



Child Nutrition Program Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic, July 2020 through December 2021

School Meals Operations Study, Year 2 Report (Final)

April 2024

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Contents

Acknowledgements	
Executive Summary.....	xv
Chapter I. Introduction.....	1
A. Background.....	1
B. Data collection.....	2
C. Organization of report.....	2
Chapter II. Meal Service in SY 2020–2021 and Fall 2021.....	5
A. Instruction during SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021.....	5
B. Meal service methods used in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021.....	6
C. Meal counting methods.....	8
D. Child Nutrition Program participation.....	9
Chapter III. Use of COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers to Improve Services to Children.....	13
A. Access-focused waivers.....	13
B. Program administration waivers.....	19
Chapter IV. Use of Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs.....	23
A. State agencies.....	23
B. School food authorities.....	23
Chapter V. Meal Service Challenges.....	25
A. State agencies.....	25
B. School Food Authorities.....	27
Chapter VI. Overview of the Next Report in the Series.....	31
References.....	33
Appendix A: COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers and Waiver Extensions.....	A.1
Appendix B: Data Collection Methods and Data Quality.....	B.1
I. State agency survey data collection.....	B.3
A. State agency survey content.....	B.3
B. State agency survey data quality.....	B.4

II. SFA survey data collection.....	B.4
A. SFA survey content.....	B.4
B. SFA survey data quality.....	B.4
III. Administrative data collection.....	B.5
A. Administrative data content.....	B.5
B. Administrative data quality.....	B.5
Appendix C: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter II.....	C.1
Appendix D: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter III.....	D.1
Appendix E: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter IV.....	E.1
Appendix F: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter V.....	F.1

Exhibits

Exhibit II.1. Percentage of SFAs that reported some or all students received instruction in school buildings during each month of SY 2020-2021.....	5
Exhibit II.2: Top three types of in-school and outside-of-school meal delivery used by SFAs during SY 2020–2021	7
Exhibit II.3: Meal delivery methods used to provide the most meals to children during SY 2020–2021.....	7
Exhibit II.4. Local program operator participation in Child Nutrition Programs, October 2020 through September 2021.....	10
Exhibit II.5. Child participation in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP during the first and second years of the COVID-19 pandemic	11
Exhibit II.6. Total meals and snacks or supplements served in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP in the first and second years of the COVID-19 pandemic.....	12
Exhibit III.1. Percentage of SFAs that used each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waiver during SY 2020-2021.....	14
Exhibit III.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators used each waiver in SY 2020–2021 compared to March through September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program.....	15
Exhibit III.3. Most-used methods to ensure that meals were distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals were not served under the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up waiver in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021	16
Exhibit III.4. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension to waive certain meal component requirements in each Child Nutrition Program, SY 2020–2021	17
Exhibit III.5. Most-used methods to target new area-eligible meal sites in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, by waiver.....	18
Exhibit IV.1. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage that used, or planned to use, the reimbursement payments for certain types of expenses.....	24
Exhibit V.1. Percentage of State agencies reporting factors that contributed to operational challenges in administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021, nationwide by Child Nutrition Program.....	26
Exhibit V.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting factors that contributed to financial challenges in administering the Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021.....	27
Exhibit V.3. Percentage of SFAs reporting that certain factors contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021	28

Exhibit V.4. Percentage of SFAs reporting that certain factors contributed to financial challenges in SY 2020–2021 29

Exhibit A.1. COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and waiver extensions authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021A.3

Exhibit A.2. COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers authorized for use from March through September 2020 and not extended through SY 2020–2021A.11

Exhibit C.1. Percentage of SFAs that reported most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic..... C.3

Exhibit C.2. Percentage of SFAs that reported all, some, or no schools provided instruction to all students in school buildings for all or part of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic..... C.4

Exhibit C.3. Percentage of SFAs that reported all, some, or no schools provided instruction to all students using a hybrid model all for part of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic..... C.5

Exhibit C.4. Percentage of SFAs that reported some or all students received instruction in school buildings during each month of SY 2020-2021..... C.6

Exhibit C.5. Percentage of SFAs providing instruction to most students in school buildings for the majority of the time from October through December 2021..... C.6

Exhibit C.6. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide meals to children in SY 2020-2021..... C.7

Exhibit C.7. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021..... C.8

Exhibit C.8. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA size..... C.9

Exhibit C.9. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA poverty level..... C.10

Exhibit C.10. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA urbanicity..... C.11

Exhibit C.11. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each method to provide meals to children from October through December 2021..... C.12

Exhibit C.12. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each meal counting method in SY 2020-2021..... C.13

Exhibit C.13. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each meal counting method from October through December 2021C.14

Exhibit C.14. Number of local program operators participating in Child Nutrition Programs, October 2020 through September 2021C.16

Exhibit C.15. Number of children participating in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2020 through September 2021C.17

Exhibit C.16. Number of children participating in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2019 through September 2020C.18

Exhibit C.17. Number of meals and snacks/supplements served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2020 through September 2021C.19

Exhibit C.18. Number of meals and snacks/supplements served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2019 through September 2020C.20

Exhibit D.1. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA size.....D.3

Exhibit D.2. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA poverty level.....D.5

Exhibit D.3. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA urbanicity.....D.6

Exhibit D.4. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver was among top three most helpful during SY 2020-2021.....D.7

Exhibit D.5. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each nationwide waiver newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021D.8

Exhibit D.6. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waivers newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021 improved services to children in various ways, by waiver.....D.9

Exhibit D.7. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each program operations waiver extension in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition Program.....D.10

Exhibit D.8. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each program operations waiver extension in summer 2021.....D.11

Exhibit D.9. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each waiver from March through September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program.....D.12

Exhibit D.10. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in NSLP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020D.13

Exhibit D.11. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SBP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020D.13

Exhibit D.12. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SSO used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020D.14

Exhibit D.13. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of sponsors in SFSP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020.....D.15

Exhibit D.14. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of institutions in CACFP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020D.16

Exhibit D.15. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SSO used each program operations waiver type in summer 2021 than in summer 2020.....D.17

Exhibit D.16. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of sponsors in SFSP used each program operations waiver type in summer 2021 than in summer 2020.....D.18

Exhibit D.17. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the way each program operations waiver was used in SY 2020-2021 differed from its use in March-September 2020D.19

Exhibit D.18. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the way each program operations waiver was used in summer 2021 differed from its use in summer 2020D.20

Exhibit D.19. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver in SY 2020-2021 reporting that use of the waiver differed in certain ways from its use in March-September 2020.....D.21

Exhibit D.20. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver in summer 2021 reporting that use of the waiver differed in certain ways from its use in summer 2020.....D.22

Exhibit D.21. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children during SY 2020-2021, by local program operator type.....D.23

Exhibit D.22. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure

meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children during summer 2021, by local program operator typeD.24

Exhibit D.23. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child during SY 2020-2021, by local program operator type.....D.25

Exhibit D.24. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child during summer 2021, by local program operator type.....D.26

Exhibit D.25. Proportion of local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver that used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child from March through September 2020, by local program operator type....D.27

Exhibit D.26. Proportion of local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver most commonly reported by State agencies that used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children from March through September 2020, by local program operator type.....D.28

Exhibit D.27. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waiver type improved services to children differently in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program.....D.29

Exhibit D.28. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waiver type improved services to children differently in summer 2021 than in summer 2020, by Child Nutrition Program.....D.30

Exhibit D.29. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved NSLP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.31

Exhibit D.30. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SBP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.32

Exhibit D.31. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SSO services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.33

Exhibit D.32. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SFSP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.34

Exhibit D.33. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved CACFP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.35

Exhibit D.34. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations reporting the waiver improved services to children differently in certain ways in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020.....D.36

Exhibit D.35. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver reporting the waiver improved services to children differently in certain ways in summer 2021 than in summer 2020.....D.37

Exhibit D.36. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements in each program in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic.....D.38

Exhibit D.37. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements in each program from October through December 2021, by SFA characteristic.....D.39

Exhibit D.38. Of SFAs that used the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs, percentage reporting using the waivers for each meal component in each program in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic.....D.40

Exhibit D.39. Percentage of State agencies in which local program operators using the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension waived requirements for each food component in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition Program.....D.42

Exhibit D.40. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of local program operators that used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension for multiple food components in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition ProgramD.43

Exhibit D.41. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of SFAs that used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension for multiple food components in SSO in summer 2021D.44

Exhibit D.42. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the majority of local program operators with the Meal Pattern waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 waived components in each program for certain time periodsD.45

Exhibit D.43. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the majority of SFAs with the Meal Pattern waiver extension in summer 2021 waived components in SSO for certain time periods.....D.46

Exhibit D.44. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of institutions with the At-Risk Area Eligibility waiver targeted new CACFP meal sites to serve children who were previously or newly eligible for benefits using certain methods during SY 2020-2021D.47

Exhibit D.45. Percentage of State agencies reporting that SFAs with the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 targeted new SSO and SFSP meal sites to serve children who were previously or newly eligible for benefits using certain methods during SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021D.48

Exhibit D.46. Percentage of State agencies reporting the methods most commonly used by local program operators with the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver extension for targeting new meal sites to serve children in SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021 ...D.49

Exhibit D.47. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each State agency monitoring waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.....D.50

Exhibit D.48. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each State agency monitoring waiver from March through September 2020.....D.50

Exhibit D.49. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each monitoring waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021D.50

Exhibit D.50. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of local program operators used onsite monitoring waivers in SY 2020-2021 or Summer 2021 than in March-September 2020, in each program.....D.51

Exhibit D.51. Percentage of State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring after receiving each monitoring waiver during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.....D.52

Exhibit D.52. Percentage of State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring following implementation of State agency monitoring waivers from March through September 2020, by waiverD.53

Exhibit D.53. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators conducted certain types of monitoring after receiving each onsite monitoring waiver during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.....D.54

Exhibit D.54. Proportion of local program operators most commonly reported by State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring following implementation of local program operator on-site monitoring waivers from March through September 2020, by waiverD.55

Exhibit D.55. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved NSLP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.56

Exhibit D.56. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SBP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.57

Exhibit D.57. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SSO services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.58

Exhibit D.58. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SFSP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.59

Exhibit D.59. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved CACFP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiverD.60

Exhibit D.60. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver was used for SFAs.....D.61

Exhibit D.61. Percentage of State agencies that used the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver for each applicable report in SY 2020-2021D.61

Exhibit D.62. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each administration-focused waiver newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021 improved services to children in various ways, by waiver.....D.62

Exhibit D.63. Percentage of State agencies that used certain criteria for sponsor participation in the Experienced SFSP Sponsors FY 2021 waiver.....D.63

Exhibit E.1. Number and percentage of State agencies that administered each of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs E.3

Exhibit E.2. Number and percentage of State agencies that accepted or declined the 1% State administrative funds made available for Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs E.3

Exhibit E.3. Number and percentage of State agencies reporting certain challenges calculating and disbursing Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program payments..... E.4

Exhibit E.4. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage that used, or planned to use, the reimbursement payments for certain types of expenses E.5

Exhibit E.5. Number and percentage of State agencies reporting payments were minimally, somewhat, or highly effective at stabilizing the financial health of local program operators’ food service operations or making up for lost revenues during the public health emergency in spring 2020 E.5

Exhibit E.6. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage reporting the effectiveness of reimbursement payments for covering fixed operational costs and/or making up for lost revenues during the public health emergency in spring 2020 E.6

Exhibit E.7. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage reporting the impact of reimbursement payments on their ability to continue operating Child Nutrition Programs E.6

Exhibit F.1. Percentage of State agencies that experienced financial or operational challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs, or challenges implementing or using the COVID-19 waivers, during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021 F.3

Exhibit F.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors contributed to operational challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021, by Program..... F.4

Exhibit F.3. Percentage of State agencies that were unable to overcome certain challenges with implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition waivers during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021..... F.5

Exhibit F.4. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors assisted efforts to overcome challenges implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition waivers during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021 F.6

Exhibit F.5. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors contributed to financial challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021, by program..... F.7

Exhibit F.6. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^e, percentage of SFAs that reported any operational challenges providing meal service during SY 2020-2021 and October through December 2021..... F.7

Exhibit F.7. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^e, percentage that reported certain factors contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020-2021 and October through December 2021..... F.8

Exhibit F.8. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage experiencing any financial challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021 F.9

Exhibit F.9. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported certain factors contributed to financial challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021 F.10

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) Child Nutrition Programs help ensure that children in families with low incomes do not go hungry and have access to safe, nutritious foods in school and other settings. FNS oversees these programs, while State agencies administer them through agreements with local program operators that implement the programs in schools and other settings.

FNS assesses school meal operations on a school year (SY) basis with the School Meals Operations study. The study was modified during the COVID-19 public health emergency—the largest nationwide disruption of the school meals programs since they were enacted. When the pandemic began in March 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized FNS to establish waivers to provide meals under the Child Nutrition Programs with appropriate safety measures (U.S. Congress 2020). With this authority, FNS issued nationwide waivers of certain program rules to allow States and local program operators to serve meals to children who were no longer routinely in school buildings due to the pandemic. The Child Nutrition Programs used to provide meals to children during the pandemic were the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program, NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

This report summarizes findings from the second year of the School Meals Operations Study, which gathered information from State agencies and School Food Authorities (SFAs) on Child Nutrition Program operations and waiver use from July 2020 through December 2021. This report focuses on findings related to the five new COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and 32 waiver extensions that FNS approved for use during this time.

Key findings include:

- During SY 2020–2021 most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of the school year and most meals were served in a cafeteria. Child participation and meals served during SY 2020–2021 surpassed the numbers from spring 2020. In summer 2021, child participation and meals served were slightly lower than summer 2020 but still much higher than summer 2019, before COVID-19.
- The SSO and SFSP Operations Waiver, which allowed local program operators to continue serving free SSO and SFSP meals to all children in non-summer months, was the most frequently used waiver in SY 2020–2021. SFSP and SSO were the most used Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020–2021, with about 8,000 local program operators using SFSP and about 6,000 using SSO each month between October and June 2021. The Parent and Guardian Pick-Up, Non-Congregate, and Meal Service Time Flexibility waivers, which allowed local program operators to use alternative meal service methods to prioritize access and safety, were the most used access-focused waiver extensions in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021.
- As in the first study year, State agencies and SFAs consistently reported that use of the waivers improved services to children. However, State agencies and local program operators continued to experience operational and financial challenges.
- Nearly all State agencies administered at least one of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs, which provided additional funding for local program operators that experienced declines or interruptions in revenues between March and June 2020 due to pandemic-

related restrictions and closures. Most SFAs in the study that received a reimbursement used or planned to use the funds to cover food costs.

Chapter I. Introduction

This report summarizes findings from the second year of the School Meals Operations Study, part of an ongoing study series to assess school meal operations on a school year (SY) basis. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provided FNS with the authority to establish nationwide waivers to allow the Child Nutrition Programs to provide meals and take appropriate safety measures. The scope of this study was modified starting with SY 2019-2020 to focus on gathering information about Child Nutrition Program operations and statutorily required information on the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and waiver extensions approved by FNS.

The waivers discussed in this report include those that were newly authorized for use in the first full school year of the pandemic (SY 2020–2021) as well as the waiver extensions authorized for use during the same period. A full list of the waivers and waiver extensions can be found in [Exhibit A.1](#). This report summarizes findings related to use of the waivers and how they improved services to children. Other findings discussed relate to the location of meal service in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021, use of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs, operational and financial challenges State agencies and local program operators experienced during the pandemic, Child Nutrition Program participation, and meals served.

A. Background

FNS' Child Nutrition Programs help ensure that children in families with low incomes do not go hungry and have access to safe, nutritious foods at school and in other settings. These include the school meal programs, which include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP); the summer meal programs, which include the NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Over the decade preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSLP, which is the largest of these programs, served about 5 billion meals to about 30 million children annually (FNS 2023a).

FNS oversees these programs, and State agencies administer them through agreements with local program operators, such as School Food Authorities (SFAs). FNS requires information about program operations to effectively oversee the programs and inform current and future policy decisions.

The FFCRA provided FNS with the authority to establish waivers to allow the Child Nutrition Programs to provide meals and take appropriate safety measures. Under this authority, FNS issued nationwide waivers of certain Child Nutrition Program rules that provided State Child Nutrition agencies and local program operators with meal service flexibilities in response to the pandemic. The FFCRA required States to report on their use of the waivers and whether the waivers improved services to children.

FNS issued the first set of Child Nutrition nationwide waivers in March 2020. As the pandemic progressed, FNS extended some waivers beyond the time period for which they were initially authorized, allowed other waivers to expire, and issued new waivers. The focus of this report is SY 2020–2021 and summer and fall 2021. A list of waivers authorized for use during this time period can be found in Appendix A.

The programs used to provide meals to children during the early pandemic months included NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. SSO and SFSP are traditionally associated with summer meal service, but these programs are also used to provide meal service during unanticipated school closures, such as those related

to weather events and other emergencies. SFAs implement NSLP and SBP in schools, and they implement SSO at a variety of sites, including schools, summer camps, and other locations. Sponsors, which may include SFAs, implement SFSP at a similar range of site types. Institutions implement CACFP at child care outlets, including child care centers and family day care homes.

B. Data collection

State agencies and SFAs provided data for the second year of this study. State agencies provided survey and administrative data and SFAs provided survey data.

The study collected survey and administrative data from the 67 State agencies that administer NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.¹ The survey of State agencies, which was fielded in December 2021, gathered information to satisfy the FFCRA reporting requirements for the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers, including the use of five waivers newly authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 and changes in waiver use for 32 waivers that were extended. Specifically, the FFCRA required that State agencies using each waiver report to FNS on (1) use of the waiver by the State agency and local program operators and (2) whether and how the waiver resulted in improved services to program participants (U.S. Congress 2020). For certain waivers, FNS identified specific actions that State agencies and local program operators were required to take and report on. For example, for State agencies using the waiver allowing parents and guardians to pick up meals without children present, FNS required that program operators put processes in place to ensure that (1) meals were distributed only to parents and guardians of eligible children and (2) duplicate meals were not distributed to any child.

The State agency survey also included questions about use of emergency funding available to local program operators through the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs and challenges State agencies experienced during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. The administrative data collection gathered information on program participation and meals served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP from October 2020 through September 2021.²

The second year of this study also included a survey of a nationally representative sample of SFAs, fielded in spring 2022. The survey gathered information on Child Nutrition Programs used to provide meal services during SY 2020–2021 and early SY 2021–2022 (from October 2021 through December 2021), waivers authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, and how SFA operations and finances were affected by the pandemic, including any effects on contracts with Food Service Management Companies.

Appendix B contains additional information about the data collection methods used for this report and limitations of the data.

C. Organization of report

Chapter II describes where meals were most commonly served, details the Child Nutrition Programs used to serve meals, and compares child participation and meals served to children between the first and

¹ In some States, more than one State agency administers NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP.

² Each month, State agencies report program data to FNS. The data are aggregated at the State level for NSLP, SBP, and SSO on the FNS-10, Report of School Program Operations; for SFSP on the FNS-418, Report of the Summer Food Service Program for Children; and for CACFP on the FNS-44, Report of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. For this study, we requested that State agencies submit the data elements collected on these forms disaggregated at the site or local program operator level, depending upon the level available from the State agency.

second years of the study. Chapter III discusses use of the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and how they improved services to children. Chapter IV discusses State agency and local program operator use of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs. Chapter V summarizes the operational and waiver implementation challenges that State agencies encountered as well as the financial and operational challenges that SFAs faced. Chapter VI provides an overview of the future years of this study. The appendices provide supplemental information and exhibits.

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Chapter II. Meal Service in SY 2020–2021 and Fall 2021

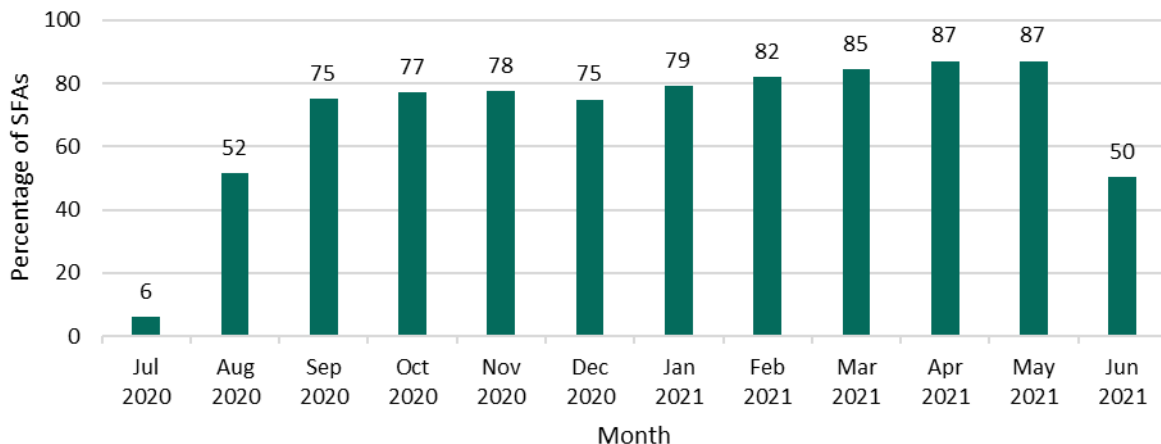
This chapter describes findings related to Child Nutrition Program participation and meals served during SY 2020–2021 through the beginning of SY 2021–2022. SY 2020–2021 was the first full school year of the pandemic. The previous spring (2020), the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a massive disruption to the school meals programs as school buildings across the country closed to prevent the spread of the disease (Severn et al., 2022). Meal service largely returned to the cafeteria in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021 as schools resumed in-person learning for some or all students and for part or all of the year. When in-person instruction was not taking place, SFAs relied on alternative meal delivery methods to provide meals to children.

A. Instruction during SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021

Local policies and conditions surrounding the spread of COVID-19 continually evolved and affected whether school districts used fully in-person, virtual, or hybrid educational models at any given time during the school year. Seventy-four percent of SFAs reported that most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of SY 2020–2021 (Appendix [Exhibit C.1](#)). However, only 41 percent of SFAs reported that all or some of their schools had students attending full-time in school buildings all year (Appendix [Exhibit C.2](#)). Among all SFAs, 43 percent reported that all or some schools used a hybrid educational model³ for part of the year, while 33 percent used the hybrid model all year (Appendix [Exhibit C.3](#)).

Exhibit II.1 shows an upward trend in the percentage of SFAs reporting that some or all students received in-person instruction during the study period, from 75 percent in September 2020 to 87 percent in May 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit C.4](#)). By fall 2021, 91 percent of SFAs reported that instruction was provided in school buildings for the majority of the time (Appendix [Exhibit C.5](#)).

Exhibit II.1. Percentage of SFAs that reported some or all students received instruction in school buildings during each month of SY 2020–2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

³ In a hybrid educational model, schools provide a combination of in-person and virtual instruction.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported instruction in school buildings in each month by the total number of SFAs. SFAs could select all applicable responses.

Although in-person instruction was commonplace during SY 2020–2021, there was variation based on SFA size and urbanicity. Medium, large, and very large SFAs were less likely to report that most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of the year. Seventy-seven percent of small and very small SFAs reported that most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of the year, compared with 66 percent of medium-size SFAs, 60 percent of large SFAs, and 41 percent of very large SFAs. Additionally, rural SFAs were most likely to report that students received instruction in school buildings for most of the year (86 percent) followed by suburban SFAs (64 percent) and urban SFAs (55 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit C.1](#)).

