertain of how accurate our forecasting may be.**

A. Donated meals may not be claimed for reimbursement. The statute clarifies that any program food not consumed may be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations. The amendment defines the terms "eligible local food banks or charitable organizations" to mean any food bank or charitable organization which is exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)).

**Q. "I'm a little fearful of the possibility of a meat shortage due to the media talking so much about the processing plants shutting down and the President forcing their opening. I'm already reminding the providers on my program of all the options with meat alternates. But if there comes a time that they need some grace on the pattern, could you review what will be needed to process the waiver?"**

A: Like all plants regardless of product, the supply chain has been disrupted. USDA has been proactive in dealing with possible shortages; however, each day brings new obstacles. We do not anticipate a noticeable disruption. We are researching your meal waivers as they come in and are in contact with brokers, distributors, and vendors to get an idea on supplies.

**Q. Also, at the very beginning of this virus, in March there was advocacy groups sending out information on a policy being discussed that would allow sponsors to pay based on reimbursement in October 2019 as opposed to the current situation (whichever was better). Did you see that legislation and what happened to it?**

A. All FNS Waivers have been sent out and uploaded on our Resource Library. At this time the State Agency has not been given any guidance on that legislation being passed or seen a waiver being sent out Nationwide.

**Q. In the past, we could bill weekly. Is it possible to implement that process?**

A. Billing is done monthly and will remain monthly.

**Q. With so few programs operating, what is the expected timeframe to get an answer to participate in USDA issued waiver after requirements have been uploaded?**

A. Request are reviewed within 24 to 72 hours upon receipt, excluding weekends. If a request has been written accurately and does not require technical assistance, plans are typically approved within 24 hours of being reviewed.

**Q. What should the plan be to continue operation when there are vendor and grocer shortages on soap, sanitizer and disinfectants?**

A. We are monitoring supply shortages across the state. Programs will need to maintain all safety and health requirements put out by AR Department of Health to continue operation during COVID-19.