



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
District Transportation Directors

FROM: Virgie Chambers
Deputy Superintendent, Division of District Operations and Support

DATE: March 16, 2020

RE: COVID-19: Use of School Buses for Meals and Instructional Packets Delivery

To facilitate districts use of school buses for Wi-Fi, meal delivery, and instructional packets the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) recommends the following:

Use of SCDE Buses

To facilitate districts' use of school buses to deliver school meals and instructional materials, the SCDE requests that district transportation personnel complete this survey, [located here](#). Although the SCDE has already assigned several Wi-Fi enabled buses to districts, we are seeking information on how many additional buses are needed as well as geographic areas where you would like buses positioned.

The SCDE will prioritize stationing Wi-Fi enabled buses or mobile hotspots in rural and other geographic locations where the percentage of free and reduced meal populations is 50 percent or greater. Information from the survey will be used to inform internet providers of the locations and number of buses or hotspots to make available.

If your district does not need assistance with Wi-Fi connectivity and will not have need for already assigned Wi-Fi buses, please note such in the survey so that buses currently assigned can be deployed to other rural or critical areas of the state. Please do not ignore the survey, every district must respond.

Wi-Fi on these stationary buses will be activated and available for internet use during a limited amount of hours during the day (for example, from 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon) because our mechanics will need time to recharge batteries so that buses can be used the next day.

Districts are urged to also use these bus “hotspot” locations as centralized “grab and go” meal distribution sites. Meal distribution can also occur during the hours when the hotspots are activated. School Food Service personnel will need to accompany the bus driver and be responsible for issuing and counting meals that are distributed. Please note, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations require that meals be provided to students only and the student must pick up the meal.

Districts can use other non-Wi-Fi enabled buses to travel rural routes to facilitate distribution of instructional packets as well as bag lunches to students that do not have means to travel to grab and go meal sites. Other district staff must accompany the bus driver to facilitate meal counts and issuance of instructional packets.

Internet Access in Rural Areas

Additionally, families located in rural and other geographic locations where the percentage of free and reduced meal populations is 50 percent or greater, several cable providers (Comcast and Charter/Spectrum) are offering free installation and internet services to new customers for 60 days. Utilizing these providers can result in statewide coverage for families. Also, families that sign up are under no obligation to continue services after the 60-day expiration, are not subject to term contracts, credit checks, or shipping fees. Maps of the coverage areas for Comcast and Charter/Spectrum will be forwarded soon as well as information on other cable providers who will offer similar services. Attached is specific information from Comcast and Charter/Spectrum on how to access this free offering.

Should you have questions please contact the SCDE County Supervisor assigned to your district. [Here](#) is a list of their contact information. Also, do not hesitate to contact the SCDE Transportation Director, Garry Fast at gfast@ed.sc.gov, Mike Bullman, Assistant Maintenance Director at mbullman@ed.sc.gov, or Bill Tindal, Business Manager at btindal@ed.sc.gov.