B. Meal service methods used in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021

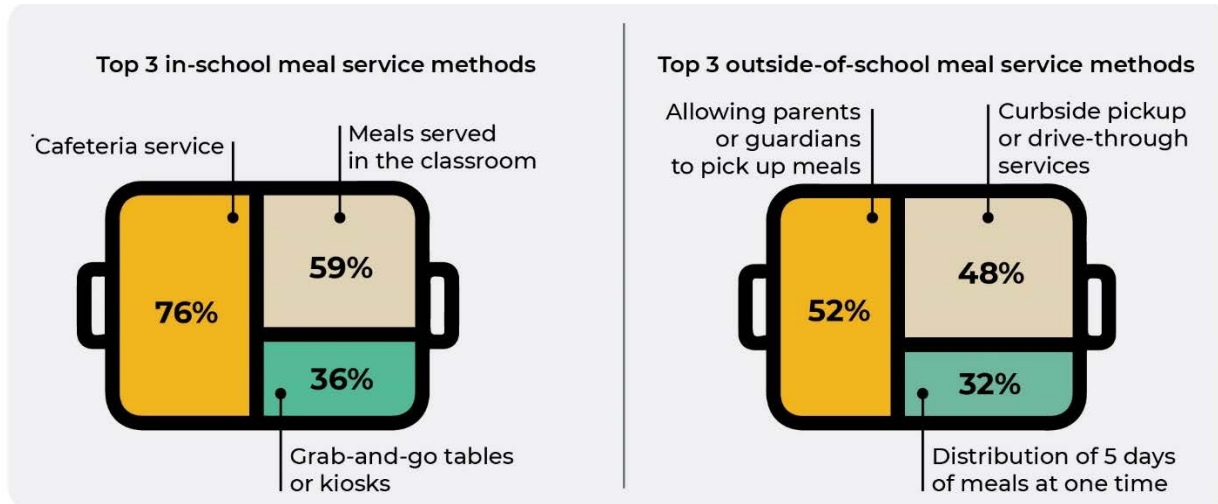
Traditionally, most SFAs use cafeteria-based meal service when students are present in school buildings.⁴ At the onset of the pandemic, however, SFAs implemented or expanded a variety of alternative in-school and outside-of-school methods to provide meals to students when in-person learning was disrupted. SFAs continued to use a variety of these methods in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021. The use of these methods differed based on SFA characteristics and the degree to which schools in the SFA provided in-person instruction.

1. SY 2020–2021

In SY 2020–2021, as most schools resumed in-person instruction to some degree, the majority of SFAs provided in-school meal service in cafeterias, although some SFAs used alternative methods of in-school meal service to facilitate social distancing and minimize transmission of COVID-19. Outside-of-school meal service methods were used to provide children and families with meals when SFAs had adopted hybrid or entirely virtual educational models (Appendix [Exhibit C.6](#)). Exhibit II.2 shows the most common delivery methods for in-school and outside-of-school meals during SY 2020-2021.

⁴ Alternative models of service, such as in-classroom and grab-and-go meals, are common in the School Breakfast Program.

Exhibit II.2: Top three types of in-school and outside-of-school meal delivery used by SFAs during SY 2020–2021

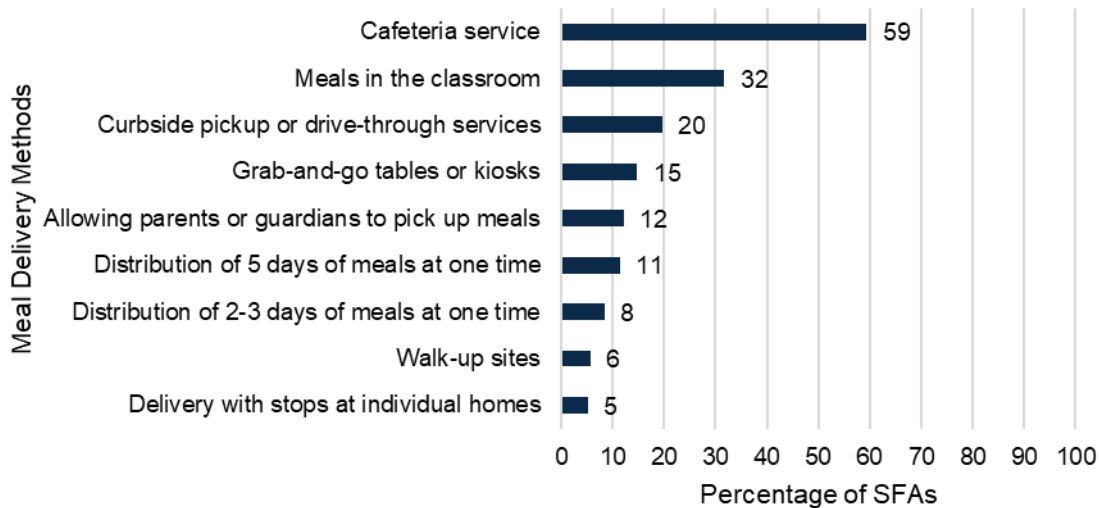


Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method and location of school meals served by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable methods for both in-school meal service and meal service outside of school buildings.

Exhibit II.3 shows the meal delivery methods SFAs used to serve the most meals to children during SY 2020-2021 (Appendix [Exhibit C.7](#)).

Exhibit II.3: Meal delivery methods used to provide the most meals to children during SY 2020–2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method was used to provide the most meals by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three methods.

There is substantial variation in meal delivery methods across SFAs when looking at key characteristics. Specifically, the methods used to provide the most meals to children varied by SFA size, poverty level, and urbanicity:

- Relative to smaller SFAs, large SFAs were significantly more likely to report that curbside pickup, distribution of a full week of meals at once, and allowing parents or guardians to pick up meals provided the most meals to children (Appendix [Exhibit C.8](#)).
- Significantly more SFAs in lower poverty areas reported that cafeteria service was how most meals were provided to children compared with SFAs in higher poverty (Appendix [Exhibit C.9](#)).
- SFAs in higher poverty areas were more likely to report using alternate methods to provide the most meals, such as meals in the classroom, curbside pickup, and distributing a full week of meals at one time .
- SFAs in rural areas more commonly reported cafeteria service as the method used to provide the most meals to children than those in suburban areas and urban areas (Appendix [Exhibit C.10](#)).
- SFAs in suburban areas were more likely to report using curbside pickup to provide the most meals to students compared to rural SFAs.
- Distribution of multiple meals at one time was most commonly used by suburban and urban SFAs.
- Parent or guardian pickup was most frequently reported as being used by urban SFAs (21 percent), compared with 16 percent of suburban SFAs and 7 percent of urban SFAs.

2. Fall 2021

By fall 2021, SFAs primarily relied on in-school meal service methods to provide meals to children. Between October and December 2021, the most common meal service methods were cafeteria service (reported by 87 percent of SFAs), meals in the classroom (reported by 43 percent of SFAs), and grab-and-go tables or kiosks (reported by 29 percent of SFAs). Methods that had been frequently used in SY 2020–2021, such as allowing parents or guardians to pick up meals, were used by only 11 percent of SFAs in fall 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit C.11](#)). The reported decline of these alternate methods was likely due to more widespread in-person learning during fall 2021 than the previous school year.

C. Meal counting methods

To receive reimbursement from the USDA, SFAs must keep track of the number of meals they serve, either using electronic records (such as a point-of-service system or a mobile device application) or physical records (such as paper rosters or tally sheets). SFAs may have needed to change or combine different meal counting methods if their existing system was not compatible with the alternate meal service methods they used during COVID-19, particularly those that took place outside of the school building.

In SY 2020–2021, the most commonly reported methods for counting meals in schools included using a standard point-of-service system (54 percent); using circle, tally, or tick sheets (44 percent); or using paper rosters (42 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit C.12](#)). Paper rosters and circle, tally, or tick sheets were the two most common methods for counting meals outside of schools (used by 38 percent and 34 percent of

SFAs, respectively). Other methods, including mobile technology such as apps on laptops or tablets and clickers, were not frequently used (fewer than 13 percent of SFAs for either in-school or outside-of-school use).

In fall 2021, SFAs' use of standard point-of-service systems in schools increased to 65 percent, while other counting methods for in-school service stayed about the same as in SY 2020–2021 (Appendix [Exhibit C.13](#)). The use of other methods to count meals served outside of school decreased (none were higher than 12 percent), which reflected the overall trend toward in-school educational and meal service operations during this time.

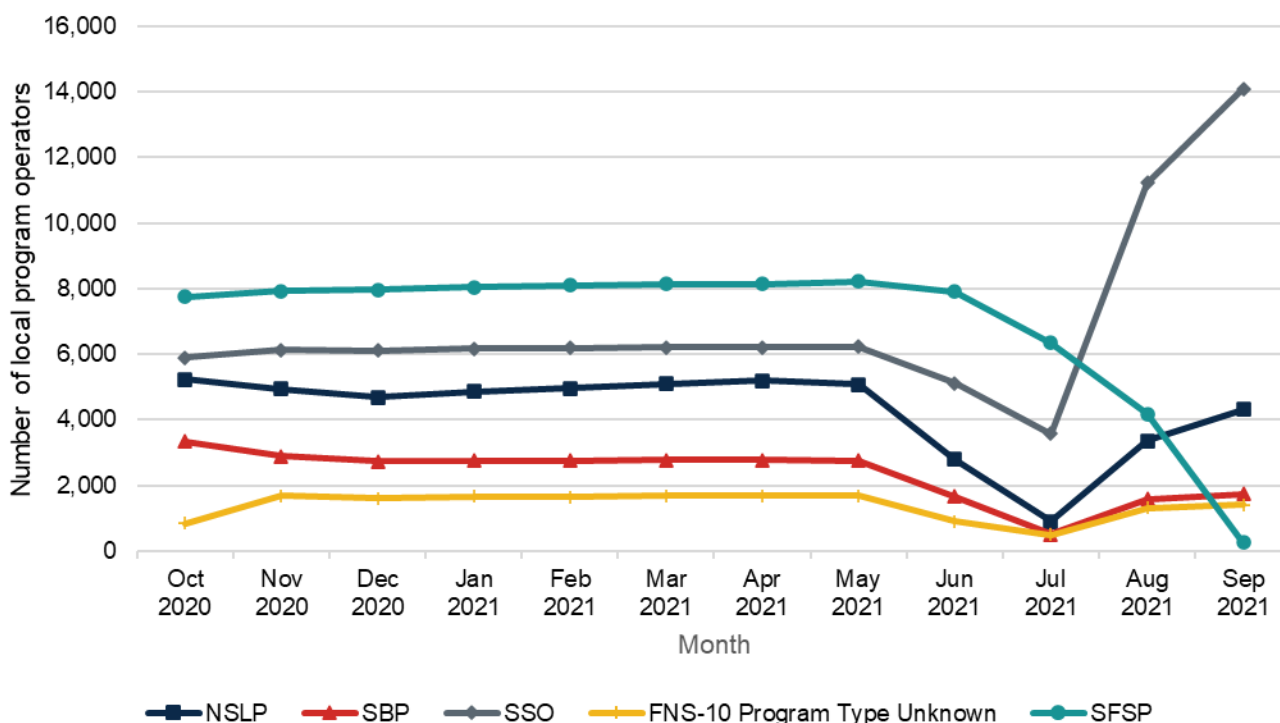
D. Child Nutrition Program participation

In a typical year, SFSP and SSO are only available during summer months or unanticipated school closures, such as those caused by extreme weather events. Due to the ongoing pandemic, FNS authorized a waiver to permit SFSP and SSO to continue to operate throughout SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021. This was the most-used waiver during this time period (see Chapter III), which is reflected by the widespread use of these programs by local program operators.

Exhibit II.4 shows that the majority of local program operators used SFSP to provide meals and snacks during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. From October 2020 through May 2021, around 8,000 local program operators provided meals through SFSP, and slightly over 6,000 SFAs operated SSO each month. Fewer SFAs operated NSLP and SBP (around 5,000 and 3,000, respectively). In June and July 2021, the participation of local program operators in all programs diminished, reflecting a long-standing trend of decreased participation in the Child Nutrition Programs during the summer months. As schools reopened in fall 2021, SFAs operating SSO rose sharply and SFSP participation fell (Appendix [Exhibit C.14](#)). The Nationwide Waiver to Allow SFSP Reimbursement Rates in SY 2021–2022 was initially authorized for use beginning in July 2021.⁵ The increase in use of SSO was likely related to the availability of this waiver, which allowed SFAs to claim SSO meals and snacks at the higher SFSP reimbursement rates (Maskornick 2022).

⁵ The Nationwide Waiver to Allow SFSP Reimbursement Rates in SY 2021–2022 was initially authorized for use from July 2021 through June 2022. The waiver was subsequently extended through September 2022 (Saracino 2021).

Exhibit II.4. Local program operator participation in Child Nutrition Programs, October 2020 through September 2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data from fiscal year 2021.

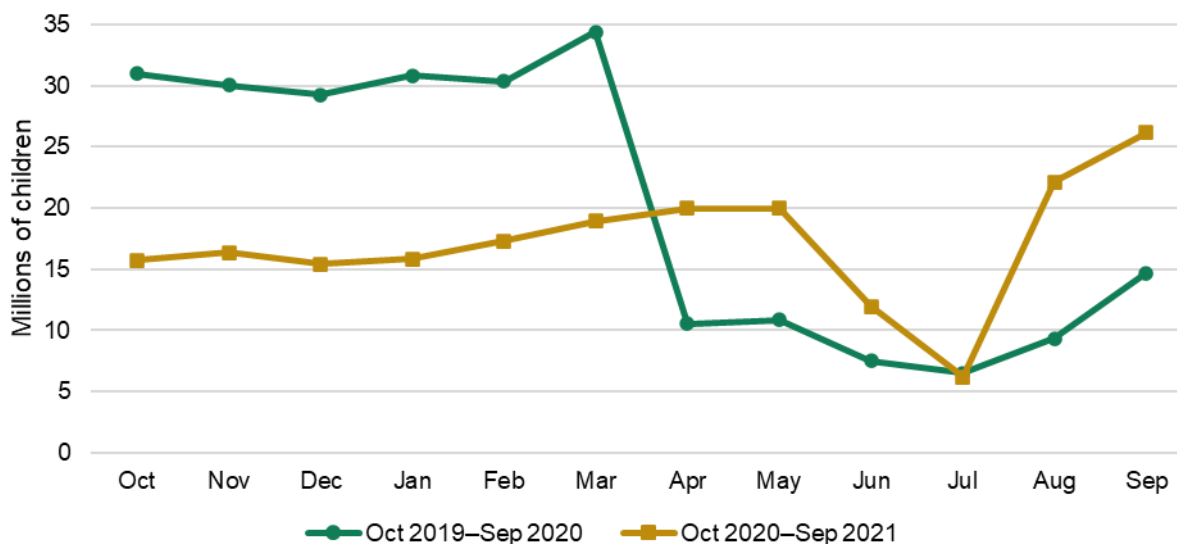
Note: All 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands provided SFA-sponsor- or institution-level data included in this exhibit. Counts of SFAs for which the reported data lacked information about whether meals were provided through NSLP, SBP, or SSO are included in the FNS-10 Program Type Unknown category.

Child participation followed a similar trend to local program operator participation in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. Child participation was highest in SFSP between October 2020 and May 2021, with 8 million to 11 million children participating in the program each month (Appendix [Exhibit C.15](#)). Child participation in SSO was also high, with 5 million to 7 million children participating per month. Child participation in NSLP and SBP lagged behind participation in SFSP and SSO. By late September 2021, child participation in SSO surpassed SFSP, with over 21 million children participating in SSO and only 1.5 million children participating in SFSP. The patterns of child participation in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 were also similar to those observed during the early part of the pandemic. Once the waivers were issued in March 2020, the highest levels of child participation through September 2020 were in SFSP, followed by SSO (Appendix [Exhibit C.16](#)) (Severn et al., 2022).

Exhibit II.5 provides a comparison of total child participation in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP in the first and second years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation from October 2020 to March 2021 was substantially lower than the pre-pandemic months of October 2019 to February 2020 and the first month of the pandemic, March 2020. However, total child participation was substantially higher in April through June 2021 and August through September 2021 than the corresponding months in the prior year. Survey findings suggest that waiver use was more widespread in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 than March

through September 2020, which could have led to more children participating in meal programs than the previous year. This is discussed further in Chapter III.

Exhibit II.5. Child participation in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP during the first and second years of the COVID-19 pandemic

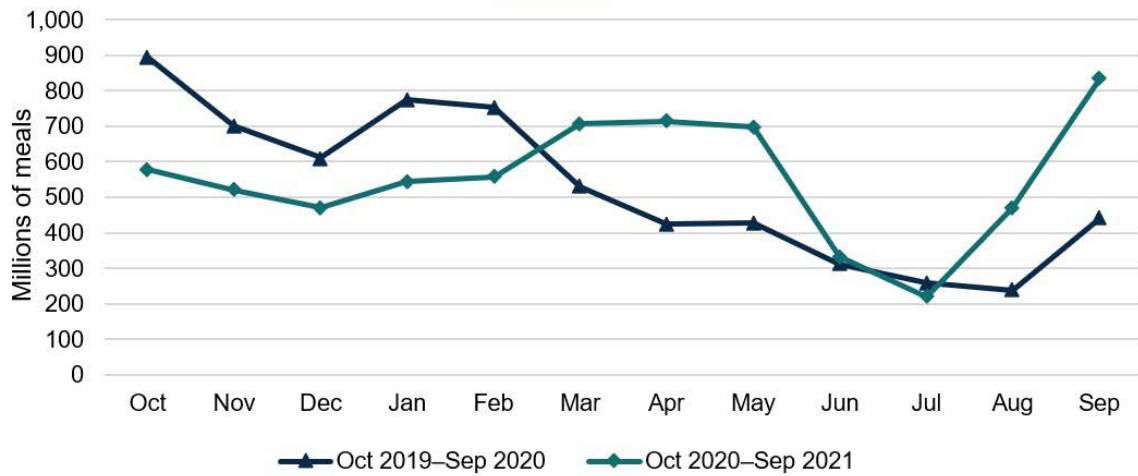


Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data from fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

Note: For SSO and SFSP, child participation equals the meal count for the meal with the most claims in the month divided by operating days. If the State did not provide operating days but did provide average daily meals, child participation equals the State-provided average daily meals. Pennsylvania did not provide operating days or average daily meals for SFSP in FY 2020. Minnesota did not provide operating days or average daily meals in FY 2021. Total includes SSO, SFSP, and either NSLP or SBP, based on which program had a larger number of children participating that month.

As shown in Exhibit II.6, a similar trend exists in the number of meals served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP between the first and second years of the pandemic. More meals were served in the pre-pandemic months of October 2019 through February 2020 than the same months the following year. The year-to-year comparison then flips, with more meals served in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP in March 2021 than March 2020, the first month of the pandemic. For all months from April through September, except July, more meals were served in 2021 than 2020. This difference was largest in April and May, where at least 271 million more meals were served each of those months in 2021 compared to the same months in 2020. The number of meals served dropped in June and July of both years, a common occurrence during summer months when most schools are not in session. Although the 212 million meals served in July 2021 was lower than the 263 million meals served in July 2020, each of these figures eclipse the 95 million meals served in July 2019 (FNS 2021). In the last month of administrative records data available for this study period (September 2021), 785 million meals were served across NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP, which either matched or exceeded pre-pandemic levels (October 2019 through February 2020). However, unlike a typical school year, the majority of meals in September 2021 were provided through SSO as most SFAs continued to use the waivers, as described in Chapter III (Appendix [Exhibits C.17](#) and [C.18](#)).

Exhibit II.6. Total meals and snacks or supplements served in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP in the first and second years of the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data from fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

Note: N = 54 (all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

Chapter III. Use of COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers to Improve Services to Children

As the pandemic continued into SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, FNS issued additional COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and extended several waivers first authorized in the early months of the pandemic. State agencies and local program operators used these waivers to improve children’s access to meals and provide flexibility in the administration and operation of the Child Nutrition Programs. The key Child Nutrition Programs used to provide meals to children during this time included the NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. This chapter describes findings on the use of the nationwide waivers and how they improved services to children during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. A complete list of waivers that were active during this time can be found in Appendix A.

A. Access-focused waivers

In SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, State agencies and local program operators frequently used access-focused waivers (listed in the box to the right) to continue serving meals to children with appropriate safety measures under the Child Nutrition Programs. Exhibit III.1 shows the percentage of SFAs that reported using each of these waivers. About 10 percent of SFAs—mostly smaller or from urban areas—reported not using any waivers (Appendix [Exhibits D.1](#), [D.2](#), and [D.3](#)).

1. SSO and SFSP Operations waiver

SSO and SFSP were heavily used to provide meals and snacks or supplements to children during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. The SSO and SFSP Operations waiver was the most-used waiver in SY 2020–2021, as reported by 68 percent of SFAs. Although this waiver was newly authorized in SY 2020–2021, it is similar in intent to the SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations waiver that expired in June 2020, and was the waiver State agencies reported SFSP and SSO operators used most during March through September 2020. The flexibility the waiver provided was instrumental in ensuring children’s access to meals during this time because it allowed local program operators to continue serving SSO and SFSP meals free of charge to all children in non-summer months. Not surprisingly, nearly 50 percent of all SFAs ranked it as one of the top three most helpful waivers (Appendix [Exhibit D.4](#)).

Although the waiver was widely used, medium and large SFAs (those serving over 2,500 students) more frequently reported using this waiver (over 80 percent in each subgroup) than small or very small SFAs (74 and 56 percent, respectively) (Appendix [Exhibit D.1](#)). In addition, SFAs in suburban areas more

Most-used access-focused waivers

SSO and SFSP Operations.* Allowed local program operators to operate SSO and SFSP during non-summer months

Parent and Guardian Pick-Up. Allowed parents and guardians to pick up meals and bring them home to their children

Non-Congregate. Allowed meals to be served and consumed in non-group settings

Meal Service Time Flexibility. Allowed meals to be served to children outside traditional times to maximize flexibility for meal pickup

Meal Pattern Flexibility. Provided the flexibility to serve meals that do not meet specified meal pattern requirements, when needed

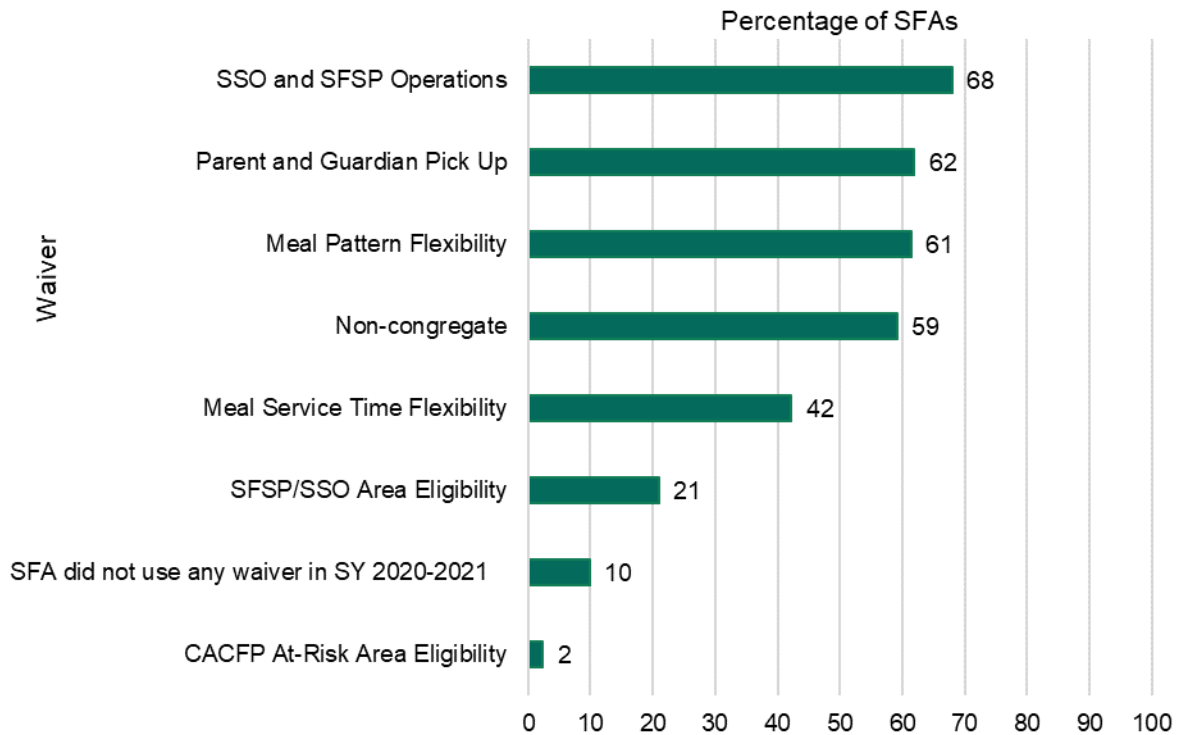
CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility.* Allowed sponsors, regardless of their location, to operate at-risk after-school care programs

SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility. Allowed sponsors, regardless of their location, to operate open SFSP and SSO sites

** Newly authorized for use in SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021.*

frequently used the SSO and SFSP Operations waiver (81 percent) than those in rural areas (65 percent) and urban areas (61 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit D.3](#)).

Exhibit III.1. Percentage of SFAs that used each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waiver during SY 2020-2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey, SY 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver by the total number of SFAs.

Similarly, most State agencies also reported using the SSO and SFSP Operations waiver, but they more frequently reported local program operators using it for SFSP (94 percent) than for SSO (67 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit D.5](#)). Almost all State agencies (94 percent) reported that the SSO and SFSP Operations waiver improved services to children by reducing barriers to children receiving meals. Most State agencies (90 percent) reported that it improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pickup and that it increased alternative meal delivery methods, which all contributed to children’s access to meals during this uncertain time (Appendix [Exhibit D.6](#)).

