

Food and Nutrition
Service

May 29, 2020

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

SUBJECT: Approval of Disaster Household Distribution in Response to the National Emergency Declaration Due to COVID-19

TO: Kurt Messner
Regional Administrator
Northeast Regional Office

This memorandum is in response to the Vermont Agency of Education (VTAOE) request to use U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foods to operate disaster household distribution. This request is in response to food assistance needs resulting from the COVID-19 National Emergency declared by the President of the United States on March 13, 2020.

VTAOE, which administers The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), requested that USDA approve the use of USDA Foods from TEFAP for disaster household distribution. The disaster household distribution food package will be provided to impacted households most in need of food assistance at school distribution sites specifically selected by VTAOE to reach impacted individuals, families, and communities in targeted areas.

The intent of disaster household distribution is to serve as a short-term program to address immediate needs and to bridge the gap to longer-term assistance programs in the aftermath of a Federal disaster or emergency declaration. Although disaster household distribution has been used in an unprecedented way over the last three months in response to the National Emergency, TEFAP is intended to serve longer-term emergency feeding needs. TEFAP provides significant State flexibility and requires minimal burden to demonstrate eligibility, even during times of social distancing. In addition, Congress has provided significant additional resources to TEFAP in response to the pandemic.

Approval is granted for disaster household distribution beginning June 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020. This approval allows VTAOE to serve a cumulative total, not to exceed **40,000 individuals** over the course of the 30-day approval period using USDA Foods available on-hand. The following foods are approved for the disaster household distribution food package for a household of one-to-two members: protein items, fruits, dried fruit, dairy, dry beans, orange juice and soups. Frozen meats and any perishables must be distributed only if proper cold and frozen storage facilities are available.

For larger households, VTAOE has approval to provide additional disaster household distribution food packages based on household size. For example, a household of four could receive two disaster household distribution food packages.

During this period, it is expected that VTAOE, in conjunction with other State counterparts, will promote the availability of other Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs to meet impacted individuals' ongoing needs. Other programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

In addition to these FNS programs, USDA has established the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) or “Farmers to Families” Food Box Program to help individuals in need, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/farmers-families-food-box-program-faqs>. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has also established a food assistance program that will aid communities impacted by COVID-19, <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/04/12/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-purchase-and-distribution-food-eligible-public>.

Terms of Approval:

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving VTAOE’s request under the following terms:

1. VTAOE must provide on a weekly basis beginning June 1, 2020 an estimate of: 1) the amount of TEFAP inventory used for the disaster household distributions; and 2) the number of persons served under disaster household distribution.
2. Please conduct outreach and distribution efforts in a manner to ensure that households that are suffering significant economic losses or significant food access challenges due to COVID-19 are served first.
3. Approval for disaster household distribution is granted through June 30, 2020. Existing TEFAP inventories must be utilized to operate a disaster household distribution including orders placed and scheduled for delivery. Please keep in mind that replacement foods may not be available for delivery until July 2020 and beyond.

Consideration of any further requests to extend disaster household distribution will be dependent on the targeting of the request to specific areas most in need and justification as to why the availability of other programs and resources are not meeting the State’s food assistance needs.

Authority

The approval of disaster household distribution of USDA Foods is in accordance with FNS regulations at 7 CFR 250.69. VTAOE must provide a summary report via the FNS-292A form within 45 days following termination of the disaster household distribution. The information reported on the FNS-292A is the location of distribution sites, the number of persons served, and the type and quantity of USDA Foods distributed.

Please have VTAOE contact the FNS Northeast Regional Office for more information should they have any questions regarding this approval.



Diane M. Kriviski
Deputy Administrator
Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs