

Child Nutrition Programs Congregate Meals Waiver

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act authorizes the provision of meals to children who are not in school during unanticipated school closures through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option (SSO). Under normal circumstances, these meals must be offered in a congregate setting (7 CFR 225.6(e)(15)) and at non-school sites (7 CFR 225.6(d)(1)(iv)). However, during a public health emergency due to the novel coronavirus, social distancing may be necessary to avoid spread of the virus. To address this important issue, States may request a waiver enabling sponsors to serve meals in a non-congregate setting and at school sites during school closures related to the coronavirus. State agencies then would be able to apply this waiver, as needed, to SFSP and SSO sponsors providing meals during unanticipated school closures due to the coronavirus. Meals served by sponsors during these school closures would be claimed either through SFSP or SSO. All other SFSP or SSO requirements would apply, including area eligibility of the sites, applicable meal patterns and reimbursement rates, among others. As always, States may request waivers of other Program requirements, as needed, and those will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

States may submit waiver requests immediately by providing their FNS Regional Office with the required waiver information. Information on how to submit a waiver request is available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/child-nutrition-program-waiver-request-guidance-and-protocol-revised>. The Regional Offices are also available to provide technical assistance on development of waiver requests.