2. Parent and Guardian Pick-Up, Non-Congregate, and Meal Service Time Flexibility waiver extensions

The Parent and Guardian Pick-Up, Non-Congregate, and Meal Service Time Flexibility waivers were the most used access-focused waiver extensions reported by State agencies in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. Over 84 percent of State agencies reported that local program operators used these waiver extensions for NSLP, SBP, SFSP, or CACFP. Similar to the SSO and SFSP Operations waiver, State

agencies reported that local program operators used these access-focused waivers least frequently for SSO (about 70 percent) and most frequently for SFSP (over 96 percent). Exhibit III.2 shows how use of the waivers changed across time. More State agencies reported that local program operators used the waivers for NSLP and SBP in SY 2020–2021 than when they were first authorized for use in March through September 2020, whereas their use remained consistent for SSO and SFSP and decreased slightly for CACFP (Appendix [Exhibits D.7](#) to [D.9](#)).

Exhibit III.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators used each waiver in SY 2020–2021 compared to March through September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program

Child Nutrition Program	March–September 2020					SY 2020–2021				
	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
SSO and SFSP Operations ^a	n.a.	n.a.	70	91	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	67	94	n.a.
Non-Congregate	73	71	70	98	96	88	84	74	96	91
Meal Service Time Flexibility	79	77	71	98	95	88	86	74	96	87
Parent and Guardian Pick-Up	70	71	68	96	91	88	84	70	98	89

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SYs 2020–2021 and 2021–2022.

Note: Sixty-seven State agencies administered at least one of the relevant Child Nutrition Programs in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands during this time period. The waivers included here were used by local program operators.

^a Although this waiver was newly authorized in SY 2020-2021, it is similar in intent to the SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations waiver that expired in June 2020.

n.a. = not applicable.

Similar to the State agency findings, SFAs commonly reported using the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up (62 percent), Non-Congregate (59 percent), and Meal Service Time Flexibility (42 percent) waivers, as shown in Exhibit III.1 above (Appendix [Exhibit D.1](#)).

State agencies were asked about differences in use of these waivers in SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021 compared to March through September 2020. These findings are shown in Appendix [Exhibits D.10](#) through [D.20](#). Most State agencies reported similar use of these waivers between the two time periods.

a. Parent and Guardian Pick-Up waiver extension requirements

As a requirement for using the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up waiver, State agencies and local program operators were required to ensure that meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals were not served. Exhibit III.3 shows the methods State agencies most frequently reported that local program operators used (Appendix [Exhibits D.21](#), [D.22](#), [D.23](#) and [D.24](#)). These findings were consistent across all programs for SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, and they were similar to methods used in the early months of the pandemic (Appendix [Exhibits D.25](#) and [D.26](#)).

b. Effect of access-focused waiver extensions

More than 37 percent of SFAs reported the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up and Non-Congregate waivers as among the most helpful. Fewer SFAs (10 percent) reported the Meal Service Time Flexibility waiver as most helpful (Appendix [Exhibit D.4](#)).

The State agency survey asked whether these waiver extensions improved services to children differently in SY 2021–2022 than how the original waivers improved services to children in March through September 2020. State agencies largely reported that the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up, Non-Congregate, and Meal Service Time Flexibility waivers improved services to children in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 similarly to March through September 2020, by improving safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pickup, reducing barriers to children receiving meals, allowing for pickup of multiple meals at one time, and increasing participation (Appendix [Exhibits D.27](#) through [D.35](#)).

Exhibit III.3. Most-used methods to ensure that meals were distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals were not served under the Parent and Guardian Pick-Up waiver in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021

 Most used methods to ensure meals were distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children	Most used methods to ensure duplicate meals were not served
Requested the number of children for which the parent or guardian was picking up meals	Told parents or guardians picking up meals that children are not eligible to receive duplicate meals
Requested children's names, ages or dates of birth, or grade levels when meals were picked up	Requested children's names, ages or dates of birth, or grade levels when meals were picked up
Posted signage to indicate who is eligible to pick up and receive meals	

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SY 2021–2022.

3. Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver

Under Federal rules, local program operators must serve meals that meet certain requirements, such as those related to meal components (FNS 2012). For example, lunches served through SSO must include servings of milk, grains, vegetables, fruit, and meat or meat alternates that meet certain nutritional and portion size requirements. Due to COVID-19, most SFAs experienced operational challenges, such as food shortages or supply chain disruptions, in providing meals during SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit F.7](#)). As such, SFAs continued to waive meal pattern requirements through the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver, which allowed local program operators to modify the meal components served when needed. During SY 2020–2021, SFAs primarily experienced challenges in meeting meal pattern requirements for foods rich in whole grains (36 percent), sodium (26 percent), meat and meat alternates (24 percent), vegetables (24 percent), and milk (23 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit D.36](#)). A similar percentage of SFAs experienced challenges in meeting these same meal pattern requirements in fall 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit D.37](#)). Overall, SFAs that used NSLP (including SSO) experienced the most challenges meeting meal pattern requirements compared to SFAs that used SBP (including SSO), SFSP, and CACFP (Appendix [Exhibit D.36](#)).

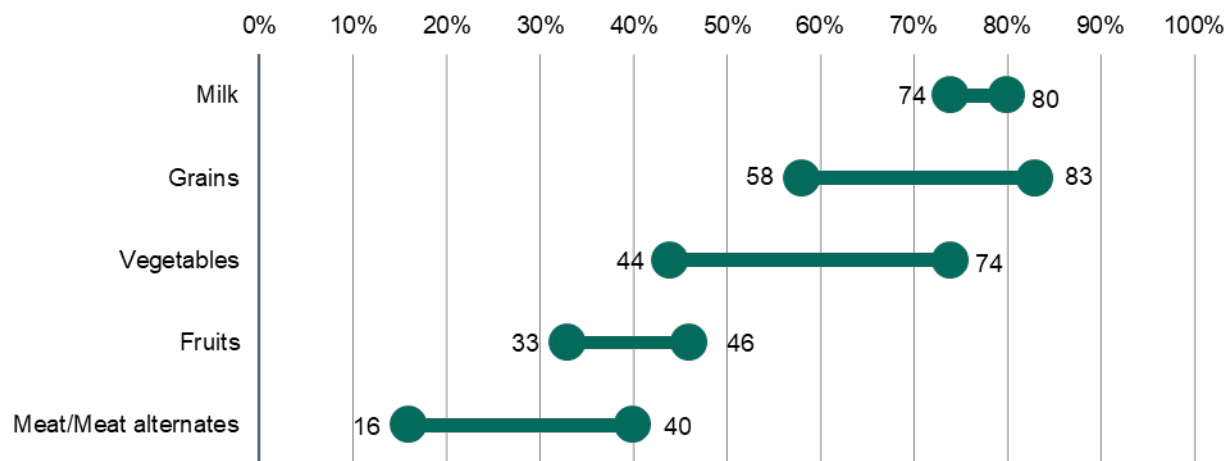
The Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver was highly used by SFAs during SY 2020–2021. Sixty-one percent of SFAs used the waiver and the largest SFAs (enrollment of 100,000 or more) more commonly used this waiver compared to smaller SFAs (Appendix [Exhibit D.1](#)). The Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver was ranked among the top three most helpful waivers by 40 percent of SFAs overall (Appendix [Exhibit D.4](#)).

The Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver was most frequently used in NSLP, SSO, and SFSP. About 40 percent of SFAs that used this waiver used it for NSLP, including SSO; about 35 percent used it for SFSP. Across all Child Nutrition Programs, SFAs most frequently reported using the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver for grains, followed by milk and vegetables. Fifty-four percent of SFAs that used NSLP and SSO waived the grain requirement, while 40 percent waived the milk and vegetable requirements. Only 31 percent of SFAs that used NSLP and SSO waived the fruit and meat and meat alternates requirements. Finally, forty-five percent of the sponsors that used SFSP waived the grain requirement, while fewer waived the milk (35 percent) and vegetable requirements (30 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit D.38](#)).

These findings from the SFA survey were similar to State agency reports. Exhibit III.4 shows the percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver to waive meal component requirements in each Child Nutrition Program. Across all Child Nutrition Programs, States reported that local program operators most frequently used the waiver for milk and grains, followed by vegetables (Appendix [Exhibit D.39](#)).

Most State agencies reported that less than half of local program operators used the waiver for multiple food components in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 (Appendix [Exhibits D.40](#) and [D.41](#)). Food components were most commonly waived for the entirety of SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, according to State agencies (Appendix [Exhibits D.42](#) and [D.43](#)).

Exhibit III.4. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension to waive certain meal component requirements in each Child Nutrition Program, SY 2020–2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SY 2021–2022.

Note: The bars indicate the extent of variation in State agency responses by Program, including NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each component or subgroup by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

Most State agencies reported that the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver improved services to children in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 similarly to March through September 2020 (Appendix [Exhibits D.27](#) and [D.28](#)). Details regarding differences State agencies reported in how this waiver improved services to children between the two time periods are shown in Appendix [Exhibit D.35](#).


4. Area Eligibility waivers

The CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility and SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waivers provided local program operators flexibility for establishing meal sites, which allowed many of them to continue serving free meals to all children in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. Under Federal rules, open meal sites are allowed to operate in an area where at least half of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, or when households have income at or below 185 percent of Federal poverty guidelines (FNS 2016). However, the area eligibility waivers provided flexibility with this requirement. These waivers were widely used by State agencies and local program operators. About 90 percent of State agencies reported that local program operators used these waivers for SFSP and CACFP (Appendix Exhibits D.5 and D.7). Sixty-three percent of State agencies reported that local program operators used the waiver for SSO (Appendix Exhibit D.7). Twenty-one percent of SFAs reported using the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver (Appendix Exhibit D.1).

a. *How local program operators targeted area-eligible SFSP, SSO, and CACFP sites*

FNS indicated that new meal sites made eligible under these waivers should target benefits to children in need, such as those who may be eligible for Child Nutrition Program benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Consequently, State agencies were required to report how new meal sites were selected to serve children who were previously or newly eligible for program benefits. Exhibit III.5 shows how these methods varied slightly between the two waivers (Appendix Exhibit D.44, D.45, and D.46).

Exhibit III.5. Most-used methods to target new area-eligible meal sites in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, by waiver

 CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility waiver	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver
<p>No methods used—all sites approved as area eligible</p> <hr/> <p>Targeted near-eligible sites, such as sites where 40% of children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals</p>	<p>Targeted near-eligible sites, such as sites where 40% of children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals</p> <hr/> <p>Identified site(s) that were area eligible in prior years</p>

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SY 2021–2022.

b. *How Area Eligibility waivers improved services to children*

State agencies reported that the CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility waiver improved CACFP services to children in a number of ways. Almost all State agencies reported that this waiver increased participation (90 percent) and reduced barriers to children receiving meals (90 percent). Additionally, over 80 percent reported that the waiver increased the number of CACFP sites and allowed for a greater geographic distribution of sites (Appendix Exhibit D.6). Most State agencies (about 85 percent) reported that the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver extension improved services to children similarly in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 as it did during the early months of the pandemic—that is, by increasing the number of meal sites and the geographic distribution of sites (Appendix Exhibits D.6 and D.29 through D.33).

B. Program administration waivers

In addition to the waivers that primarily focused on improving children’s access to meals, FNS issued nationwide waivers that provided flexibilities related to program administration for SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. Many of these waivers were extensions of waivers first authorized between March and September 2020; some were newly authorized for this time period.

1. On-site monitoring waivers

Under program regulations, State agencies and local program operators are required to monitor Child Nutrition Program operations. On-site monitoring is required at specified intervals to help ensure program integrity (FNS 2023b). However, to maintain safety and minimize the spread of COVID-19, FNS issued monitoring waivers for each program from March through September 2020, which provided flexibilities with these requirements for State agencies and local program operators. FNS guidance noted that suspending on-site monitoring was vital to support social distancing while providing meals and that school, child care center, and family day care home closures may limit opportunities for on-site monitoring. As the pandemic continued, FNS extended these waivers into the 2020–2021 school year.

Nearly all State agencies (at least 89 percent) continued using on-site monitoring waiver extensions for all Child Nutrition Programs in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021, although it was slightly less than in the early months of the pandemic (Appendix [Exhibits D.47](#) and [D.48](#)). Similarly, nearly all State agencies reported that their local program operators continued using these waiver extensions for all programs in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit D.49](#)). Across all programs, at least sixty-six percent of State agencies reported that either more or about the same number of local program operators used the monitoring waiver extensions in SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021, compared to March through September 2020 (Appendix [Exhibit D.50](#)). Use of on-site monitoring waivers was also reported in the SFA survey, where twenty-two percent of SFAs reported using the School Meals Onsite Monitoring waiver during SY 2020–2021. About 15 percent of SFAs also reported using the SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors waiver and the SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver (Appendix [Exhibit D.1](#)).

Under these waivers, many State agencies and local program operators shifted their approaches to monitoring from on-site visits to alternative methods, including desk audits or virtual observations. State agencies most frequently reported that they conducted desk audits, either by reviewing records and paperwork or by interviewing site operators, to monitor sponsoring organizations (between 81 percent and 96 percent of State agencies, depending upon the waiver) (Appendix [Exhibit D.51](#)). This was similar to the types of monitoring they reported conducting in the early months of the pandemic (Appendix [Exhibit D.52](#)).

On-site monitoring waivers

School Meals Onsite Monitoring. Provided flexibilities for State agencies and SFAs in certain monitoring and review requirements for school meals programs

SFSP Onsite Monitoring for State Agencies. Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring requirements for State agencies administering and sponsors operating SFSP

SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors. Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for sponsors participating in SFSP

SFSP First Week Site Visits. Provided flexibility in the requirement to visit SFSP sites during the first week of operation

CACFP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors. Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for sponsors participating in CACFP

CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies. Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for CACFP

State agencies also most commonly reported that their local program operators conducted desk audits and on-site but socially distanced observations (76 percent to 93 percent of State agencies and 76 percent to 88 percent of State agencies, respectively, depending upon the waiver). Fewer State agencies reported that local program operators conducted virtual monitoring, although, for CACFP, many State agencies reported that local program operators conducted virtual observations through live stream video of site operations or photos of meal preparation and service (Appendix [Exhibit D.53](#)). While desk audits were also the most commonly used monitoring approach across all programs in the early months of the pandemic, on-site observations were far less common during that time period than in SY 2020–2021 (Appendix [Exhibit D.54](#)).

Most State agencies reported that the on-site monitoring waiver extensions improved services to children in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021 similar to the early months of the pandemic. The waivers improved services by increasing the ability of State agencies and local program operators to focus administrative resources on other priority areas, such as providing meals to children. These waivers also increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing and providing meals (Appendix [Exhibits D.55](#) to [D.59](#)).

2. Other program administration waivers

FNS also issued nationwide waivers that provided other program administration flexibilities in SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. The most frequently used waivers related to reporting requirements and deadlines and sponsor application processing. Nearly all State agencies used these waivers (Appendix [Exhibit D.5](#)).

a. Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver

The pandemic introduced challenges and limitations that impacted the ability of State agencies and local program operators to submit accurate and complete reporting during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. FNS waived select reporting requirements in the Child Nutrition Programs⁶ to enable States to reallocate their limited staffing resources to meal service and relevant COVID-19 response activities rather than expending those resources on the completion of administrative reporting, thereby facilitating the safe provision of meals. Nearly all State agencies (96 percent) used the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver, and most (87 percent) used the waiver for all SFAs in their State (Appendix [Exhibits D.5](#) and [D.60](#)). State agencies most frequently reported using the waiver for the FNS-828 Paid Lunch Price Report, FNS-640 Administrative Review Report Form, FNS-874 Second (Independent) Review of Applications, Ameliorative Action Report, and State Agency Food Safety Inspections Report (over 83 percent of State agencies) (Appendix [Exhibit D.61](#)). The majority of State agencies reported that the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver increased their ability to provide technical assistance to local program operators and increased the availability of State and local resources for other priority areas (Appendix [Exhibit D.62](#)).

⁶ This waiver canceled the following reporting requirements: Data Element 15, Part B of the FNS-10; FNS-640 Administrative Review Report Form; FNS-828 SFA Paid Lunch Price Report; FNS-834 State Agency (NSLP/SNAP) Direct Certification Rate Data Element Report; FNS-874 Second (Independent) Review of Applications; Ameliorative Action Report; State Agency Food Safety Inspections Report; and Performance-Based Reimbursement (7 Cents) Quarterly Report.

b. Experienced SFSP Sponsors FY 2021 waiver

Program regulations allow State agencies to use a streamlined application and approval process for returning SFSP sponsors that operated in the prior year with no significant deficiencies or operational problems. State agencies are required to conduct preapproval visits to all applicant sponsors that did not participate in SFSP in the prior year (FNS 2022). Due to the pandemic, many sponsors did not operate in FY 2020 and so would not qualify for a streamlined application for experienced sponsors. Recognizing the challenges State agencies experience in processing applications from new and returning sponsors, FNS waived the requirement for State agencies to conduct preapproval visits of SFSP sponsors that did not participate in FY 2020 due to COVID-19 but had successfully participated in FY 2019.

Most State agencies (89 percent) used the Experienced SFSP Sponsors waiver (Appendix [Exhibit D.5](#)). State agencies primarily required sponsors to be in good standing or have no significant review findings to participate in the waiver (Appendix [Exhibit D.63](#)). State agencies most frequently reported that the waiver increased their ability to efficiently approve sponsors to provide meals and increased their ability to provide technical assistance to local program operators (Appendix [Exhibit D.62](#)).

c. CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP waiver

Most State agencies used the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Deadlines in NSLP/SBP waiver, which provided more time to meet required election and reporting deadlines for CEP, a policy option that allows high poverty schools and districts to serve free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students (FNS 2023c). However, slightly fewer used this waiver in SY 2020–2021 compared to March through September 2020. In the early months of the pandemic, 94 percent of State agencies reported using the CEP Deadlines waiver, while 89 percent used it for SY 2020–2021. Only 12 percent of SFAs reported using the waiver (Appendix [Exhibits D.1](#) and [D.5](#)). The CEP Deadlines waiver was more frequently used by the largest SFAs (those serving over 100,000 students) and SFAs with poverty levels above 60 percent (Appendix [Exhibits D.1](#) and [D.2](#)). Similar to the March through September 2020 time period, State agencies that used the waiver for SY 2020–2021 reported that it improved services to children by increasing the ability to (1) focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children and (2) provide technical assistance to local program operators (Appendix [Exhibits D.55](#), [D.56](#), and [D.62](#)).

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Chapter IV. Use of Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs

In response to the operational challenges faced by local program operators during the pandemic, FNS made two Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs available in 2021: (1) the School Programs Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program and (2) the Child and Adult Care Food Program Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program. Together with the nationwide waivers, these two programs were intended to address operational hurdles and to deliver relief from the impacts of COVID-19. State agencies administering the NSLP, SBP, or CACFP could apply to participate in these reimbursement programs, which provided additional funding for local program operators that experienced declines or interruptions in revenues between March and June 2020 due to pandemic-related restrictions and closures. Participating State agencies were required to implement the reimbursement programs statewide and provide equal access to the funds to all eligible local program operators (Smith-Holmes 2021).

A. State agencies

Nearly all State agencies (81 percent) administered at least one of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs (Appendix [Exhibit E.1](#)). State agencies that administered the reimbursement programs were eligible to receive 1 percent State administrative funds to cover costs related to administering the programs.⁷ Among State agencies that administered the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs, 27 State agencies (48 percent) accepted the 1 percent State administrative funds for operating school-based programs (NSLP or SBP) and 27 State agencies (49 percent) accepted the funds for operating CACFP (Appendix [Exhibit E.2](#)). Among the State agencies that declined the funds, the most common reason cited was having sufficient State administrative funds available (reported by 80 percent of State agencies).

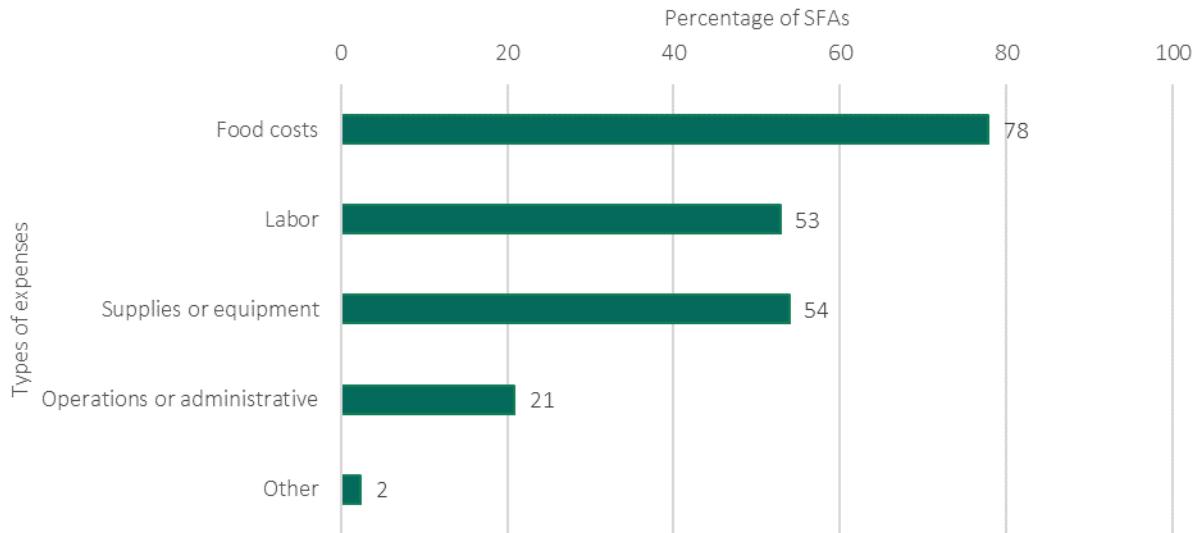
State agencies that administered the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs were required to disburse payments to eligible program operators based on FNS-approved implementation plans. These plans included a formula that the State agencies used to determine the amount of funding they would provide to each local program operator. Seventy-six percent of State agencies reported that the most common challenge they faced calculating and disbursing the payments was the complexity of the calculations. Other common challenges included identifying eligible program operators (65 percent) and obtaining assurance statements from program operators (62 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit E.3](#)).

B. School food authorities

SFAs are one type of local program operator that received the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payments. Among SFAs surveyed, 35 percent reported receiving a payment. As shown in Exhibit IV.1, most SFAs reported using or planning to use the reimbursement payments to cover food costs (78 percent), labor costs such as salaries or benefits (53 percent), and supplies or equipment (54 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit E.4](#)).

⁷ These 1 percent State administrative funds were provided in addition to the 1 percent State administrative expense funds that State agencies receive from FNS annually.

Exhibit IV.1. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage that used, or planned to use, the reimbursement payments for certain types of expenses



Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey, SY 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 434 SFAs reported receiving at least one Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement payment. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported receiving at least one Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs payment by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

Most State agencies and SFAs reported that the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs payments supported the financial health of food service operations. Seventy-eight percent of State agencies and 78 percent of SFAs reported that the payments were highly or somewhat effective (Appendix [Exhibit E.5](#) and [E.6](#)). Fifty-four percent of SFAs reported that the funds had a high or significant impact on their ability to continue Child Nutrition Program operations (Appendix [Exhibit E.7](#)).

