



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Food Service Directors/Supervisors

FROM: Ronald F. Jones
Director, Office of Health and Nutrition

DATE: March 26, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Response: Nationwide Waivers for the Child Nutrition Programs

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA, FNS) has issued three recent waivers to support access to nutritious meals while minimizing potential exposure to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Please read this memorandum, in its entirety, to ensure all required guidelines are adhered to in implementing these flexibilities for the Child Nutrition Programs.

Meal Pattern Requirements Waiver: FNS has provided nationwide approval for states to locally waive specific meal pattern requirements, as needed, to support access to nutritious meals when certain foods are not available due to COVID-19.

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) continues to emphasize the importance that School Food Authorities (SFAs) maintain and meet the nutrition standards for each Program to the greatest extent possible. We will review requests on a case-by-case basis and approval will be granted based on requests that are targeted and justified based upon disruptions to the availability of food products resulting from unprecedented impacts of COVID-19.

SFAs requesting flexibility for this waiver must contact their assigned Education Associate.

Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup Waiver: FNS is allowing states approved for non-congregate feeding to waive the rule preventing parents and guardians from picking up meals for their children, as long as they protect accountability and integrity.

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SFAs with an approved waiver allowing non-congregate meal distribution during COVID-19-related operations may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take home to their children. To maintain accountability and program integrity, the SFA must have in place processes to ensure that meals are distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children, and that duplicate meals are not distributed to any child. Requests for this waiver can be emailed to waiverfood@ed.sc.gov. SFAs must provide in detail their plans to ensure program integrity.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Data Waiver: FNS is extending the deadlines for reporting SY 2019–20 student counts to establish SY 2020–21’s identified student percentage for CEP, as well as for the required LEA and state notifications and CEP election. FNS recognizes that in this public health emergency, alternative feeding operations are demanding staff resources, and additional time is necessary to meet upcoming CEP deadlines.

LEAs electing CEP or conducting a grace year in SY 2020–21, the ISP may be calculated using data drawn any time between April 1, 2020, and June 30, 2020. By June 15, 2020, LEAs must submit their lists of schools that:

- have an ISP of at least 40 percent (eligible for CEP);
- have an ISP greater than or equal to 30 percent but less than 40 percent (near-eligible for CEP); and
- are currently in the fourth year of CEP participation with an ISP greater than or equal to 30 percent but less than 40 percent (eligible for grace year).

LEAs that intend to elect CEP for SY 2020–21 must notify the SCDE by August 31, 2020.

A statewide Teams conference call is scheduled for tomorrow, **Friday, March 27, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.** to further discuss these waivers and review the request process that must be followed to implement the waivers at your approved sites. Each SFA is expected to be represented on the call.

If you have any questions, please submit them to waiverfood@ed.sc.gov and we will address them during the conference call tomorrow.

The SCDE appreciates the outstanding work you are doing to meet the nutritional needs of the students of South Carolina during this challenging time.