Chapter V. Meal Service Challenges

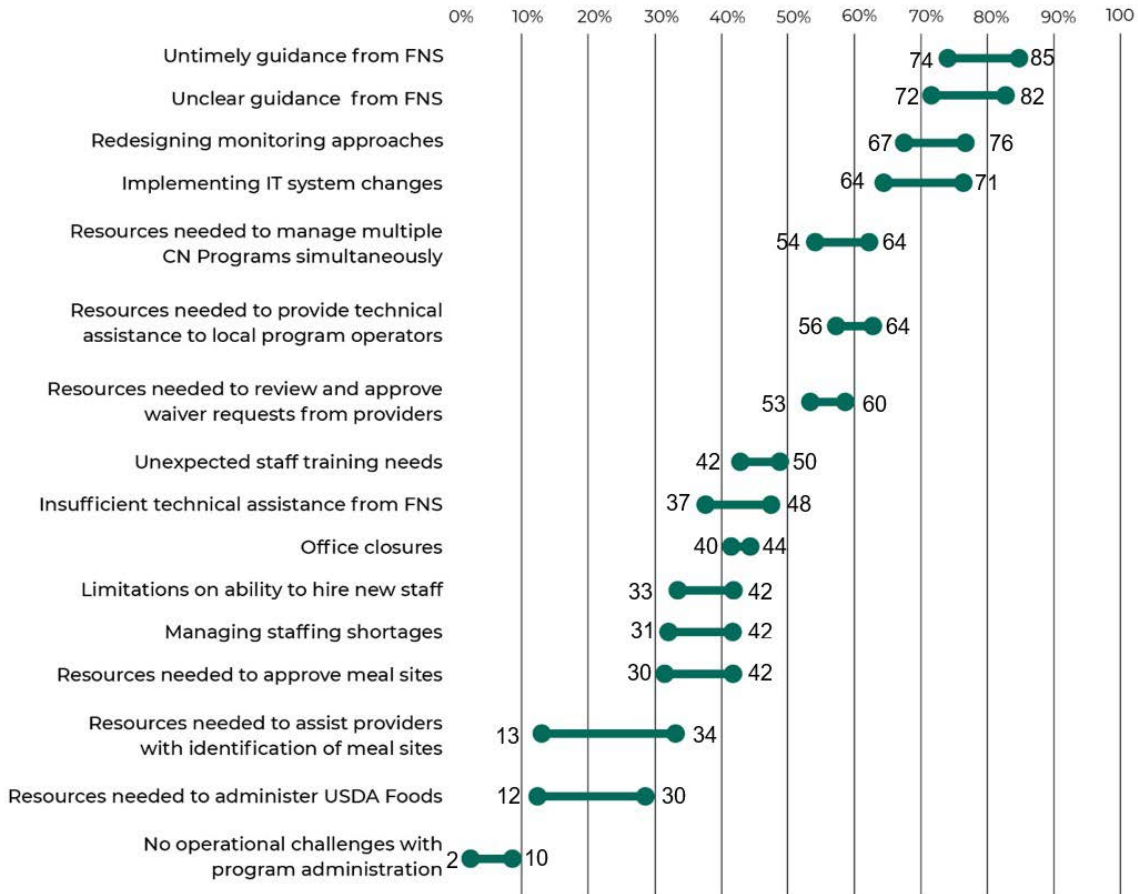
Although the waivers helped address many of the challenges that State agencies and local program operators faced in providing meal service in the first full school year during the pandemic, other challenges remained and evolved over time. State agencies experienced challenges related to operating the Child Nutrition Programs within the context of the pandemic, including implementing the Child Nutrition COVID-19 nationwide waivers, while SFAs experienced financial challenges and challenges with operating the Child Nutrition Programs amidst the pandemic.

A. State agencies

Almost all State agencies (93 percent) reported operational challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021 (Appendix [Exhibit F.1](#)). State agencies reported a range of factors that contributed to the challenges they experienced in operating the NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. Exhibit V.1 (and Appendix [Exhibit F.2](#)) shows the percentage of State agencies that reported each factor as contributing to their operational challenges in administering the Child Nutrition Programs during the first full school year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The range shown for each factor reflects variation across NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. There was little variation by Child Nutrition Program in the factors contributing to the operational challenges. Untimely or unclear guidance from FNS was the most frequently reported contributing factor across Child Nutrition Programs, reported by 72 to 85 percent of State agencies. Most State agencies also cited redesigning their monitoring approaches (68 to 76 percent), which were likely needed to accommodate transitions from in-person to virtual models, and implementing information technology (IT) system changes (64 to 76 percent) contributed to operational challenges.

Sixty-nine percent of State agencies experienced challenges implementing or using the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers (Appendix [Exhibit F.1](#)), but few (between 1 and 10 percent) reported that they were unable to overcome these challenges (Appendix [Exhibit F.3](#)). State agencies most frequently cited collaboration with other State agencies (42 percent) and local program operators (43 percent) as factors that helped them overcome waiver use or implementation challenges (Appendix [Exhibit F.4](#)).

Exhibit V.1. Percentage of State agencies reporting factors that contributed to operational challenges in administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021, nationwide by Child Nutrition

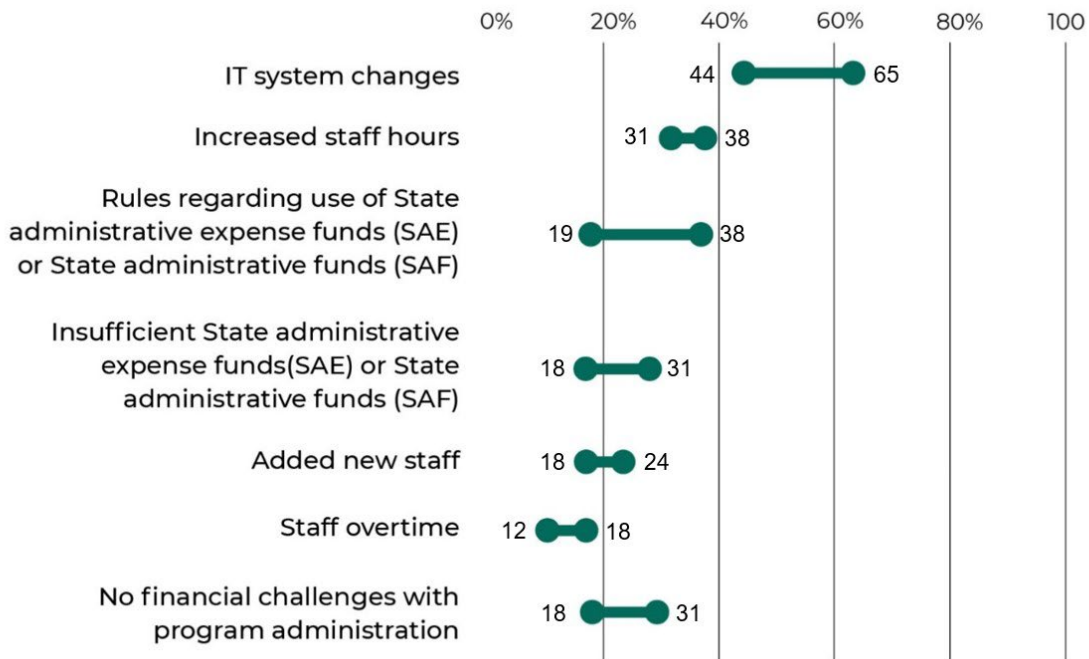


Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SY 2021–2022.

Note: The bars indicate the extent of variation in State agency responses by Program, including NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each factor per program by the total number of State agencies that oversaw each program.

Although operational challenges were commonly experienced by State agencies, only 27 percent reported experiencing financial challenges (Appendix [Exhibit F.1](#)). Exhibit V.2 shows that IT system changes were the most common financial challenge, reported by 44 to 65 of State agencies (Appendix [Exhibit F.5](#)).

Exhibit V.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting factors that contributed to financial challenges in administering the Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection, SY 2021–2022.

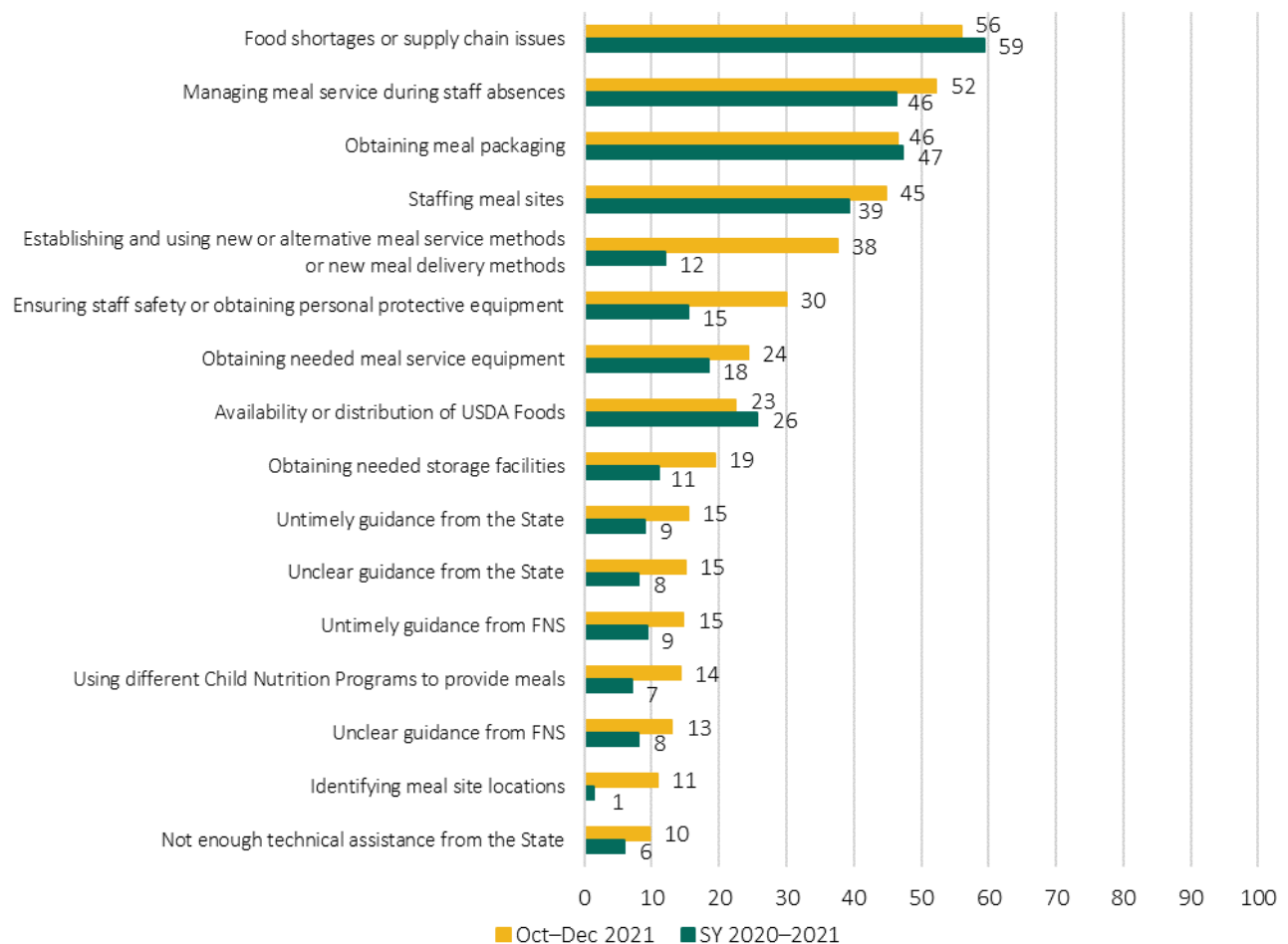
Note: The bars indicate the extent of variation in State agency responses by Program, including NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each factor per program by the total number of State agencies that oversee each program.

B. School Food Authorities

In SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021, SFAs experienced a variety of operational and financial challenges, primarily related to the cost and availability of food, cost of meal packaging, and staffing. Over 60 percent of SFAs experienced operational challenges, although the percentage decreased slightly from SY 2020–2021 (68 percent) to fall 2021 (63 percent) (Appendix [Exhibit F.6](#)).

Exhibit V.3 shows factors that contributed to operational challenges reported by SFAs in school year 2020–2021 and in fall 2021. Food shortages or supply chain issues were the most commonly reported operational challenge in both time periods. They were reported as a contributing factor by 82 percent of SFAs during SY 2020–2021 and 96 percent of SFAs in fall 2021. Seventy-seven percent of SFAs reported staff absences as an operational challenge in both time periods. In addition, 68 percent of SFAs reported that obtaining meal packaging contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020–2021, which increased to 82 percent in fall 2021. Most factors presented less of a challenge over time. For example, 55 percent of SFAs reported that establishing new delivery methods contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020–2021, while only 25 percent of SFAs reported it as a challenge in fall 2021.

Exhibit V.3. Percentage of SFAs reporting that certain factors contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020–2021 and fall 2021



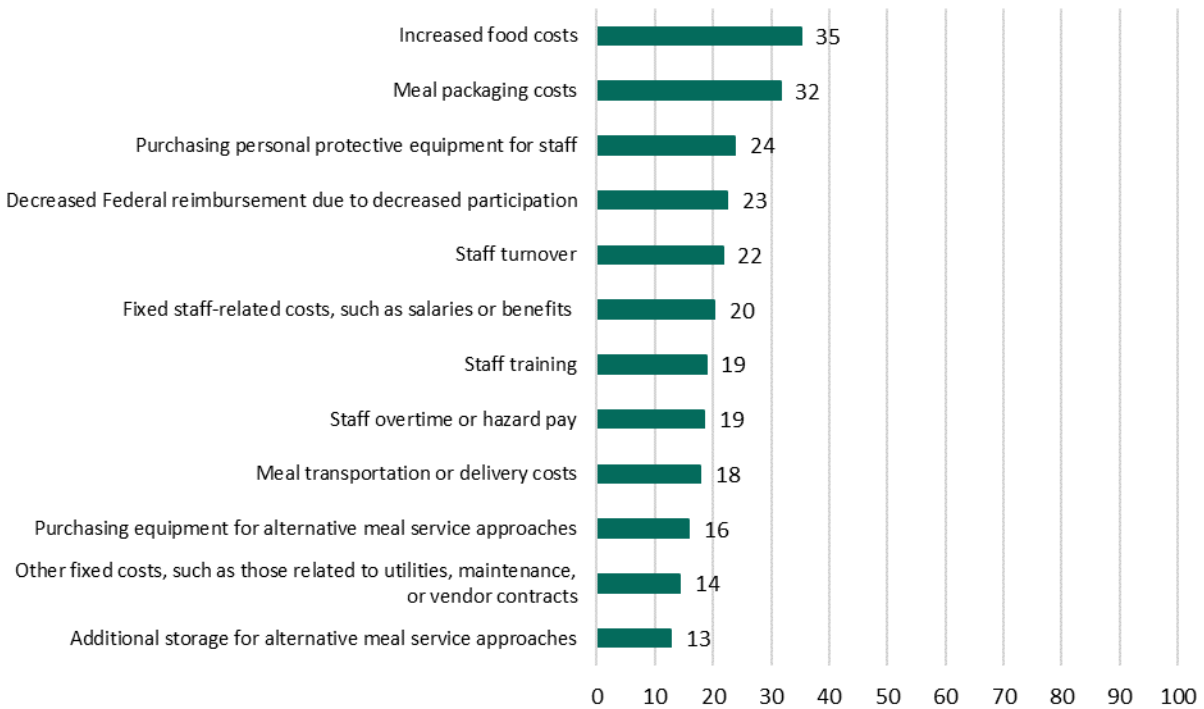
Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey, SY 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each factor by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

In SY 2020–2021, 40 percent of SFAs reported experiencing financial challenges providing meal service (Appendix [Exhibit F.8](#))⁸. Among these SFAs, over 90 percent reported increased food costs as contributing to financial challenges, while 83 percent reported meal packaging costs as a contributing factor (Exhibit V.4 and Appendix [Exhibit F.9](#)). Staff turnover was also reported as contributing to financial challenges by 65 percent of SFAs. Decreased Federal reimbursement and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) were also each reported by over 60 percent of SFAs as contributing to financial challenges.

⁸ Data on financial challenges SFAs experienced in fall 2021 were incomplete and are not included in this report.

Exhibit V.4. Percentage of SFAs reporting that certain factors contributed to financial challenges in SY 2020–2021



Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey, SY 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each factor contributing to financial challenges by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

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Chapter VI. Overview of the Next Report in the Series

The third report in this series will discuss findings from SY 2021–2022 and summer 2022. During SY 2021–2022 and summer 2022, 29 waivers were still in use. In addition, the Keep Kids Fed Act, which was signed into law in June 2022, extended some flexibilities through September 2022 (U.S. Congress 2022). The report will provide statutorily required information about these waivers from State Child Nutrition agencies as well as information on program participation, child participation, and meals served in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP.

As in previous years of the study, data collection will involve obtaining survey and administrative data from the 67 State agencies in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that administer NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, and CACFP. The survey, which was fielded from October 2022 through January 2023, gathered information to address the reporting requirements for the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers as well as information on challenges in administering the Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2021–2022. The administrative data provides information about program participation, child participation, and meals served in the Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2021–2022 and summer 2022.

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Appendix A:
COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers and Waiver Extensions

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Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

The FFCRA provided FNS with the authority to establish nationwide waivers of certain Child Nutrition Program rules, which provided States and local program operators with flexibilities to help them continue serving meals to children during the pandemic. Exhibit A.1 lists the waivers authorized for use during the study period of SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021. Waivers are arranged by initial authorization date. Exhibit A.2 lists waivers previously authorized for use that FNS did not extend into the study period.

Exhibit A.1. COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers and waiver extensions authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
Non-Congregate	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #33: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs (SBP, NSLP, and CACFP)—Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #44: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the SFSP—Extension 3 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #54: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option—Extension 4 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #61: Nationwide Waivers to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option—Extension 5 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #75: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding for Summer 2021 Operations—Extension 6	March 20, 2020	September 30, 2022	Access	NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, CACFP	Allowed meals to be served and consumed in non-group settings
Meal Service Time Flexibility	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #34: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program—Extension 2	March 20, 2020	September 30, 2022	Access	NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, CACFP	Allowed meals to be served to children outside traditional times to maximize flexibility for meal pickup

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #50: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the SFSP and SSO—Extension COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #66: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the SFSP and SSO—Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #78: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions for Summer 2021 Operations—Extension 3					
Parent and Guardian Pick-Up	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #35: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children (SBP, NSLP, and CACFP)—Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #47: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children—Extension 3 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #55: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children (SSO and SFSP)— Extension 4 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #62: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children (SSO and SFSP)—Extension 5 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #76: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children for Summer 2021 Operations—Extension 6	March 25, 2020	September 30, 2022	Access	NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, CACFP	Allowed parents and guardians to pick up meals and bring them home to their children
Meal Pattern Flexibility	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #36: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs – Extension 4 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #38: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs – Extension 5 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #45: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in SFSP – Extension 6	March 25, 2020	End of SY 2021-2022	Access	NSLP, SBP, SSO, SFSP, CACFP	Provided the flexibility to serve meals that do not meet specified meal pattern requirements when needed

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #53: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option- Extension 7 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #63: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option- Extension 8 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #70: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs (NSLP, SBP, and CACFP)- Extension 5 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #74: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibilities for Summer 2021 Operations- Extension 9					
High School Offer vs. Serve	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #37: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High School in the National School Lunch Program for SY 2020-2021	June 25, 2020	End of SY 2021–2022	Access	NSLP	Provided the flexibility to serve meals without using offer versus serve in senior high schools
CACFP Monitoring for Sponsors	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #39: Nationwide Waiver of Monitoring Requirements for Sponsors in the Child and Adult Care Food Program	March 27, 2020	June 10, 2023 ^c	Administrative - sponsors	CACFP	Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for sponsors participating in CACFP

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State agencies	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #40: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program—Extension 2	March 27, 2020	June 10, 2023	Administrative – State agencies	CACFP	Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for CACFP
School Meals Onsite Monitoring—Revised	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #41: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs—Extension 2	March 27, 2020	June 10, 2023	Administrative – State agencies and SFAs	NSLP, SBP, SSO	Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for school meals programs
SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #42: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for Sponsoring Organizations in the Summer Food Service Program—Extension 2	March 27, 2020	September 30, 2021	Administrative – sponsors	SFSP	Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring and review requirements for sponsors participating in SFSP
SFSP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #43: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies in the Summer Food Service Program—Extension 2	March 27, 2020	September 30, 2021	Administrative – State agencies	SFSP	Provided flexibilities in certain monitoring requirements for State agencies administering and sponsors operating SFSP

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #46: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers—Extension COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #52: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers—Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #60: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers—Extension 3 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #77: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers for Summer 2021 Operations—Extension 4	June 10, 2020	June 30, 2022	Access	SSO, SFSP	Allowed sponsors regardless of their location to operate open SSO and SFSP sites
Closed Enrolled Area Eligibility	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #48: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option—Extension COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #64: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option—Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #80: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites for Summer 2021 Operations—Extension 3	April 21, 2020	September 30, 2022	Administrative – SFAs and sponsors	SFSP, SSO	Allowed sponsors to determine closed enrolled SSO and SFSP site eligibility through area eligibility
SFSP First Week Site Visits	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #49: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program - Extension COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #65: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program - Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #81: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program for Summer 2021 Operations-Extension 3	April 21, 2020	September 30, 2021	Administrative – sponsors	SFSP	Provided flexibility for requirement to visit SFSP sites during first week of operation

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #51: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the SFSP- Extension COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #67: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the SFSP- Extension 2 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #79: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program for Summer 2021 Operations- Extension 3	April 30, 2020	September 30, 2021	Access	SFSP	Provided the flexibility to serve meals without using offer versus serve
CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Area Eligibility	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #58: At-Risk Afterschool Area Eligibility Waiver COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #68: At-Risk Afterschool Area Eligibility Waiver- Extension	September 18, 2020	June 30, 2021	Access	CACFP	Allowed sponsors, regardless of their location, to operate at-risk after-school care programs
SSO and SFSP Operations	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #56: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations Through December 2020 COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #59: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations Through School Year 2020-2021—Extension	October 9, 2020	June 30, 2021	Access	SSO, SFSP	Allowed local program operators to continue operating SSO and SFSP during non-summer months
SFSP Pre-Approval Visits and Reimbursements	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #57: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #69: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program—Extension	September 11, 2020	June 30, 2021	Administrative – sponsors	SFSP	Allowed sponsors to be reimbursed for meals prior to receiving approval to participate in SFSP

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date ^a	Expiration date ^b	Focus	Programs	Description of waiver
FSMC Contract Duration	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #71: Nationwide Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration in the National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program—Extension	April 24, 2020	June 30, 2022	Administrative – SFAs and sponsors	NSLP, SFSP	Allowed extension of FSMC contracts
Reporting Requirements	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #72: Nationwide Waiver for Selected Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements	January 7, 2021	End of SY 2021–2022	Administrative – State agencies	NSLP, SBP	Cancelled selected administrative data reporting requirements in the Child Nutrition Programs
Community Eligibility Provision Data Waiver	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs	March 26, 2021	September 30, 2021	Administrative – SFAs	NSLP, SBP	Provided more time to meet required election and reporting deadlines for CEP
Experienced SFSP Sponsors	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #83: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Sponsors that Successfully Participated in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in Fiscal Year 2019 to Operate as Experienced Sponsors in Fiscal Year 2021	April 1, 2021	September 30, 2021	Administrative – State agencies	SFSP	Allowed State agencies to use a streamlined application and approval process for returning sponsors that successfully participated in SFSP in FY 2019 but not in FY 2020

Source: Child Nutrition COVID-19 Waivers (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-disaster-assistance/fns-responds-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers>).

Note: Focus reflects the primary target or goal of the waiver, either improving children’s access to meals or providing flexibility in Child Nutrition Program administration.

Appendix A. COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers

- ^a Initial authorization date reflects the date the first waiver of this type was authorized for use.
- ^b Expiration date reflects the expiration date of the final waiver extension.
- ^c Expiration date reflects 30 days after the end of the public health emergency.

Exhibit A.2. COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers authorized for use from March through September 2020 and not extended through SY 2020–2021

Waiver name	Full waiver policy memo name	Initial authorization date	Focus	Description of waiver
Afterschool Activity Requirements in NSLP/CACFP	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #3: Nationwide Waiver of the Activity Requirement in Afterschool Care Child Nutrition Programs	March 20, 2020	Access	Allowed after-school meals and snacks to be served outside the standard after-school setting
60-Day Reporting Requirements	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #12: Nationwide Waiver of 60 Day Reporting Requirements for January and February 2020	April 1, 2020	Administrative	Provided new deadline for 60-day reporting requirements
School Wellness Policy Assessments	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #18: Nationwide Waiver of Local School Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments in the NSLP and SBP	April 23, 2020	Administrative	Provided a new first triennial assessment deadline
CACFP Annual Review Requirements for State agencies	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #20: Nationwide Waiver of Annual Review Requirements for State Agencies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program	April 24, 2020	State administrative	Provided flexibility for conducting annual reviews of CACFP sites
SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations	COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #21: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Unanticipated School Closure Operations	April 27, 2020	Administrative	Allowed local program operators to continue operating SSO and SFSP under unanticipated school closure requirements in May and June 2020 without meeting the administrative requirements for operating these programs in the summer

Source: Child Nutrition COVID-19 Waivers (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-disaster-assistance/fns-responds-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers>).

Note: Focus reflects the primary target or goal of the waiver, either improving children’s access to meals or providing flexibility in Child Nutrition Program administration.

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Appendix B: Data Collection Methods and Data Quality

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Data collection for the second year of the School Meals Operations Study included conducting two surveys and obtaining administrative records data. All 67 State agencies in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that administered NSLP, SBP, SSO/SFSP, and CACFP⁹ completed a survey and provided administrative data. In some States, a single agency completed these data collection activities. In other States, the data were provided by multiple agencies. A nationally representative sample of SFAs also completed a survey. This appendix provides information about the data collection process and the limitations of the data.

I. State agency survey data collection

The State agency survey was administered as a web survey from December 2021 through March 2022.

A. State agency survey content

The State agency survey collected information on the FFCRA statutory reporting requirements for the five COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers that FNS authorized for use during SY 2020–2021. To satisfy reporting requirements for extensions of the nationwide waivers that were covered in the first State agency survey (conducted in spring 2021), the second State agency survey also collected information on changes in waiver use since September 2020 for the 32 nationwide waiver extensions that were authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 or summer 2021.

FFCRA requires each State agency that oversees the Child Nutrition Programs and uses a nationwide waiver to report on the use of each waiver by the State agency and local program operators, including a description of whether and how each waiver resulted in improved services to children (U.S. Congress 2020). Three waiver extensions authorized during SY 2020–2021 had additional reporting requirements. FNS guidance instructed State agencies to report on the following for each waiver or extension:

- For the extension of the Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility, how new meal sites were selected to serve children who were previously eligible or newly eligible for program benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19
- For the extension of the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children, plans taken to ensure that meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals were not distributed to any child
- For the extension of the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs, information on when and where this waiver was in effect and for what food components

Full participation in the School Meals Operations study satisfied State agencies' reporting requirements for the nationwide waivers and waiver extensions. State agencies were required to respond to all survey questions about the waivers. Questions included a response option for "don't know." The survey also included questions about the use of emergency funding available to local program operators through the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs and about the challenges State agencies experienced during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021.

⁹ This study did not collect information on CACFP operations in adult day care centers, given its focus on Child Nutrition Programs.

B. State agency survey data quality

State agencies generally provided substantive answers to the survey questions. Across all State agencies, respondents selected “don’t know” as a response for 14 percent of survey items. Like the first survey, the prevalence of “don’t know” responses varied greatly by State agency, survey section, and survey question. The section of the survey containing questions about the At-Risk Afterschool Area Eligibility waiver and At-Risk Afterschool Area Eligibility waiver extension had the highest prevalence of “don’t know” responses (26 percent). The survey section on emergency funding had the lowest prevalence of “don’t know” responses (3 percent).

Respondents were generally able to find a response that fit their situation in the options provided. Across the survey, respondents entered an open-ended response in the “other-specify” field for 13 percent of survey items (respondents entered “other-specify” responses for less than 10 percent of survey items in the first State agency survey). Questions about methods used under the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children had the highest prevalence of “other-specify” responses at 29 percent. There was a similar prevalence in use of “other-specify” response options for questions about challenges faced during the process of calculating and disbursing Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program payments and approaches used to target new meal sites under the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver.

Survey data collected from State agencies on the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver had certain limitations, primarily due to incomplete data. In the survey, State agencies that collected required data on meal components waived in each Child Nutrition Program by local program operators using the waiver were asked to submit a file with that data. Those able to submit a file skipped a set of survey questions on the meal components waived. As State agencies submitted their files, the study team reviewed the files for completeness and conducted follow-up as needed. The extent to which the required data were provided by State agencies varied, which affected data completeness and quality. Between 9 percent and 16 percent of State agencies with local program operators that used the waiver had incomplete data on which meal components were waived, depending upon the Child Nutrition Program.

II. SFA survey data collection

The SFA survey was administered as a web survey from February through April 2022. The survey was fielded to 1,268 SFAs. A nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs completed the survey (86.3 percent of selected SFAs).

A. SFA survey content

The SFA survey gathered information on Child Nutrition Programs used to provide meal services during SY 2020–2021 and October through December 2021, as well as how SFA operations and finances were affected by the pandemic, including any effects on FSMC contracts. The survey also captured data from SFAs on the COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers authorized for use during SY 2020–2021 and summer 2021.

B. SFA survey data quality

Overall, SFAs generally provided answers to the survey questions. Across all SFAs, missing responses accounted for 10 percent of survey items overall. The prevalence of missing responses varied by survey

section, with the highest prevalence of missing responses (13 percent) occurring in the section on financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on SFAs. The survey section on FSMC contracts had the lowest prevalence of missing responses (0.4 percent). The study team conducted a nonresponse bias analysis to assess the potential for nonresponse bias and adjusted the weights for nonresponse.

III. Administrative data collection

The administrative data collection began on March 1, 2022. Most State agencies provided data by the end of May 2022, and all State agencies provided data by early July 2022.

A. Administrative data content

Each month, State agencies report to FNS their Child Nutrition Program participation data aggregated at the State level. State agencies report NSLP, SBP, and SSO data on the FNS-10, Report of School Program Operations; SFSP data on the FNS-418, Report of the Summer Food Service Program for Children; and CACFP data on the FNS-44, Report of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. These data were the basis of the administrative data this study requested from State agencies, although the study requested data aggregated at the site or local program operator level, depending upon the data available at the State agency.

The administrative data collected during the second year of this study included school-level FNS-10 data, site-level FNS-418 data, and outlet-level FNS-44 data. All data covered FY 2021, or October 2020 through September 2021. When data were not available from State agencies at these levels, the study team collected SFA-level FNS-10 data, sponsor-level FNS-418 data, and institution-level FNS-44 data.

In addition to the data elements regularly collected on these forms, the data collection instruments included requests for identifying information and key characteristics of each school, site, outlet or SFA, sponsor, or institution and data consistent with what was reported to FNS in the remarks section of these forms, from March through September 2020. Specifically, as in the first year of the study, FNS memo SP-16-2020, CACFP 10-2020, and SFSP 09-2020 required that certain information on schools, sites, and outlets operating during the pandemic be provided in the remarks section of the FNS-10, FNS-418, and FNS-44 for the monthly data collections beginning with March 2020.¹⁰

B. Administrative data quality

State agencies were generally able to provide the requested administrative data. The level of disaggregation and level of completeness varied, although most State agencies provided some or all of the requested data at the lower level of disaggregation for each form—school, site, or outlet—and more State agencies were able to provide data at the lower level of disaggregation than in the first year of the study.

From April through October 2022, the study team reviewed the completeness of the administrative data and communicated with State agencies to request missing data and clarify data elements and inconsistencies as needed. As in the first year of the study, in Year 2 some State agencies were unable to provide certain data elements, which affected the completeness of the data. The data elements most

¹⁰ Each month States were required to report the following in the remarks section of each form: For the FNS-10, the number of NSLP/SBP sites and number of SSO sites that provided meals or snacks. For the FNS-418, the number of sites operating under COVID-19 waivers. For the FNS-44, the number of center-based sites that offered childcare, the number of center-based sites that offered meals only, the number of home-based sites that offered childcare, and the number of home-based sites that offered meals only.

commonly missing were (1) on the FNS-10 and FNS-418, an indicator of whether the SSO or SFSP site operated at a school or non-school location under COVID-19 waivers; (2) on the FNS-418, an indicator of whether a site was made area eligible under the Area Eligibility waiver; (3) on the FNS-44, indicators of whether center-based sites offered at-risk meals under the Area Eligibility waiver and information identifying day care outlets that provided child care or only served meals during COVID-19.

Data on average daily meals and average daily attendance also were frequently missing across the forms or determined to be inaccurate, based on FNS instructions for calculating these data elements. Although FNS does not collect data on the actual number of children participating in the programs from State agencies each month, FNS requires State agencies to report on average daily meals or attendance in each program. FNS uses these data as a proxy for children participating. As a result, these data elements are key to addressing the research questions related to student and child participation. To address the missing or inaccurate data received from State agencies, the study team produced calculated versions of these variables for the purposes of improving the quality and reliability of the analysis.¹¹

¹¹ Student and child participation were calculated by dividing the meal count by operating days. If the State agency did not provide operating days but did provide average daily meals or attendance, student and child participation was set equal to the State agency-provided average daily meals or attendance.

Appendix C: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter II

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Exhibit C.1. Percentage of SFAs that reported most students received instruction in school buildings for the majority of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	Most students received instruction in school buildings for majority of the year	Most students did not receive instruction in school buildings for majority of the year	Don't Know	No response	n
All SFAs	74.0	20.8	5.2	0.0	1,094
SFA size (enrollment)					
Very small (1–499)	76.9	18.1	4.9	0.0	398
Small (500–2,499)	77.1	17.0*	5.9	0.0	329
Medium (2,500–4,999)	65.9*	30.1*	4.0	0.0	169
Large (5,000–99,999)	59.1*	35.6*	5.3	0.0	171
Very large (100,000+)	40.7*	55.6*	3.7	0.0	27
SFA poverty level					
< 60%	79.7*	14.4*	5.9	0.0	745
60% +	62.5*	33.7*	3.8	0.0	349
SFA urbanicity					
Suburban	64.0*	30.4*	5.6	0.0	319
Urban	55.1*	38.5*	6.4	0.0	231
Rural	86.1*	9.3*	4.6	0.0	544

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA's geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs reporting students received instruction in school buildings by the total number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting instruction in school buildings between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exhibit C.2. Percentage of SFAs that reported all, some, or no schools provided instruction to all students in school buildings for all or part of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	All or some schools had all students attending full time, in school buildings <i>all</i> year	All or some schools had all students attending full time, in school buildings for <i>part</i> of the year	No schools had all students attending full time, in school buildings for any part of the year	Don't know	No response	n
All SFAs	40.8	41.8	15.1	5.4	0.0	1,094
SFA size (enrollment)						
Very small (1–499)	47.8*	35.9*	11.6*	7.1	0.0	398
Small (500–2,499)	40.5	42.1	16.3	5.1	0.0	329
Medium (2,500–4,999)	32.5*	49.2	18.0	2.5*	0.0	169
Large (5,000–99,999)	20.6*	58.3*	23.5*	2.9	0.0	171
Very large (100,000+)	22.2*	70.4*	11.1	0.0*	0.0	27
SFA poverty level						
< 60%	47.6*	37.4*	12.4*	5.3	0.0	745
60% +	27.2*	50.8*	20.7*	5.8	0.0	349
SFA urbanicity						
Suburban	33.2*	48.1*	19.8*	4.3	0.0	319
Urban	31.7*	47.8	17.2	7.8	0.0	231
Rural	47.9*	36.6*	12.1*	5.0	0.0	544

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA's geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs reporting students attending or not attending full time in school buildings by the total number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic. SFAs could select all applicable responses.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting instruction in school buildings between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exhibit C.3. Percentage of SFAs that reported all, some, or no schools provided instruction to all students using a hybrid model all for part of the year in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	All or some schools used the hybrid model <i>all</i> year	All or some schools used the hybrid model for <i>part</i> of the year	No schools used the hybrid model	Don't know	No response	n
All SFAs	32.5	42.9	21.4	6.4	0.0	1,094
SFA size (enrollment)						
Very small (1–499)	25.0*	34.2*	33.5*	9.3*	0.0	398
Small (500–2,499)	38.5*	45.2	15.5*	4.9	0.0	329
Medium (2,500–4,999)	41.8*	47.2	8.6*	3.6	0.0	169
Large (5,000–99,999)	33.9	66.9*	4.0*	2.2*	0.0	171
Very large (100,000+)	55.6*	44.4	3.7*	0.0*	0.0	27
SFA poverty level						
< 60%	30.5	41.8	23.8*	7.0	0.0	745
60% +	36.5	45.0	16.6*	5.2	0.0	349
SFA urbanicity						
Suburban	36.7	50.1*	12.0*	3.3*	0.0	319
Urban	26.4*	48.5	24.0	7.2	0.0	231
Rural	32.9	37.2*	24.8*	7.6	0.0	544

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA’s geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs reporting schools using the hybrid model for all or part of the year by the total number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic. SFAs could select all applicable responses.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting instruction provided using a hybrid model between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exhibit C.4. Percentage of SFAs that reported some or all students received instruction in school buildings during each month of SY 2020-2021

Month	Percentage of SFAs
July 2020	6.1
August 2020	51.6
September 2020	75.1
October 2020	77.2
November 2020	77.5
December 2020	74.9
January 2021	79.3
February 2021	81.9
March 2021	84.5
April 2021	87.1
May 2021	87.1
June 2021	50.3
None - no students received instruction in school buildings in SY 2020-2021	2.9
No response	0.7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported instruction in school buildings in each month by the total number of SFAs. SFAs could select all applicable responses.

Exhibit C.5. Percentage of SFAs providing instruction to most students in school buildings for the majority of the time from October through December 2021

Instruction was provided in school buildings for the majority of the time	Percentage of SFAs
Yes	90.7
No	5.8
Don't know	3.6
No response	0.1

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs providing instruction to most students in school buildings for the majority of the time from October through December 2021 by the total number of SFAs.

Exhibit C.6. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide meals to children in SY 2020-2021

Method	Used for in-school meal service	Used for meal service outside of school buildings	Did not use	Don't know
Cafeteria service	75.9	13.9	18.8	1.2
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	13.7	52.2	31.5	3.4
Meals in the classroom	58.7	2.6	35.2	2.3
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	14.3	47.7	35.7	2.5
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	36	17.9	48.3	2.3
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	8.3	31.7	54.3	3.5
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	8.6	29.7	56.3	3.6
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	7.7	29.6	57.4	3.8
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	7.5	28.1	59.1	4.2
Distribution of frozen meals	5	24	65	4.1
Distribution of weekend meals	7.2	19.9	67.2	4.3
Delivery with stops at individual homes	4	19.4	69.2	4
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	4.8	16.3	71.5	4
Distribution of bulk food packages	3.3	15.4	73.4	4.3
Other home delivery method	1.5	6.5	81.8	5.5
Other ^a	1.0	0.2	46.7	10.8
No response	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method and location of school meals served by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable methods for both in-school meal service and meal service outside of school buildings.

^a SFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.7. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021

Method used to provide the most meals to children	Percentage
Cafeteria service	59.4
Meals in the classroom	31.7
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	19.6
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	14.8
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	12.1
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	11.4
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	8.4
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	5.7
Delivery with stops at individual homes	5.1
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	4.4
Distribution of weekend meals	3.4
Distribution of bulk food packages	2.2
Distribution of frozen meals	1.2
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	1.1
Other home delivery method	0.5
Other ^a	1.4
Don't know	0.0
No response	1.2

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method was used to provide the most meals by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three methods.

^aSFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.8. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA size

Method used to provide the most meals to children	SFA size				
	Very small (1-499)	Small (500-2,499)	Medium (2,500-4,999)	Large (5,000-99,999)	Very large (100,000+)
Cafeteria service	56.5	65.4*	54.4	55.3	59.3
Meals in the classroom	29.6	31.4	39.5*	34	18.5
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	9.8*	20.7	39.5*	36.0*	51.9*
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	9.9*	17.5	14.9	25.2*	29.6
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	9.2*	11.7	18.4*	18.9*	33.3*
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	6.2*	13.7	15.8	20.4*	18.5
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	7.2	7.3	12.1	13	14.8
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	4.7	4.8	9.5	9.3	18.5
Delivery with stops at individual homes	4.7	5.7	7.1	3.2	3.7
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	3.1*	3.5	7.5	10.5*	3.7
Distribution of weekend meals	2.1*	3.9	3.5	7.1*	7.4
Distribution of bulk food packages	1.6	1.9	4.2	3.4	11.1
Distribution of frozen meals	0.8	1.3	1.8	2.4	0.0*
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	1	1.5	0.6	0.0*	0.0*
Other home delivery method	0.5	0.3	1.1	0.5	0.0*
Other ^b	3.0*	0.3*	0.0*	0.0*	0.0*
Don't know	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No response	0.8	2.0	0.6	0.5	0.0*

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method was used to provide the most meals by the number of SFAs within each SFA size that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three methods.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting each meal providing method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a SFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.9. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA poverty level

Method used to provide the most meals to children	SFA poverty level	
	< 60%	60% +
Cafeteria service	65.4*	47.3*
Meals in the classroom	29.4*	36.2*
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	16.5*	25.8*
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	13.9	16.6
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	8.5*	19.1*
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	9.8*	14.7*
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	5.9*	13.3*
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	4.5*	8.2*
Delivery with stops at individual homes	3.9*	7.6*
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	3.6	6.2
Distribution of weekend meals	2.9	4.5
Distribution of bulk food packages	2.2	2.1
Distribution of frozen meals	1.5	0.8
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	0.4*	2.3*
Other home delivery method	0.4	0.7
Other ^b	2.0*	0.3*
Don't know	0.0	0.0
No response	1.4	0.7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method was used to provide the most meals by the number of SFAs within each SFA poverty level that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three methods.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each meal counting method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a SFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.10. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported specific methods to provide the most meals to children in SY 2020-2021, by SFA urbanicity

Method used to provide the most meals to children	SFA urbanicity		
	Suburban	Urban	Rural
Cafeteria service	50.4*	38.9*	71.6*
Meals in the classroom	30.8	37.6*	29.7
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	29.0*	22.1	14.1*
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	18.1	17	12.4*
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	16.1*	20.6*	6.8*
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	17.1*	15.8*	7.0*
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	11.1	10.4	6.3*
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	8.7*	5.5	4.4*
Delivery with stops at individual homes	3.9	4.5	5.9
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	4.5	3.7	4.7
Distribution of weekend meals	3.3	5.5	2.6
Distribution of bulk food packages	2.2	3.4	1.7
Distribution of frozen meals	2.3	0.5	1
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	0.7	1.7	1
Other home delivery method	1.1	0.6	0.2
Other ^a	1.3	2.1	1.2
Don't know	0.0	0.0	0.0
No response	2.3	0.8	0.7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA’s geographic location.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method was used to provide the most meals by the number of SFAs within each SFA urbanicity that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three methods.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting each meal providing method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a SFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.11. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each method to provide meals to children from October through December 2021

Method	All SFAs
Cafeteria service	88.1
Meals in the classroom	43.6
Grab-and-go tables or kiosks in school buildings	29.3
Curbside pickup/drive-through services	14.8
Allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals without children present	11.3
Distribution of a full week (5 days) of meals at one time	8.1
Walk-up sites outside of schools, centers, or other buildings	7.2
Distribution of shelf-stable meals	5.9
Distribution of 2-3 days of meals at one time	5.7
Distribution of frozen meals	5.0
Distribution of weekend meals	3.8
Delivery with stops at individual homes	3.6
Distribution of bulk food packages	2.7
Mobile sites at which a bus or van delivered meals at preset times	2.2
Other home delivery method	1.5
Other ^a	1.1
No response	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,078 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in October through December 2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each method by the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program from October through December 2021 within each SFA characteristic. SFAs could select all applicable methods.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting each meal service method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a SFAs that indicated using other methods to provide meals to children reported that they were either a detention facility or residential housing.

Exhibit C.12. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each meal counting method in SY 2020-2021

Meal counting method	Percentage of SFAs
Standard point-of-service system	
Used for in-school meal service	54.0
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	10.1
Did not use	38.8
Don't know	1.9
No response	3.6
Mobile technology (for example, laptop, tablet, or cell phone apps)	
Used for in-school meal service	12.8
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	7.3
Did not use	73.7
Don't know	3.8
No response	5.9
Paper rosters	
Used for in-school meal service	41.7
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	33.9
Did not use	34.5
Don't know	2.6
No response	3.4
Clickers	
Used for in-school meal service	11.7
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	6.5
Did not use	75.8
Don't know	3.9
No response	6.1
Circle, tally, or tick sheets, or another similar form	
Used for in-school meal service	44.1
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	38.0
Did not use	36.0
Don't know	3.1
No response	3.4
Other counting method^a	
Used for in-school meal service	1.5
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	1.3
Don't know	6.9
No response	18.7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey.

Note: 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each meal counting method by the total number of SFAs within each SFA poverty level that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable meal counting methods and indicate the method was used for both in-school meal service and meal service outside of school buildings. SFAs may have changed methods during the school year or used a combination of methods.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each meal counting method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^aOther reported meal counting methods included Google Docs, tray counting and production records.

Exhibit C.13. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage that reported using each meal counting method from October through December 2021

Meal counting method	Percentage
Standard point-of-service system	
Used for in-school meal service	64.8
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	4.7
Did not use	30.1
Don't know	1.4
No response	3.3
Mobile technology^a	
Used for in-school meal service	15.2
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	2.3
Did not use	74.5
Don't know	2.6
No response	6.5
Paper rosters	
Used for in-school meal service	40.8
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	10.9
Did not use	47.3
Don't know	2.1
No response	4.7
Clickers	
Used for in-school meal service	11.6
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	2.9
Did not use	77.4
Don't know	3.3
No response	6.4
Circle, tally, or tick sheets, or another similar form	
Used for in-school meal service	39.8
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	11.7
Did not use	48.5
Don't know	2.6
No response	4.8
Other counting method^b	
Used for in-school meal service	1.2
Used for meal service outside of school buildings	0.4
Don't know	4.1
No response	16.1

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 1,078 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in October through December 2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each meal counting method by the number of SFAs within each SFA size that reported using a Child Nutrition Program from October through December 2021. SFAs could select all applicable meal counting methods and indicate the method was used for both in-school meal service and meal service outside of school buildings. SFAs may have changed methods or used a combination of methods during October through December 2021.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each meal counting method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^aExamples of mobile technology include laptops, tablets, and mobile telephone applications.

^bOther reported meal counting methods included Google Docs, tray counting and production records.

Exhibit C.14. Number of local program operators participating in Child Nutrition Programs, October 2020 through September 2021

	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Jan. 2021	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Apr. 2021	May 2021	Jun. 2021	Jul. 2021	Aug. 2021	Sep. 2021
NSLP	5,239	4,938	4,688	4,872	4,969	5,091	5,192	5,078	2,790	904	3,363	4,313
SBP	3,342	2,883	2,727	2,753	2,756	2,774	2,781	2,755	1,660	509	1,577	1,733
SSO	5,889	6,126	6,104	6,163	6,185	6,208	6,212	6,235	5,110	3,585	11,216	14,086
FNS-10 program type unknown	837	1,687	1,603	1,656	1,653	1,674	1,677	1,680	906	488	1,313	1,419
SFSP	7,754	7,936	7,968	8,049	8,097	8,141	8,142	8,219	7,904	6,343	4,175	249
Total^a	19,207	20,102	19,789	20,117	20,228	20,397	20,474	20,490	16,302	11,059	18,528	17,983

Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data from fiscal year 2021.

Notes: All 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands provided SFA- or sponsor-level data included in this Exhibit. The number of SFAs (NSLP and SBP) and sponsors (SSO and SFSP) operating during each month is calculated for each program. If the same SFA or sponsor operated in multiple programs, it is counted twice in the total. Counts of SFAs or sponsors for which the data reported on the FNS-10 lacked information about whether meals were provided through NSLP, SBP, or SSO are included in the "FNS-10 program type unknown" row.

^aBecause some schools participated in NSLP, SBP, and SSO, the totals may not equal the sum of the rows above.

Exhibit C.15. Number of children participating in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2020 through September 2021

	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Jan. 2021	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Apr. 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Jul. 2021	Aug. 2021	Sep. 2021
NSLP	1,677,804	1,348,840	1,279,291	1,319,453	1,431,279	1,486,085	1,587,630	1,468,355	471,740	40,686	1,793,584	2,208,865
SBP	1,174,825	939,688	862,717	854,562	926,932	966,953	972,746	933,140	328,788	51,538	1,028,155	1,280,791
SSO	5,124,980	5,538,921	5,302,226	5,278,303	5,758,002	6,324,611	6,865,675	6,927,406	3,889,339	1,656,918	15,967,446	21,265,731
FNS-10 Program Type Unknown	556,765	1,032,504	867,936	940,751	1,252,587	1,181,352	1,230,667	1,172,477	339,718	136,599	1,103,392	1,592,827
SFSP	8,378,087	8,584,403	8,144,346	8,485,017	9,150,053	10,207,990	10,568,362	10,663,084	7,242,588	4,335,535	3,594,765	1,528,592
Total^a	15,723,394	16,341,600	15,407,528	15,825,956	17,333,978	18,924,690	19,965,801	20,028,340	11,986,224	6,180,538	22,124,454	26,178,579

Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data, fiscal year 2021.

Note: 53 States provided SFA- sponsor- or institution-level data included in this exhibit. Minnesota did not provide operating days or average daily meals and is therefore excluded from this exhibit. Child participation equals the meal count for the meal type with the most claims divided by operating days. If the State did not provide operating days but did provide average daily meals, child participation equals the State-provided average daily meals. Child participation data reported on the FNS-10 that lacked information about whether meals were provided through NSLP, SBP, or SSO are included in the "FNS-10 program type unknown" row. Percent change was calculated by dividing monthly child participation by child participation in the previous month.

^a Total includes SSO, SFSP, and either NSLP or SBP, based on which program had a larger number of children participating that month.

Exhibit C.16. Number of children participating in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2019 through September 2020

	Oct. 2019	Nov. 2019	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	May. 2020	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Sep. 2020
NSLP	26,127,515	26,343,519	25,886,803	26,018,212	26,010,135	23,153,369	112,044	108,506	78,417	196,192	3,394,458	3,043,962
SBP	18,075,724	17,002,253	16,091,008	17,562,711	17,275,325	12,628,537	132,243	151,763	132,872	209,393	1,932,626	1,704,828
SSO	0	0	0	0	0	5,919,772	4,182,375	3,870,621	2,200,973	1,280,534	1,527,099	4,071,976
SFSP ^a	0	0	0	0	0	3,891,216	6,244,826	6,807,929	5,185,798	4,979,056	4,373,655	7,417,713
Total^b	30,967,064	30,025,333	29,263,309	30,833,104	30,352,100	34,403,899	10,571,808	10,842,270	7,528,854	6,495,985	9,368,604	14,679,902

Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data, fiscal year 2020.

Note: N = 54 (all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Child participation equals the meal count for the meal type with the most claims divided by operating days. If the State did not provide operating days but did provide average daily meals, child participation equals the State-provided average daily meals. Pennsylvania did not provide operating days or average daily meals for SFSP and is therefore excluded from SFSP participation data. If an SFA shifted operations between NSLP and SSO in a given month, children served by that SFA are only included in the SSO participation data for that month.

^aThe number of children participating in SFSP from March through September 2020 reported here differs from the numbers in the School Meals Operations Study Year 1 report, which showed between 3,887,466 and 7,414,986 children participating in SFSP each month between March and September. After publication of the Year 1 report, the method used to tabulate the number of SFSP meals served in Minnesota was revised to sum multiple claim revisions instead of using only the claim with the largest meal count, resulting in small changes to the number of children participating in SFSP.

^bTotal includes SSO, SFSP, and either NSLP or SBP, based on which program had a larger number of children participating that month.

Exhibit C.17. Number of meals and snacks/supplements served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2020 through September 2021

	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Jan. 2021	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Apr. 2021	May 2021	Jun. 2021	Jul. 2021	Aug. 2021	Sep. 2021
NSLP	38,393,020	27,073,280	24,490,440	30,684,634	32,430,193	38,353,817	42,159,750	37,763,281	8,924,948	1,821,864	33,165,037	53,807,367
SBP	21,071,597	14,599,241	12,830,595	15,409,827	16,286,382	19,024,567	19,295,217	17,730,639	3,555,750	857,065	15,858,585	24,903,712
SSO	188,020,634	172,943,623	155,824,431	177,091,759	182,229,453	232,334,685	233,488,181	236,575,382	107,505,734	58,479,955	300,097,589	659,409,729
FNS-10 Program Type Unknown	17,412,344	28,897,349	22,024,531	27,312,075	29,373,709	38,182,706	39,814,403	35,280,148	8,486,348	4,196,000	17,290,446	49,408,403
SFSP	313,124,786	276,138,037	256,030,062	292,944,878	297,841,871	378,809,553	378,310,313	370,994,126	204,882,762	154,015,889	104,445,488	45,356,551
Total	578,022,381	519,651,530	471,200,059	543,443,173	558,161,608	706,705,328	713,067,864	698,343,576	333,355,542	219,370,773	470,857,145	832,885,762

Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10, FNS-418, and FNS-44 data from fiscal year 2021.

Notes: N = 54 (all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Meal counts for which the data reported on the FNS-10 lacked information about whether the meals were provided through NSLP, SBP, or SSO are included in the "FNS-10 program type unknown" row.

Exhibit C.18. Number of meals and snacks/supplements served in NSLP, SBP, SSO, and SFSP October 2019 through September 2020

	Oct. 2019	Nov. 2019	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	May 2020	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Sep. 2020
NSLP	597,494,228	467,630,919	410,995,746	523,100,805	505,484,748	234,240,788	3,027,758	2,831,666	2,523,832	3,881,886	37,296,414	62,080,661
SBP	297,412,630	232,656,530	199,904,912	252,397,496	247,581,410	111,681,258	2,372,161	2,205,968	1,982,874	3,361,931	21,687,739	33,961,741
SSO	0	0	0	0	108,045,756	183,902,267	178,607,962	116,847,972	63,287,442	44,144,875	127,341,085	
SFSP ^a	0	0	0	0	0	75,129,703	235,635,040	243,482,688	191,229,138	188,496,693	135,847,004	216,962,714
Total	894,906,858	700,287,449	610,900,658	775,498,301	753,066,158	529,097,505	424,937,226	427,128,284	312,583,816	259,027,952	238,976,032	440,346,201

Source: School Meals Operations Study, disaggregated FNS-10 and FNS-418 data, fiscal year 2020.

Note: N = 54 (all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

^aThe number meals and supplements served in SFSP from March through September 2020 reported here differs from the numbers in the School Meals Operations Study Year 1 report, which showed between 58,526,396 and 199,057,623 meals served in SFSP each month between March and September. After publication of the Year 1 report, the method used to tabulate the number of SFSP meals served in Minnesota was revised to sum multiple claim revisions instead of using only the claim with the largest meal count, resulting in small changes to the number of meals reported.

Appendix D: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter III

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Exhibit D.1. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA size

COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver	All SFAs	SFA size (enrollment)				
		Very small (1-499)	Small (500-2,499)	Medium (2,500-4,999)	Large (5,000-99,999)	Very large (100,000+)
SFA did not use any COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers in SY 2020-2021	10.0	19.7*	2.8*	4.6*	0.5*	0.0*
#56 or 59: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021	68.9	55.8*	74.2*	82.6*	90.7*	85.2*
#25, 35, 47, 55, or 62: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children	62.7	41.5*	70.9*	87.4*	97.1*	100.0*
#26, 36, 38, 45, 53, 63, or 70: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs	62.2	50.2*	68.2*	74.1*	79.4*	85.2*
#22, 33, 44, 54, or 61: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs	60.0	39.2*	67.6*	83.3*	96.0*	100.0*
#17, 23, 34, 50, or 66: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the Child Nutrition Programs	42.8	25.8*	46.3	63.4*	79.7*	88.9*
#37: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP for SY 2020-2021	36.9	23.4*	40.8	49.1*	67.0*	63.0*
#18: Nationwide Waiver of Local Schools Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments in the NSLP and SBP	25.7	15.5*	27.7	35.2*	51.9*	29.6
#29: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs	22.3	16.5*	22.1	27.1	41.9*	37
#32, 46, 52, or 60: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers	21.2	10.5*	20.2	35.9*	54.1*	70.4*
#14, 48, or 64: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option	20.6	12.5*	19.4	33.4*	45.0*	51.9*
#16, 51, or 67: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program	19.4	12.7*	21.2	30.0*	30.2*	51.9*
#15, 49, or 65: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	15.8	9.4*	14.2	29.6*	33.9*	37.0*

COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver	All SFAs	SFA size (enrollment)				
		Very small (1-499)	Small (500-2,499)	Medium (2,500-4,999)	Large (5,000-99,999)	Very large (100,000+)
#30 or 42: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for Sponsoring Organizations in the Summer Food Service Program	15.1	7.7*	15.0	29.7*	31.8*	51.9*
#6 or 82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the NSLP and SBP	12.4	9.9*	11.5	13.7	23.6*	48.1*
#72: Nationwide Waiver for Selected Child Nutrition Program Reporting Requirements	8.0	8.5	5.7*	9.8	12.7	7.4
#57 or 69: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	7.9	4.6*	7.3	12.0	19.6*	11.1
#19 or 71: Nationwide Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration in the National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program	5.5	4.7	6.3	4.2	7.2	3.7
#58 or 68: Nationwide Waiver of Area Eligibility in the Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Care Component	2.3	0.3*	0.6*	6.4*	11.8*	44.4*
No response	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver by the total number of SFAs within each SFA size that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waivers.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.2. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA poverty level

COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver	All SFAs	SFA poverty level	
		< 60%	60% +
SFA did not use any COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers in SY 2020-2021	10.0	11.3	7.5
#56 or 59: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021	68.9	67.9	70.9
#25, 35, 47, 55, or 62: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children	62.7	59.5*	69.1*
#26, 36, 38, 45, 53, 63, or 70: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs	62.2	62.2	62.2
#22, 33, 44, 54, or 61: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs	60.0	56.6*	66.7*
#17, 23, 34, 50, or 66: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the Child Nutrition Programs	42.8	39.1*	50.2*
#37: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP for SY 2020-2021	36.9	35.3	40.3
#18: Nationwide Waiver of Local Schools Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments in the NSLP and SBP	25.7	23.1*	31.0*
#29: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs	22.3	21.8	23.2
#32, 46, 52, or 60: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers	21.2	25.9*	11.9*
#14, 48, or 64: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option	20.6	22.3	17.2
#16, 51, or 67: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program	19.4	18.8	20.6
#15, 49, or 65: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	15.8	15.1	17.3
#30 or 42: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for Sponsoring Organizations in the Summer Food Service Program	15.1	13.6	18.3
#6 or 82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the NSLP and SBP	12.4	6.8*	23.5*
#72: Nationwide Waiver for Selected Child Nutrition Program Reporting Requirements	8.0	7.4	9.4
#57 or 69: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	7.9	8.0	7.7
#19 or 71: Nationwide Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration in the National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program	5.5	5.0	6.5
#58 or 68: Nationwide Waiver of Area Eligibility in the Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Care Component	2.3	1.7	3.5
No response	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver by the total number of SFAs within each SFA poverty level that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waivers.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each meal counting method between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.3. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver during SY 2020-2021, by SFA urbanicity

COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver	All SFAs	SFA urbanicity		
		Suburban	Urban	Rural
SFA did not use any COVID-19 Child Nutrition Nationwide Waivers in SY 2020-2021	10.0	5.4*	17.7*	9.2
#56 or 59: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021	68.9	80.6*	62.0*	66.0*
#25, 35, 47, 55, or 62: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children	62.7	74.7*	55.6*	59.8*
#26, 36, 38, 45, 53, 63, or 70: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs	62.2	68.3*	52.5*	63.1
#22, 33, 44, 54, or 61: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs	60.0	72.0*	55.2	56.1*
#17, 23, 34, 50, or 66: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the Child Nutrition Programs	42.8	53.3*	42.2	38.0*
#37: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP for SY 2020-2021	36.9	37.9	30.1*	39.2
#18: Nationwide Waiver of Local Schools Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments in the NSLP and SBP	25.7	31.0*	32.1*	20.7*
#29: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs	22.3	34.9*	23.9	15.7*
#32, 46, 52, or 60: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers	21.2	32.8*	19.0	16.6*
#14, 48, or 64: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option	20.6	25.7*	22.4	17.5*
#16, 51, or 67: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program	19.4	15.0*	16.0	22.9*
#15, 49, or 65: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	15.8	13.3	13.4	17.9*
#30 or 42: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for Sponsoring Organizations in the Summer Food Service Program	15.1	16.2	13.2	15.4
#6 or 82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the NSLP and SBP	12.4	13.2	19.6*	9.2*
#72: Nationwide Waiver for Selected Child Nutrition Program Reporting Requirements	8.0	10.2	8.0	7.0
#57 or 69: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	7.9	9.9	8.2	6.9
#19 or 71: Nationwide Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration in the National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program	5.5	7.1	5.9	4.6
#58 or 68: Nationwide Waiver of Area Eligibility in the Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Care Component	2.3	3.3	4.1	1.1*
No response	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA's geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver by the total number of SFAs within each SFA urbanicity that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select all applicable COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waivers.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting using each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.4. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported each COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waiver was among top three most helpful during SY 2020-2021

Most helpful COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver	Percentage
#56 or 59: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021	50.0
#26, 36, 38, 45, 53, 63, or 70: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs	40.8
#22, 33, 44, 54, or 61: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs	38.1
#25, 35, 47, 55, or 62: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children	37.5
#17, 23, 34, 50, or 66: Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the Child Nutrition Programs	10.5
#37: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP for SY 2020-2021	8.9
#32, 46, 52, or 60: Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers	4.7
#16, 51, or 67: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the Summer Food Service Program	4.2
#18: Nationwide Waiver of Local Schools Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments in the NSLP and SBP	3.7
#14, 48, or 64: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in SFSP and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option	3.5
#6 or 82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the NSLP and SBP	1.7
#29: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs	1.6
#72: Nationwide Waiver for Selected Child Nutrition Program Reporting Requirements	1.5
#19 or 71: Nationwide Waiver of Food Service Management Contract Duration in the National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program	0.9
#30 or 42: Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements for Sponsoring Organizations in the Summer Food Service Program	0.7
#57 or 69: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Reimbursement for Meals Served Prior to Notification of Approval and Provide Flexibility for Pre-Approval Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	0.6
#15, 49, or 65: Nationwide Waiver to Waive First Week Site Visits in the Summer Food Service Program	0.4
#58 or 68: Nationwide Waiver of Area Eligibility in the Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Care Component	0.1
No response	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each COVID-19 Child Nutrition waiver was most helpful by total the number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. SFAs could select up to three waiver options.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.5. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each nationwide waiver newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021

Waiver	Number of State agencies	Percent of State Agencies	n
SFSP/SSO Operations – SSO	36	67	54
SFSP/SSO Operations – SFSP	51	94	54
CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility	49	89	55
Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements	54	96	56
CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP	49	88	56
Experienced SFSP Sponsors	48	89	54

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Sixty-seven State agencies administered at least one of the relevant Child Nutrition Programs in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands during this time period. By program, 56 State agencies administered NSLP and SBP; 54 administered SSO; 54 administered SFSP; and 55 administered CACFP.

Exhibit D.6. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waivers newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021 improved services to children in various ways, by waiver

	SFSP/SSO Operations – SSO	SFSP/SSO Operations – SFSP	CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility
Improved services to children			
Number of State agencies that used the waiver	36	51	49
Site Options			
Greater geographic distribution of sites	81	86	80
Increased number of sites	78	86	85
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	94	90	61
Meal Options			
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	92	88	68
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	83	84	54
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	83	73	44
Other			
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	92	90	73
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	94	94	90
Increased participation	89	84	90
Other^b			
Other: Eased meal delivery/increased access	6	6	5
Other: Reduced stigma of participation	6	2	n.a.
Other: Increased local program operators' administrative resources for providing meals	n.a.	2	n.a.
Other: Able to serve children supper and/or snack	n.a.	n.a.	7
Other: Served a wider age range of children	n.a.	n.a.	2
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	6	4	5
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the numbers of State agencies that reported each improvement by the total number of State agencies that used each program operations waiver.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.7. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each program operations waiver extension in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition Program

Waiver	NSLP #	NSLP %	SBP #	SPB %	SSO #	SSO %	SFSP #	SFSP %	CACFP #	CACFP %
Non-congregate	49	88	47	84	40	74	52	96	50	91
Meal Service Time Flexibility	49	88	48	86	40	74	52	96	48	87
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	49	88	47	84	38	70	53	98	49	89
Meal Pattern Flexibility	43	77	43	77	35	65	43	80	44	80
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	34	63	48	89	n.a.	n.a.
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	38	70	49	91	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	46	85	n.a.	n.a.
FSMC Contract Duration	38	68	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Sixty-seven State agencies administered at least one of the relevant Child Nutrition Programs in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands during this time period. Fifty-six State agencies oversaw NSLP and SBP, fifty-four oversaw SSO and SFSP, and fifty-five oversaw CACFP. The waivers included here were used by local program operators.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.8. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each program operations waiver extension in summer 2021

Waiver	SSO #	SSO %	SFSP #	SFSP %
Non-congregate	38	70	53	98
Meal Service Time Flexibility	38	70	53	98
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	35	65	49	91
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	n.a.	n.a.	44	81
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	37	69	52	96
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	35	65	47	87
Meal Pattern Flexibility	30	56	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Sixty-seven State agencies administered at least one of the relevant Child Nutrition Programs in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands during this time period. Fifty-four State agencies oversaw SSO and SFSP. The waivers included here were used by local program operators.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.9. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each waiver from March through September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program

Waiver	NSLP		SBP		SSO		SFSP		CACFP	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Meal Service Time Flexibility	44	79	43	77	40	71	53	98	52	95
Non-congregate	41	73	40	71	39	70	53	98	53	96
Afterschool Activity Requirements in NSLP/CACFP	31	55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	43	78
Meal Pattern Flexibility	38	68	38	68	36	64	42	78	42	76
Parent Pick-up	39	70	40	71	38	68	52	96	50	91
CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP	52	93	48	86	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
CACFP Monitoring for Sponsors	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	54	98
School Meals Onsite Monitoring - Revised	45	80	43	77	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	52	96	n.a.	n.a.
60-Day Reporting Requirements	30	54	27	48	n.a.	n.a.	7	13	37	67
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	34	61	47	87	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP First Week Site Visits	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	53	98	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP Offer vs. Serve Flexibilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	51	94	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	39	70	52	96	n.a.	n.a.
School Wellness Policy Assessments	42	75	38	68	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
NSLP/SFSP Food Service Management Contract Duration	31	55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	24	44	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	39	70	49	91	n.a.	n.a.
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	38	68	44	81	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Sixty-seven State agencies administered at least one of the relevant Child Nutrition Programs in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands during this time period. Fifty-six State agencies oversaw NSLP, SBP, and SSO, fifty-four oversaw SFSP, and fifty-five oversaw CACFP. The waivers included here were used by local program operators.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.10. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in NSLP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Waiver	More SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of SFAs used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	18	33	43	6	49
Meal Service Time Flexibility	24	29	39	8	49
FSMC Contract Duration	50	8	32	8	38
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	29	29	37	6	49
Meal Pattern Flexibility	42	28	26	5	43

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of SFAs that used the waiver type in the program during SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported SFAs used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.11. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SBP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Waiver	More SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of SFAs used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	23	30	40	6	47
Meal Service Time Flexibility	27	27	38	8	48
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	32	30	34	4	47
Meal Pattern Flexibility	42	28	26	5	43

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of SFAs that used the waiver type in the program during SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported SFAs used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.12. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SSO used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Waiver	More SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of SFAs used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	43	20	35	3	40
Meal Service Time Flexibility	38	20	43	0	40
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	53	5	39	3	38
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	47	18	32	3	38
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	44	6	50	0	34
Meal Pattern Flexibility	66	11	23	0	35

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of SFAs that used the waiver type in the program during SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported SFAs used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.13. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of sponsors in SFSP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Waiver	More sponsors used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer sponsors used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of sponsors used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	40	17	40	2	52
Meal Service Time Flexibility	40	17	40	2	52
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	61	0	35	4	49
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	48	2	0	13	46
SFSP Pre-approval Visits and Reimbursements	39	9	0	11	46
FSMC Contract Duration	49	3	37	11	35
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	43	13	42	2	53
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	44	2	52	2	48
Meal Pattern Flexibility	40	19	40	2	43

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of sponsors that used the waiver type in the program during SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported sponsors used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.14. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of institutions in CACFP used each program operations waiver type in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Waiver	More institutions used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer institutions used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of institutions used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	30	30	32	8	50
Meal Service Time Flexibility	27	29	35	8	48
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	33	33	31	4	49
Meal Pattern Flexibility	30	25	41	5	44

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported change in the number of institutions that used the waiver type in the program during SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported institutions used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.15. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of SFAs in SSO used each program operations waiver type in summer 2021 than in summer 2020

Waiver	More SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer SFAs used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of SFAs used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	34	18	39	8	38
Meal Service Time Flexibility	34	11	53	3	38
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	31	14	51	3	35
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	35	19	43	3	37
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	34	17	46	3	35
Meal Pattern Flexibility	57	13	0	7	30

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported change in the number of SFAs that used the waiver type in the program during summer 2021, as compared to summer 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported SFAs used the waiver type in the program in summer 2021.

Exhibit D.16. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of sponsors in SFSP used each program operations waiver type in summer 2021 than in summer 2020

Waiver	More sponsors used waiver in SY 2020-2021	Fewer sponsors used waiver in SY 2020-2021	About the same number of sponsors used the waiver in SY 2020-2021	Don't know	n
Non-congregate	28	30	38	4	53
Meal Service Time Flexibility	36	19	42	4	53
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	43	16	39	2	49
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	25	16	52	7	44
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	31	27	40	2	52
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	34	19	43	4	47

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of sponsors that used the waiver type in the program during summer 2021, as compared to summer 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported sponsors used the waiver type in the program in summer 2021.

Exhibit D.17. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the way each program operations waiver was used in SY 2020-2021 differed from its use in March-September 2020

Waiver	Percentage
Non-congregate	21
Meal Service Time Flexibility	29
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	21
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	24
SFSP Pre-approval Visits and Reimbursements	13
FSMC Contract Duration	7
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	16
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	7
Meal Pattern Flexibility	23

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported the way each waiver type was used in SY 2020-2021 differed from its use in March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported local program operators used the waiver type in any program during SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.18. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the way each program operations waiver was used in summer 2021 differed from its use in summer 2020

Waiver	Percentage
SFSP/SSO Non-congregate Feeding	17
SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time Flexibility	10
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility For Closed Enrolled Sites	11
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	10
SFSP/SSO Parent Pick-up	9
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	9
SSO Meal Pattern Flexibility	7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported that the way each program operations waiver was used in summer 2021 differed from its use in summer 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver type in any program during summer 2021.

Exhibit D.19. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver in SY 2020-2021 reporting that use of the waiver differed in certain ways from its use in March-September 2020

Responses	Non-congregate	Meal Service Time Flexibility	Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	SFSP Offer vs. Serve	SFSP Pre-approval Visits and Reimburse-ments	FSMC Contract Duration	Parent and Guardian Pick-up	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	Meal Pattern Flexibility
Broadly increased access/participation	1	3	2	2	2	n.a.	1	4	n.a.
Change in virtual/in-person learning	1	2	2	7	n.a.	n.a.	4	n.a.	n.a.
Flexibility eased meal service	1	9	5	9	4	5	1	n.a.	5
Increased number of sites	1	n.a.	11	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	2
Increased use of alternative meal service methods	1	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1	n.a.	n.a.
More uncertainty/compliance challenges	3	3	n.a.	n.a.	4	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Used less frequently/as needed-various reasons	9	6	2	2	7	n.a.	9	2	6
Used more frequently	n.a.	3	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	1	n.a.	n.a.
Adjusted meal times to allow for social distancing	n.a.	5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fewer CACFP sponsors used waiver	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Used to address supply chain issues	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	13

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Responses listed were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver nationwide during SY 2020-2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.20. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver in summer 2021 reporting that use of the waiver differed in certain ways from its use in summer 2020

Responses	SFSP/SSO Non-congregate Feeding	SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time Flexibility	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility For Closed Enrolled Sites	SFSP Offer vs. Serve	SFSP/SSO Parent Pick-up	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	SSO Meal Pattern Flexibilities
Broadly increased access/participation	3	n.a.	2	n.a.	2	2	n.a.
Change in virtual/in-person learning	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	3	n.a.	n.a.
Flexibility eased meal service	3	5	2	n.a.	2	2	n.a.
Increased number of sites	2	n.a.	5	2	n.a.	2	n.a.
More uncertainty/compliance challenges	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		n.a.
Used less frequently/as needed- various reasons	7	3	n.a.	n.a.	3	4	n.a.
Used more frequently	n.a.	2	4	8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Used to address supply chain issues	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Responses listed were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver nationwide during summer 2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.21. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children during SY 2020-2021, by local program operator type

Method	SFAs for NSLP, SBP, or SSO	Sponsors for SFSP	Institutions for CACFP
Scanned children's meal cards or asked for children's personal identification numbers used for meal service	60	51	22
Requested children's names, ages or dates of birth, or grade levels when meals were picked up	73	75	65
Requested children's school names or a copy of school correspondence when meals were picked up	56	53	29
Requested the number of children for which the parent/guardian was picking up meals	79	85	71
Provided parents/guardians with rear view mirror hangers, placards, or QR codes	44	42	22
Posted signage to indicate who is eligible to pick up and receive meals	67	72	49
Other^a			
Other: CACFP and other small sites able to identify parents of eligible children	4	2	8
Other: Information communicated through flyers, websites, and other means	6	6	n.a.
Other: Parent signed form, provided attestation	6	n.a.	2
Other: Pre-order or advance sign-up for meals	4	6	2
Other: Reviewed rosters or data systems that included enrolled or eligible children	15	4	8
Don't know which methods were used to ensure meals distributed only to parent/guardians of eligible children	25	2	14

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each method, or don't know, by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of sponsors that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.22. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children during summer 2021, by local program operator type

Method	SFAs for SSO	Sponsors for SFSP
Scanned children's meal cards or asked for children's personal identification numbers used for meal service	68	54
Requested children's names, ages or dates of birth, or grade levels when meals were picked up	84	81
Requested children's school names or a copy of school correspondence when meals were picked up	70	58
Requested the number of children for which the parent/guardian was picking up meals	86	94
Provided parents/guardians with rear view mirror hangers, placards, or QR codes	51	42
Posted signage to indicate who is eligible to pick up and receive meals	84	83
Other^a		
Other: CACFP and other small sites able to identify parents of eligible children	n.a.	2
Other: Information communicated through flyers, websites, and other means	3	6
Other: Parent signed form, provided attestation	5	n.a.
Other: Pre-order or advance sign-up for meals	8	6
Other: Reviewed rosters or data systems that included enrolled or eligible children	n.a.	4
Don't know which methods were used to ensure meals distributed only to parent/guardians of eligible children	11	2

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each method, or don't know, by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of SFAs that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.23. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child during SY 2020-2021, by local program operator type

Method	SFAs for NSLP, SBP, or SSO	Sponsors for SFSP	Institutions for CACFP
Told parents/guardians picking up meals that children are not eligible to receive duplicate meals	77	81	63
Asked parents/guardians to self-attest that they were not picking up duplicate meals	58	64	43
Requested children's names or other identifying information when meals were picked up	77	74	76
Used the same staff at multiple delivery sites (that provided meals at different times) located in a geographic area	42	47	24
Other^a			
Other: Cross-checked rosters; used point-of-service system	n.a.	6	2
Other: Meals served at one location	4	4	2
Other: Pre-order or advance sign-up for meals	4	2	0
Other: Signage, outreach materials	6	6	4
Other: Staff looked for evidence of other meals in cars	2	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know which methods were used to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed	17	11	18

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each method, or don't know, by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the programs.

^a "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of SFAs that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.24. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver extension used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child during summer 2021, by local program operator type

Method	SFAs for SSO	Sponsors for SFSP
Told parents/guardians picking up meals that children are not eligible to receive duplicate meals	84	87
Asked parents/guardians to self-attest that they were not picking up duplicate meals	73	65
Requested children's names or other identifying information when meals were picked up	81	75
Used the same staff at multiple delivery sites (that provided meals at different times) located in a geographic area	54	54
Other^a		
Other: Cross-checked rosters; used point-of-service system	n.a.	2
Other: Meals served at one location	3	n.a.
Other: Pre-order or advance sign-up for meals	5	4
Other: Signage, outreach materials	8	4
Don't know which methods were used to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed	11	10

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each method, or don't know, by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of SFAs that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.25. Proportion of local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver that used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed to any child from March through September 2020, by local program operator type

Method	Proportion of SFAs providing NSLP, SBP, or SSO most commonly reported by State Agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of sponsors providing SFSP most commonly reported by State Agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of institutions providing CACFP most commonly reported by State Agencies	Don't Know ^a
Told parents/guardians picking up meals that children are not eligible to receive duplicate meals	All	11	All	12	All	17
Asked parents/guardians to self-attest that they were not picking up duplicate meals	Less than half	15	Less than half	13	Less than half	20
Requested children's names or other identifying information when meals were picked up	More than half	8	More than half	7	All	7
Used the same staff at multiple delivery sites (that provided meals at different times) located in a geographic area	Less than half	14	Less than half	14	Less than half	19
Other ^b	None	15	None	20	None	21
Other: Signage, outreach materials	All	n.a.	More than half	n.a.	All	n.a.
Other: Cross-checked rosters; used point-of-service system	Less than half	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Did not use any methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed	None	11	None	12	None	13

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: State agencies reported the proportion of SFAs on a 5-point scale that included none, less than half, about half, more than half, and all. The Parent Pick-up waiver was used by 39 State agencies for NSLP, 38 State agencies for SBP, 38 State agencies for SSO, 52 State agencies for SFSP, and 50 State agencies for CACFP.

^aThe number of State agencies that reported they did not know the proportion of local program operators that used certain methods to ensure duplicate meals were not distributed.

^b“Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of local program operators that provided the “other” method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.26. Proportion of local program operators with the Parent/Guardian Pick-up waiver most commonly reported by State agencies that used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children from March through September 2020, by local program operator type

Method	Proportion of SFAs providing NSLP, SBP, or SSO most commonly reported by State agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of sponsors providing SFSP most commonly reported by State Agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of institutions providing CACFP most commonly reported by State Agencies	Don't Know ^a
Scanned children's meal cards or asked for children's personal identification numbers used for meal service	Less than half	10	Less than half	12	None	16
Requested children's names, ages or dates of birth, or grade levels when meals were picked up	Less than half	9	Less than half	11	More than half	11
Requested children's school names or a copy of school correspondence when meals were picked up	Less than half	9	Less than half	14	None	17
Requested the number of children for which the parent/guardian was picking up meals	All	8	More than half	9	More than half	13
Provided parents/guardians with rear view mirror hangers, placards, or QR codes	Less than half	14	Less than half	17	None	20
Posted signage to indicate who is eligible to pick up and receive meals	None	13	More than half	15	Less than half	19
Other ^b	None	16	None	17	None	19
Other: Parent signed form, provided attestation	Less than half	n.a.	More than half	n.a.	More than half	n.a.
Other: Pre-order	Less than half	n.a.	Less than half	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Did not use any methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents/guardians of eligible children	None	11	None	11	None	15

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: State agencies reported the proportion of local program operators on a 5-point scale that included none, less than half, about half, more than half, and all. The Parent Pick-up waiver was used by 39 State agencies for NSLP, 38 State agencies for SBP, 38 State agencies for SSO, 52 State agencies for SFSP, and 50 State agencies for CACFP.

^a The number of State agencies that reported they did not know the proportion of local program operators that used certain methods to ensure meals were distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children.

^b "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of local program operators that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.27. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waiver type improved services to children differently in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020, by Child Nutrition Program

Waiver	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
Non-congregate	49	47	40	44	50
Meal Service Time Flexibility	49	48	40	31	48
Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	n.a.	n.a.	38	29	n.a.
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	26	n.a.
SFSP Pre-approval Visits and Reimbursements	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	20	n.a.
FSMC Contract Duration ^a	38	n.a.	n.a.	14	n.a.
Parent and Guardian Pick-up	49	47	38	23	49
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	n.a.	n.a.	34	19	n.a.
Meal Pattern Flexibility	43	43	35	21	44

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported the waiver improved services to children in the program differently in SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported local program operators used the waiver type in the program in SY 2020-2021. See Exhibit D.34 for ways in which the waivers improved services to children differently.

^aThe FSMC Contract Duration waiver could also have been used in SBP and SSO.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.28. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each program operations waiver type improved services to children differently in summer 2021 than in summer 2020, by Child Nutrition Program

Waiver	SSO	SFSP
SFSP/SSO Non-congregate Feeding	24	17
SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time Flexibility	26	17
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility For Closed Enrolled Sites	20	8
SFSP Offer vs. Serve	n.a.	9
SFSP/SSO Parent Pick-up	16	12
SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	17	15
SSO Meal Pattern Flexibilities	20	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported the waiver improved services to children in the program differently in summer 2021, as compared to summer 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported SFAs used the waiver type in the program in summer 2021. See Exhibit D.35 for ways in which the waivers improved services to children differently.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.29. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved NSLP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	Meal Service Time Flexibility (% State agencies)	Non-congregate (% State agencies)	Afterschool Activity Requirements in NSLP/ CACFP (% State agencies)	Meal Pattern Flexibility (% State agencies)	Parent Pick-up (% State agencies)
Greater geographic distribution of sites	43	44	26	21	38
Increased number of sites	30	34	32	21	33
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	73	83	52	39	72
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	75	85	61	37	77
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	57	63	45	39	49
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	45	41	19	76	33
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	82	90	81	32	90
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	77	85	77	63	92
Increased participation	61	61	45	29	79
Other^b					
Other: Reduced food safety concerns	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5	n.a.
Other: Promoted equity for working families, families with disabilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	9	5	6	8	8
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	6	3	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	44	41	31	38	39

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each access-focused waiver for the program.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes. For example, a quart of milk provides four one-cup servings.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.30. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SBP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	Meal Service Time Flexibility (% State agencies)	Non-congregate (% State agencies)	Meal Pattern Flexibility (% State agencies)	Parent Pick-up (% State agencies)
Greater geographic distribution of sites	44	48	21	38
Increased number of sites	30	38	21	33
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	74	85	39	70
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	79	85	37	78
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	58	63	39	50
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	44	40	76	33
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	81	90	32	90
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	77	85	63	93
Increased participation	63	63	32	80
Other^b				
Other: Reduced food safety concerns	n.a.	n.a.	5	n.a.
Other: Promoted equity for working families, families with disabilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	9	5	8	8
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	3	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	43	40	38	40

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each access-focused waiver for the program.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes. For example, a quart of milk provides four one-cup servings.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.31. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SSO services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	Meal Service Time Flexibility	Non-congregate	Meal Pattern Flexibility	Parent Pick-up	SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility
Greater geographic distribution of sites	78	74	28	53	41	92
Increased number of sites	65	59	25	37	44	87
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	90	90	42	82	90	63
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	100	97	42	87	97	47
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	83	77	53	74	82	39
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	65	59	83	47	38	34
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	98	95	39	95	85	61
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	98	90	61	97	95	89
Increased participation	93	79	33	84	79	82
Other^b						
Other: Reduced food safety concerns	n.a.	n.a.	6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Promoted equity for working families, families with disabilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	0	0	8	0	0	3
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	3	0	0	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	40	39	36	38	39	38

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each access-focused waiver for the program.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes. For example, a quart of milk provides four one-cup servings.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.32. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved SFSP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	Meal Service Time Flexibility	Non-congregate	Meal Pattern Flexibility	Parent Pick-up	SFSP Offer vs. Serve Flexibilities	SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility
Greater geographic distribution of sites	81	77	31	56	22	52	95
Increased number of sites	68	77	33	46	24	60	91
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	96	96	43	81	33	88	68
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	98	98	45	88	41	96	45
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	87	81	48	65	37	77	39
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	57	47	81	31	37	33	36
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	94	96	38	98	37	85	57
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	94	92	69	98	53	96	91
Increased participation	91	94	36	88	53	85	86
Other^b							
Other: Reduced stigma of receiving free meals	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Reduced food safety concerns	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Allowed safe meal delivery during a time with civil unrest, in addition to COVID	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Promoted equity for working families, families with disabilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	0	0	2	0	12	0	0
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	53	53	42	52	51	52	44

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each access-focused waiver for the program.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes. For example, a quart of milk provides four one-cup servings.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.33. Percentage of State agencies reporting that access-focused waivers improved CACFP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	Meal Service Time Flexibility	Non-congregate	Afterschool Activity Requirements in NSLP/CACFP	Meal Pattern Flexibility	Parent Pick-up
Greater geographic distribution of sites	52	58	44	17	56
Increased number of sites	50	53	42	14	40
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	87	92	63	24	76
Allowed pick up of multiple meals at one time	94	89	74	29	86
Allowed distribution of bulk food packages ^a	75	68	60	31	66
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	54	47	35	79	34
Improved safety for children by not requiring congregate feeding or meal pick-up	90	96	88	29	92
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	94	92	91	67	98
Increased participation	69	83	70	26	82
Other^b					
Other: Reduced stigma of receiving free meals	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Reduced food safety concerns	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.
Other: Allowed safe meal delivery during a time with civil unrest, in addition to COVID	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2
Other: Promoted equity for working families, families with disabilities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	2	0	2	2	0
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0	0	5	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	52	53	43	42	50

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each access-focused waiver for the program.

^a Bulk food packages: Food packages that contain items that could be used for multiple meals or portion sizes. For example, a quart of milk provides four one-cup servings.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program. n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.34. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations reporting the waiver improved services to children differently in certain ways in SY 2020-2021 than in March-September 2020

Responses	Non-congregate	Meal Service Time Flexibility	Closed-Enrolled Area Eligibility	SFSP Offer vs. Serve	SFSP Pre-approval Visits and Reimburse ments	FSMC Contract Duration	Parent and Guardian Pick-up	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	Meal Pattern Flexibility
Broadly increased access/participation	6	6	7	4	n.a.	n.a.	9	11	2
Increased number of sites	1	2	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	1	7	n.a.
Allowed service of available food when supply issues occurred	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Allowed more flexibility in addressing supply chain issues	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Increased after school access to meals	n.a.	3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Increased use of alternative meal delivery methods	1	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Increased child/student participation	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Increased local resources for providing meals	n.a.	n.a.	4	n.a.	7	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Reduced barriers to receiving meals	1	n.a.	n.a.	4	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Enabled flexible meal service as school operations changed	24	24	18	20	11	7	16	4	15
Improved safety for children	7	5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6	4	n.a.
Increased access to meals	7	2	4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3	n.a.	2

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Ways in which waivers improved services to children differently in SY 2020-2021, as compared to March-September 2020, were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver type nationwide in any program in SY 2020-2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.35. Percentage of State agencies that used each program operations waiver reporting the waiver improved services to children differently in certain ways in summer 2021 than in summer 2020

Responses	SFSP/SSO Non-congregate Feeding	SFSP/SSO Meal Service Time Flexibility	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility For Closed Enrolled Sites	SFSP Offer vs. Serve	SFSP/SSO Parent Pick-up	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility	SSO Meal Pattern Flexibilities
Broadly increased access/participation	n.a.	3	n.a.	2	5	2	3
Increased number of sites	n.a.	n.a.	7	n.a.	2	13	n.a.
Allowed service of available foods when supply issues occurred	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	10
Increased alternative meal delivery methods	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Increased local resources for providing meals	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Enabled flexible meal service as school operations changed	10	7	2	4	3	2	7
Improved safety for children	n.a.	2	2	n.a.	n.a.	4	n.a.
Increased access to meals	5	5	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Ways in which waivers improved services to children differently in summer 2021, as compared to summer 2020, were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver type nationwide in any program in summer 2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.36. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements in each program in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	Meal pattern requirement										No response ^b	n
	Milk	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat/meat alternates	Grains	Whole-grain rich foods	Calories	Sodium	Other	No challenges		
All SFAs	22.9	19.1	24.4	24.8	21.8	36.3	17.0	26.4	3.2	50.7	2.2	1,081
SFAs that used NSLP, including SSO	21.6	18.6	24.7	24.7	20.1	33.3	16.3	23.9	2.6	44.8	5.1	827
SFAs that used SBP, including SSO	14.7	11.7	0.2	0.0	12.5	21.0	9.5	14.8	2.1	39.0	29.1	816
SFAs that used SFSP	16.0	11.2	16.6	17.4	15.4	30.1	11.6	23.2	2.3	37.4	15.2	418
SFAs that used CACFP	14.2	12.9	14.9	15.2	12.5	27.3	9.7	18.3	4.0	36.5	26.8	135

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages for all SFAs were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements for each meal component for any Child Nutrition Program by the total number of SFAs that reported using any Child Nutrition Program. Percentages within each SFA characteristic were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements for each meal component by the total number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic that reported using each Child Nutrition Program. Within each SFA characteristic (or Child Nutrition Program), SFAs could select multiple meal pattern requirements for each relevant program.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. Only SFAs that reported operating NSLP (including SSO), SBP (including SSO), SFSP, or CACFP were asked this question.

^b No response percentages include SFAs that did not receive the question because of logical skips in the survey and SFAs that received the question but did not provide a response.

Exhibit D.37. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements in each program from October through December 2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	Meal pattern requirement										No response ^b	n
	Milk	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat/meat alternates	Grains	Whole-grain rich foods	Calories	Sodium	Other	No challenges		
All SFAs	23.3	19.9	22.0	28.5	28.0	38.9	13.8	24.3	3.1	47.4	0.9	1,078
SFA size (enrollment)												
1–499	19.6*	19.3	18.2*	24.1*	20.7*	29.4*	10.3*	16.7*	3.3	55.5*	1.0	387
500–2,499	21.3	19.1	21.9	28.6	28.8	39.2	13.8	24.0	2.7	48.5	0.9	327
2,500–4,999	27.4	18.4	26.3	32.8	38.1*	55.2*	21.1*	39.3*	2.3	31.6*	1.1	167
5,000–99,999	40.7*	26.5*	34.0*	42.5*	45.5*	61.5*	21.6*	42.0*	4.0	26.1*	0.0*	170
100,000+	40.7	7.4*	25.9	29.6	33.3	25.9	7.4	22.2	3.7	37.0	0.0*	27
SFA poverty level												
<60%	23.2	20.3	22.0	29.1	28.4	39.3	14.0	26.1*	3.4	45.0*	0.8	732
60% +	23.4	19.0	22.0	27.3	27.1	38.2	13.4	20.7*	2.5	52.1*	1.0	346
SFA urbanicity												
Suburban	26.4	22.5	25.6	29.8	35.1*	44.1*	15.0	29.5*	3.2	42.5	0.7	315
Urban	25.4	14.8*	16.5*	26.7	22.5*	32.0*	8.4*	16.9*	5.4	51.9	1.9	225
Rural	21.0	20.6	22.5	28.6	26.8	39.2	15.4	24.7	2.1	47.9	0.6	538

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's CCD Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA's geographic location.

Note: Percentages for all SFAs were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements for each meal component for any Child Nutrition Program by the total number of SFAs that reported using any Child Nutrition Program. Percentages of SFAs within each Child Nutrition Program were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported facing challenges meeting meal pattern requirements for each meal component by the total number of SFAs in the sample. Percentages within each SFA characteristic were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported challenges meeting meal pattern requirements by the total number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic that reported using a Child Nutrition Program. Within each SFA characteristic (or Child Nutrition Program), SFAs could select multiple meal pattern requirements for each relevant program.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs that used the meal pattern requirement between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

^a 1,078 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in October through December 2021. Only SFAs that reported operating NSLP (including SSO), SBP (including SSO), or CACFP were asked this question.

^b No response percentages include SFAs that did not receive the question because of logical skips in the survey and SFAs that received the question but did not provide a response.

Exhibit D.38. Of SFAs that used the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs, percentage reporting using the waivers for each meal component in each program in SY 2020-2021, by SFA characteristic

SFA characteristic	Meal pattern requirement					Did not use waiver for any meal components	No response	n
	Milk	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat/meat alternates	Grains			
All SFAs								
NSLP, including SSO	41.6	30.6	41.3	31.4	54.3	28.0	2.7	560
SBP, including SSO	27.6	19.4	0.0	0.0	34.0	33.0	23.8	538
SFSP	34.6	22.9	30.0	24.8	45.4	31.3	11.8	287
CACFP	31.2	25.2	22.4	19.2	32.1	38.0	19.5	103
SFA size (enrollment)								
1–499	14.7	11.5	14.1	11.6	19.7	14.5	0.0	194
500–2,499	15.1	11.6	15.1	12.3	22.0	16.2	0.0	223
2,500–4,999	5.7	4.6	5.7	4.1	7.2	3.3	0.0	122
5,000–99,999	8.2	5.7	7.2	4.6	8.5	4.2	0.0	137
100,000+	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	23
SFA poverty level								
<60%	29.0	20.7	26.6	20.8	37.6	25.1	0.0	477
60% +	14.8	12.8	15.6	11.9	20.1	13.2	0.0	222
SFA urbanicity								
Suburban	13.7	10.0	13.2	9.9	17.1	8.8	0.0	225
Urban	8.8	6.4	7.8	5.9	9.3	7.4	0.0	130
Rural	21.4	17.1	21.1	16.8	31.2	22.1	0.0	344

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA’s geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported using waivers for each meal component by the number of SFAs within each SFA characteristic that reported using the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs. SFAs could select all applicable meal pattern requirements.

Exhibit D.39. Percentage of State agencies in which local program operators using the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension waived requirements for each food component in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition Program

Food component	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
Milk	79	77	80	74	72
Meat	26	16	40	26	32
Grains	67	65	83	58	52
Fruits	37	33	46	40	39
Vegetables	63	44	74	44	36
Waiver not used for this program	2	2	0	7	4
Don't know ^a	2	2	3	2	2
No response ^b	9	16	9	14	14
Vegetable Sub-Groups					
Dark Green	30	n.a.	43	n.a.	n.a.
Red/Orange	21	n.a.	26	n.a.	n.a.
Starchy	23	n.a.	37	n.a.	n.a.
Legumes	33	n.a.	43	n.a.	n.a.
Other	12	n.a.	17	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know ^a	5	n.a.	6	n.a.	n.a.
No response ^b	26	n.a.	17	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each component or sub-group by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a The percentage of State agencies that reported they did not know which components SFAs waived, after reporting that the waiver was used in the program.

^b State agencies either provided a file documenting SFAs that used the meal pattern waiver in each program or responded to survey questions about use of the waiver. “No response” reflects the percentage of State agencies that reported in the survey that the waiver was used for a program but did not provide information in their file on the components, or vegetable subgroups, for which the waiver was used.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.40. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of local program operators that used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension for multiple food components in SY 2020-2021, by Child Nutrition Program

Proportion of local program operators	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
○ No local program operators	9	7	0	20	11
◐ Less than half	27	27	31	28	25
◑ About half	11	7	7	2	2
◒ More than half	16	16	15	9	15
● All local program operators	4	4	2	2	2
Don't know ^a	0	0	0	0	0
No response ^b	7	11	6	11	11

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each proportion by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver for the program.

^aThe percentage of State agencies that reported they did not know which components SFAs waived, after reporting that the waiver was used in the program.

^b State agencies either provided a file documenting SFAs that used the meal pattern waiver in each program or responded to survey questions about use of the waiver. “No response” reflects the percentage of State agencies that reported in the survey that the waiver was used for a program but did not provide information in their file on the components for which the waiver was used.

Exhibit D.41. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of SFAs that used the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver extension for multiple food components in SSO in summer 2021

Proportion of SFAs	Percentage of State agencies
<input type="radio"/> No SFAs	7
<input type="radio"/> Less than half	20
<input type="radio"/> About half	0
<input type="radio"/> More than half	27
<input type="radio"/> All SFAs	10
Don't know ^a	0
No response ^b	30

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each proportion by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver for the program.

^aThe percentage of State agencies that reported they did not know which components SFAs waived, after reporting that the waiver was used in the program.

^bState agencies either provided a file documenting SFAs that used the meal pattern waiver in each program or responded to survey questions about use of the waiver. “No response” reflects the percentage of State agencies that reported in the survey that the waiver was used for a program but did not provide information in their file on the components for which the waiver was used.

Exhibit D.42. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the majority of local program operators with the Meal Pattern waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 waived components in each program for certain time periods

Time Period	Percentage
NSLP	
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of SY 2020-2021	49
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during SY 2020-2021	23
Component requirements were waived for specific months during SY 2020-2021	19
Don't know	2
No response ^a	7
SBP	
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of SY 2020-2021	47
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during SY 2020-2021	21
Component requirements were waived for specific months during SY 2020-2021	16
Don't know	2
No response ^a	14
SSO	
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of SY 2020-2021	46
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during SY 2020-2021	20
Component requirements were waived for specific months during SY 2020-2021	23
Don't know	3
No response ^a	9
SFSP	
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of SY 2020-2021	33
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during SY 2020-2021	30
Component requirements were waived for specific months during SY 2020-2021	16
Don't know	7
No response ^a	14
CACFP	
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of SY 2020-2021	41
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during SY 2020-2021	25
Component requirements were waived for specific months during SY 2020-2021	9
Don't know	7
No response ^a	16

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each time period by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a State agencies either provided a file documenting local program operators that used the meal pattern waiver in each program or responded to survey questions about use of the waiver. “No response” reflects the percentage of State agencies that reported in the survey that the waiver was used for a program but did not provide information in their file on the time periods for which requirements were waived.

Exhibit D.43. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the majority of SFAs with the Meal Pattern waiver extension in summer 2021 waived components in SSO for certain time periods

Time Period	Percentage
Component requirements were waived for the entirety of summer 2021	47
Component requirements were waived for specific weeks or days during summer 2021	10
Component requirements were waived for specific months during summer 2021	7
Don't know	7
No response ^a	30

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each time period by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a State agencies either provided a file documenting SFAs that used the meal pattern waiver in each program or responded to survey questions about use of the waiver. “No response” reflects the percentage of State agencies that reported in the survey that the waiver was used for a program but did not provide information in their file on the time periods for which requirements were waived.

Exhibit D.44. Percentage of State agencies reporting each proportion of institutions with the At-Risk Area Eligibility waiver targeted new CACFP meal sites to serve children who were previously or newly eligible for benefits using certain methods during SY 2020-2021

Method	○ No institutions	◐ Less than half	◑ About half	● More than half	● All institutions	Don't know
No methods used – all sites approved as area eligible	27	10	7	15	24	17
Analyzed unemployment data	32	15	5	2	0	46
Analyzed prior year school meals eligibility data	22	22	10	0	10	37
Identified site(s) that were area eligible in prior years	27	22	12	0	7	32
Targeted near-eligible sites, such as sites where 40% of children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals	17	22	17	7	10	27
Other^a						
Other: Allowed if enrichment or other activities provided	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.
Other: Analyzed income data	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Providers identified areas with children in need	n.a.	5	n.a.	2	2	n.a.
Did not use any methods to target new meal sites	41	7	10	2	n.a.	37

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each proportion of institutions implemented certain methods, or don't know, by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program. Forty-nine State agencies used the CACFP At-Risk Area Eligibility waiver.

^a "Other" responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of institutions that provided the "other" method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.45. Percentage of State agencies reporting that SFAs with the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 targeted new SSO and SFSP meal sites to serve children who were previously or newly eligible for benefits using certain methods during SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021

Method	SY 2020-2021		Summer 2021	
	SSO	SFSP	SSO	SFSP
Analyzed unemployment data	32	40	26	38
Analyzed prior year school meals eligibility data	56	44	49	47
Identified site(s) that were area eligible in prior years	59	58	43	51
Targeted near-eligible sites, such as sites where 40% of children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals	56	63	49	62
Other^a				
Other: Allowed for sites accessible to children in need, where children congregate	3	2	3	2
Other: Allowed for sites operating programs during extended school closures	n.a.	4	n.a.	2
Other: Analyzed other income or economic data	9	6	6	6
Other: Collaborated with partners to evaluate needs	9	10	9	9
Other: Considered anecdotal information on needs	3	6	3	4
Don't know which approaches were used to select meal sites	12	6	14	9
No methods used – all sites approved as area eligible	12	10	14	11

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each method or no method by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. State agencies also reported the proportion of SFAs that provided the “other” method specified.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.46. Percentage of State agencies reporting the methods most commonly used by local program operators with the SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility waiver extension for targeting new meal sites to serve children in SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021

Most commonly used method	SY 2020-2021	Summer 2021
Analyzed unemployment data	11	13
Analyzed prior year school meals eligibility data	11	13
Identified site(s) that were area eligible in prior years	19	16
Targeted near-eligible sites, such as sites where 40% of children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals	32	28
Other		
Other: Allowed for sites operating programs during extended school closures	5	3
Other: Analyzed other income or economic data	5	6
Other: Collaborated with partners to evaluate needs	8	9
Don't know which approach was most commonly used to select meal sites	8	13

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each method by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in either program.

Exhibit D.47. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each State agency monitoring waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Waiver	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies	50	91
School Meals Onsite Monitoring - State Agencies	52	93
SFSP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies	51	94

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Each waiver applies to specific Child Nutrition Programs, noted in the name of the waiver. During SY 2020-2021 and summer 2021, 56 State agencies administered NSLP and SBP; 54 administered SSO; 54 administered SFSP; and 55 administered CACFP.

Exhibit D.48. Total number and percentage of State agencies that used each State agency monitoring waiver from March through September 2020

Waiver	Number of State Agencies	Percent of State agencies
CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State agencies	53	96
School Meals Onsite Monitoring - Revised	56	100
SFSP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State agencies	53	98
CACFP Annual Review Requirements for State agencies	53	96

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Each waiver applies to specific Child Nutrition Programs, noted in the name of the waiver. During FY 2020, 56 State agencies administered NSLP, SBP, and SSO; 54 State agencies administered SFSP; and 55 State agencies administered.

Exhibit D.49. Total number and percentage of State agencies in which local program operators used each monitoring waiver extension in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Waiver	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
CACFP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors	54	98
School Meals Onsite Monitoring - SFAs	51	91
SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsoring Orgs	50	93
SFSP First Week Site Visits (SY 2020-2021)	50	93
SFSP First Week Site Visits (July 1-Sept. 30, 2021)	48	89

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Each waiver applies to specific Child Nutrition Programs, noted in the name of the waiver. By program, 56 State agencies administered NSLP and SBP; 54 administered SSO; 54 administered SFSP; and 55 administered CACFP.

Exhibit D.50. Percentage of State agencies reporting that more, fewer, or about the same number of local program operators used onsite monitoring waivers in SY 2020-2021 or Summer 2021 than in March-September 2020, in each program

Program	More local program operators used waiver in SY 2020-2021 or Summer 2021	About the same number of local program operators used the waiver in SY 2020-2021 or Summer 2021	Fewer local program operators used waiver in SY 2020-2021 or Summer 2021	Don't know	n
NSLP	32	36	22	10	50
SBP	32	34	22	12	50
SFSP ^a	38	38	12	12	50
CACFP	33	43	11	13	54
SFSP ^b	33	44	21	2	48

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Onsite monitoring waivers include School Meals Onsite Monitoring (used for NSLP and SBP), SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsoring Orgs, SFSP First Week Site Visits, and CACFP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each change in the number of local program operators that used the waivers during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021, as compared to March-September 2020, by the total number of State agencies that reported local program operators used the waivers in the program in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021. No onsite monitoring waivers were issued for SSO in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.

^a This includes local program operators that used either or both SFSP onsite monitoring waivers available during SY 2020-2021—the SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsoring Organizations waiver and the SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver.

^b This includes local program operators that used the SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver extension for July 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021.

Exhibit D.51. Percentage of State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring after receiving each monitoring waiver during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Type of monitoring	CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies	School Meals Onsite Monitoring – State agencies	SFSP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies
Number of State agencies that used the waiver	50	52	51
Desk audit – paperwork review	94	81	96
Desk audit- interviews with local program operators	90	83	96
Virtual observations conducted through live stream video	74	54	55
Virtual observations through review of site photos	76	63	65
On-site socially distanced observations	56	38	67
Other type of monitoring			
Conducted pre-approval site visit	2	n.a.	2
Monitoring postponed or waived	2	6	2
Provided technical assistance	2	4	4
Single audits	n.a.	4	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of State agencies reporting each monitoring type by the number of State agencies that used the waiver in SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.52. Percentage of State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring following implementation of State agency monitoring waivers from March through September 2020, by waiver

Types of monitoring	CACFP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State Agencies	School Meals Onsite Monitoring – Revised	SFSP Onsite Monitoring Requirements for State agencies	CACFP Annual Review Requirements for State agencies
Desk audit - paperwork review	91	73	89	81
Desk audit - interviews with site operators	92	73	88	85
Virtual observations conducted through live stream video	66	48	54	57
Virtual observations through review of site photos	62	36	46	58
On-site while assisting with or observing meal service	17	16	23	17
Other	4	9	7	4
No monitoring conducted	8	11	0	13
Number of State agencies that used waiver	53	56	53	53

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Exhibit D.53. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operators conducted certain types of monitoring after receiving each onsite monitoring waiver during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Type of monitoring	CACFP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors	School Meals Onsite Monitoring – SFAs	SFSP Onsite Monitoring ^a	SFSP First Week Site Visits ^b
Number of State agencies that used the waiver	54	52	50	50
Desk audit – paperwork review	93	82	90	83
Desk audit- interviews with local program operators	89	76	82	77
Virtual observations conducted through live stream video	85	47	60	46
Virtual observations through review of site photos	70	45	60	48
On-site socially distanced observations	76	80	88	77
Other type of monitoring				
Monitoring postponed or waived	2	n.a.	2	n.a.
Reviewed site video recordings	2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting local program operators used each monitoring type by the number of State agencies that used the waiver during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021.

^a This includes types of monitoring conducted by local program operators that used either or both SFSP onsite monitoring waivers available during SY 2020-2021—the SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsoring Organizations waiver and the SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver.

^b This includes types of monitoring conducted by local program operators that used the SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver extension for July 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.54. Proportion of local program operators most commonly reported by State agencies that conducted certain types of monitoring following implementation of local program operator on-site monitoring waivers from March through September 2020, by waiver

Types of monitoring	CACFP Monitoring for Sponsors		School Meals Onsite Monitoring - Revised		SFSP Onsite Monitoring Sponsors		SFSP First Week Site Visits	
	Proportion of institutions providing CACFP most commonly reported by State agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of SFAs providing NSLP and SBP most commonly reported by State agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of sponsors providing SFSP most commonly reported by State agencies	Don't Know ^a	Proportion of sponsors providing SFSP most commonly reported by State agencies	Don't Know ^a
Desk audit- paperwork review	More than half	11	More than half	15	More than half	11	More than half	13
Desk audit- interviews with site operators	More than half	11	More than half	15	More than half	12	Less than half	13
Virtual observations conducted through live stream video	Less than half	14	None	17	Less than half	15	Less than half	18
Virtual observations through review of site photos	Less than half	17	None	16	Less than half	17	Less than half	19
On-site while assisting with or observing meal service	Less than half	18	None	14	Less than half	11	Less than half	12
Other	None	25	None	16	None	22	None	23
No monitoring conducted	More than half	11	More than half	15	More than half	11	More than half	13

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: State agencies reported the proportion of local program operators on a 5-point scale: that included none, less than half, about half, more than half, and all. The CACFP Monitoring for Sponsors waiver was used by local program operators in 54 State agencies. The School Meals Onsite Monitoring – Revised waiver was used by local program operators in 45 State agencies for NSLP and 43 State agencies for SBP. The SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors waiver was used by local program operators in 52 State agencies. The SFSP First Week Site Visits waiver was used by local program operators in 54 State agencies.

^aThe number of State agencies that reported they did not know the proportion of local program operators that implemented certain types of monitoring.

Exhibit D.55. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved NSLP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP	School Meals Onsite Monitoring - Revised	60-Day Reporting Requirements	School Wellness Policy Assessments	NSLP/SFSP Food Service Management Contract Duration
Increased administrative resources for identifying meal sites	48	38	20	50	35
Increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	54	51	27	52	58
Increased administrative resources for providing meals	62	67	43	67	74
Increased ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	81	78	43	83	74
Increased ability of local program operators to begin operations more quickly	42	49	30	43	65
Other^a					
Other: Enabled more schools to qualify, increasing children served	6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Allowed reimbursement, improving SFA ability to serve children	n.a.	n.a.	10	n.a.	n.a.
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	15	13	27	10	6
This waiver did not improve services to children	4	7	10	7	3
Number of State agencies that used waiver	52	45	30	42	31

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each local program operator administration-focused waiver.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program. n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.56. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SBP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP	School Meals Onsite Monitoring – Revised	60-Day Reporting Requirements	School Wellness Policy Assessments
Increased administrative resources for identifying meal sites	52	40	19	55
Increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	58	51	26	58
Increased administrative resources for providing meals	67	67	41	71
Increased ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	88	79	44	89
Increased ability of local program operators to begin operations more quickly	46	51	30	47
Other^a				
Other: Enabled more schools to qualify, increasing children served	6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other: Allowed reimbursement, improving SFA ability to serve children	n.a.	n.a.	11	n.a.
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	10	14	30	5
This waiver did not improve services to children	2	5	7	5
Number of State agencies that used waiver	48	43	27	38

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each local program operator administration-focused waiver.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.57. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SSO services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites	SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations
Increased administrative resources for identifying meal sites	62	59
Increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	59	64
Increased administrative resources for providing meals	71	79
Increased ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	88	82
Increased ability of local program operators to begin operations more quickly	76	82
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	3	13
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	34	39

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each local program operator administration-focused waiver.

Exhibit D.58. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved SFSP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	SFSP Onsite Monitoring for Sponsors	60-Day Reporting Requirements	SFSP/SSO Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites	SFSP First Week Site Visits	NSLP/SFSP Food Service Management Contract Duration	SFSP/SSO Unanticipated School Closure Operations
Increased administrative resources for identifying meal sites	50	43	66	57	33	65
Increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	65	57	57	70	63	59
Increased administrative resources for providing meals	69	43	74	79	67	82
Increased ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	73	57	83	79	75	82
Increased ability of local program operators to begin operations more quickly	60	43	83	70	79	80
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	13	0	4	6	8	8
This waiver did not improve services to children	2	14	2	2	0	0
Number of State agencies that used waiver	52	7	47	53	24	49

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each local program operator administration-focused waiver.

Exhibit D.59. Percentage of State agencies reporting that local program operator administration-focused waivers improved CACFP services to children in certain ways from March through September 2020, by waiver

Improved services to children	CACFP Monitoring for Sponsors	60-Day Reporting Requirements
Increased administrative resources for identifying meal sites	33	19
Increased administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	50	30
Increased administrative resources for providing meals	59	43
Increased ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	76	57
Increased ability of local program operators to begin operations more quickly	52	30
Other^a		
Other: Improve children's safety	4	n.a.
Other: Allowed reimbursement, improving SFA ability to serve children	n.a.	8
Don't know how this waiver improved services to children	15	22
This waiver did not improve services to children	0	14
Number of State agencies that used waiver	54	37

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2020–2021.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement from March through September 2020 by the total number of State agencies that used each local program operator administration-focused waiver.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.60. Percentage of State agencies reporting that the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver was used for SFAs

Characteristic	Percentage of State agencies
Reporting requirements waived for all SFAs	87
Reporting requirements waived for public and non-public institutions	2
Reporting requirements waived on case-by-case basis	4
Reporting requirements waived for no SFAs	6

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: State agencies reporting that less than 100% of SFAs used the waiver responded to this survey question. Characteristics listed were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each SFA characteristic by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver nationwide. Fifty-four State agencies used the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.61. Percentage of State agencies that used the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver for each applicable report in SY 2020-2021

Report	Percentage of State agencies
FNS-10 Report of School Program Operations – Part B (October Annual Reporting)	52
FNS-640 Administrative Review Report Form	83
FNS-828 Paid Lunch Price Report	87
FNS-834 State Agency (NSLP/SNAP) Direct Certification Rate Data Element Report	63
FNS-874 Second (Independent) Review of Applications	83
Ameliorative Action Report	83
State Agency Food Safety Inspections Report	81
Performance-Based Reimbursement (7 Cents) Quarterly Report	72

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that used the waiver for each report by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in SY 2020-2021. Fifty-four State agencies used the Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements waiver in SY 2020-2021.

Exhibit D.62. Percentage of State agencies reporting that each administration-focused waiver newly authorized for use in SY 2020-2021 improved services to children in various ways, by waiver

Improved services to children	Child Nutrition Programs Reporting Requirements	CEP Deadlines in NSLP/SBP	Experienced SFSP Sponsors FY 2021
Number of State agencies that used waiver	54	49	48
Increased State Agency administrative resources for approving meal sites	81	52	n.a.
Increased State and local administrative resources for identifying meal sites	57	40	56
Increased local resources for providing meals	72	n.a.	71
Increased State and local administrative resources available for other priority areas to improve services to children	85	71	82
Increased State Agency ability to provide technical assistance to local program operators	91	83	82
Increased local program operators' administrative resources for identifying meal sites	n.a.	52	n.a.
Increased local program operators' administrative resources for addressing food supply issues and other challenges in preparing meals	n.a.	52	n.a.
Increased local program operators' administrative resources for providing meals	n.a.	67	n.a.
Increased local program operators' ability to focus administrative resources on other priority areas to improve services to children	n.a.	76	n.a.
Increased State Agency ability to efficiently approve sponsors to provide meals	n.a.	n.a.	88
Increased State and local administrative resources for approving meal sites	n.a.	n.a.	79
Other: Eased meal delivery/increased access ^a	4	5	3

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each improvement by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each response by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in the program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Exhibit D.63. Percentage of State agencies that used certain criteria for sponsor participation in the Experienced SFSP Sponsors FY 2021 waiver

Criteria	Percentage of State agencies
Good standing	44
Good standing based on previous monitoring	8
No significant review findings	19
Determined to be low risk based on prior actions	13
Determined to be low risk from application and documentation review	8
Experience operating SFSP	8
Previously operated other Child Nutrition Program	6
Communication with agencies	2
Completion of training(s)	8
Experience operating SFSP	8
Abbreviated qualification process	4
Provided additional TA	4
Conducted virtual site visits	2
Sponsors using the waiver were scheduled for SFSP administrative review in 2020-21 program year	2
Site agreements valid for 36 months	2
N/A - no sponsors met criteria	2
N/A- waiver not used	2
No response	19

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Responses listed were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported using each criterion for sponsor participation by the total number of State agencies that used the waiver in FY 2021. Forty-eight State agencies used the Experienced SFSP Sponsors FY 2021 waiver.

Appendix E: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter IV

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Exhibit E.1. Number and percentage of State agencies that administered each of the Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs

Program Administered	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
School Programs ^a	55	98
CACFP	55	100
Don't know	0	0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

^a School Programs include the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

Exhibit E.2. Number and percentage of State agencies that accepted or declined the 1% State administrative funds made available for Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Programs

Responses to accepting the 1% State administrative funds	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
Yes, for School Programs ^a	27	48
Yes, for CACFP	27	49
No, declined funds	30	45
Reasons for declining the 1% State administrative funds		
Sufficient State administrative funds on-hand (ex. SAE)	24	80
Minimal or no expense associated with administering Program(s)	5	17
Concerns about possible reporting burden	7	23
Other^b		
Administrative burden associated with managing and accounting for this funding	4	13
Current staff managed the process	2	7
Did not spend funds	1	3
Don't know	0	0
Don't know	3	4

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

^a School Programs include the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

^b “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of States that reported each response by the total number of States.

Exhibit E.3. Number and percentage of State agencies reporting certain challenges calculating and disbursing Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program payments

Reported challenges	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
Complexity of calculations	42	63
Identifying eligible program operators	36	54
Obtaining assurance statements from local program operators	34	51
Communicating with local program operators	27	40
Timing associated with necessary systems upgrades	19	28
Meeting statutory or programmatic deadlines	15	22
Costs associated with necessary systems upgrades	14	21
Other		
None of the above	8	12
Confusing, manual calculation process	7	10
Time consuming process	6	9
CACFP challenges related to sponsor types, unaffiliated centers, providers that changed sponsors	2	3
Delays or system challenges disbursing funds	2	3
Untimely or unclear guidance from FNS	2	3
Don't know	1	1
Missing	0	0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Exhibit E.4. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage that used, or planned to use, the reimbursement payments for certain types of expenses

Expense Type	Percentage of SFAs
Food costs	77.8
Labor (e.g., salaries/benefits)	52.8
Supplies/equipment	53.9
Operations/administrative	20.9
Other ^a	2.4
No response	0.0

Survey questions B8

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey SY 2021-2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 434 SFAs reported receiving at least one Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement payment. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported expense types by the number of SFAs that reported receiving a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment. SFAs could select all applicable expense types.

^aOther expense types reported included reimbursement of general fund, paying FSMC, training, returning to State, and transportation.

Exhibit E.5. Number and percentage of State agencies reporting payments were minimally, somewhat, or highly effective at stabilizing the financial health of local program operators' food service operations or making up for lost revenues during the public health emergency in spring 2020

Reported effectiveness	Number of State agencies	Percent of State agencies
Highly effective	25	37
Somewhat effective	27	40
Minimally effective	2	3
Don't know	13	19
Missing	0	0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021-2022.

Exhibit E.6. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage reporting the effectiveness of reimbursement payments for covering fixed operational costs and/or making up for lost revenues during the public health emergency in spring 2020

Level of effectiveness	Percentage of SFAs
Highly effective	38.4
Somewhat effective	39.2
Minimally effective	22.4
No response	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 434 SFAs reported receiving at least one Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement payment. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported the level of effectiveness by the total number of SFAs that reported receiving a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment.

Exhibit E.7. Of SFAs that received a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment, percentage reporting the impact of reimbursement payments on their ability to continue operating Child Nutrition Programs

Impact	Percentage of SFAs
High impact: The payment was an important determining factor in our ability to continue program operations	12.7
Significant impact: Stabilized or substantially improved financial health of our food service operation	41.1
Minimal impact: Did not substantially affect our ability to continue program operations	46.2
No response	0.0

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 434 SFAs reported receiving at least one Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement payment. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each impact by the total number of SFAs that reported receiving a Child Nutrition Emergency Operational Costs reimbursement payment.

Appendix F: Supplemental Exhibits Related to Chapter V

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Exhibit F.1. Percentage of State agencies that experienced financial or operational challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs, or challenges implementing or using the COVID-19 waivers, during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Type of challenges	Percentage	Percentage missing
Financial	27	1
Operational	93	0
Implementing or using waivers	69	1

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Notes: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each type of challenges by 67 total State agency respondents. Percentage missing calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that did not answer the question by 67 total State agency respondents.

Exhibit F.2. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors contributed to operational challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021, by Program

Factors contributing to operational challenges	NSLP	SBP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
Untimely guidance from FNS	85	83	78	84	74
Unclear guidance from FNS	72	72	73	82	76
Redesigning monitoring approaches (for example, from onsite to virtual)	68	68	67	76	70
Implementing IT system changes	68	68	71	76	64
Resources needed to manage multiple Child Nutrition Programs simultaneously (for example, school meals and summer meals)	62	62	61	64	54
Resources needed to provide technical assistance to local program operators	58	57	59	64	56
Resources needed to review and approve waiver requests from providers	53	53	55	60	58
Unexpected staff training needs	47	47	49	50	42
Insufficient technical assistance from FNS	42	40	37	44	48
Office closures	40	40	41	42	44
Resources needed to approve meal sites	32	32	39	42	30
Managing staffing shortages (for example, due to illness or other reasons)	34	34	31	38	42
Limitations on ability to hire new staff	34	34	33	38	42
Resources needed to assist providers with identification of meal sites	13	13	22	34	22
Resources needed to administer USDA Foods	30	25	22	18	12
No operational challenges with program administration	6	6	10	2	2

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each factor per program by the total number of State agencies who oversee each program.

Exhibit F.3. Percentage of State agencies that were unable to overcome certain challenges with implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition waivers during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Challenge	Percentage of State agencies
Untimely guidance from FNS	10
Staffing issue	6
Implementing IT system changes	4
Reporting requirements were not clear	3
Unclear guidance from FNS	3
LPO misinterpretation of waiver requirements	1
Monitoring local program operators	1
None: State agencies were able to overcome all challenges	43
None: No challenges reported implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition waivers	31

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: As shown in Appendix Exhibit F.1, 69 percent of State agencies had challenges implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition nationwide waivers. State agencies that experienced challenges were asked which they were unable to overcome. Challenges listed were derived from State agencies' open-ended responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each challenge that could not be overcome by the total number of State agencies that oversee the programs. Some State agencies reported that they were able to overcome all challenges and others reported they experienced no challenges. These responses are captured in the last two rows of this exhibit.

Exhibit F.4. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors assisted efforts to overcome challenges implementing or using COVID-19 Child Nutrition waivers during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021

Factor	Percentage
Collaboration with local program operators	43
Collaboration with other State agencies	42
Timely technical assistance from FNS Regional Office	34
Timely guidance and clarification from FNS National Office	31
Comprehensive technical assistance from FNS Regional Office	27
Comprehensive guidance and clarification from FNS National Office	25
Collaboration with suppliers or food vendors	16
Other^a	
Regional Office communications meetings and support	1
Support from Governor's office/State administrators	3
Timely State approval of waiver requests	4

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that reported each factor by the total number of State agencies that oversee the programs.

^a “Other” responses were derived from State agencies’ open-ended responses. Responses that did not directly address the question were not coded. For example, some State agencies provided information on why they were unable to overcome the challenges.

Exhibit F.5. Percentage of State agencies reporting certain factors contributed to financial challenges administering Child Nutrition Programs during SY 2020-2021 or summer 2021, by program

Factors contributing to financial challenges	NSLP	SSO	SFSP	CACFP
IT system changes	65	63	59	44
Increased staff hours	35	38	35	31
Rules regarding use of State administrative expense funds (SAE) or State administrative funds (SAF)	35	38	35	19
Insufficient State administrative expense funds (SAE) or State administrative funds (SAF)	29	31	18	19
Added new staff	18	19	24	19
Staff overtime	12	13	18	13
No financial challenges with program administration	24	19	18	31

Source: School Meals Operations Study, State Agency Child Nutrition Director COVID-19 Waiver Collection School Year 2021–2022.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of State agencies reporting each factor per program by the total number of State agencies who oversee each program. Percentage missing calculated by dividing the number of State agencies that did not answer the question per program by the total number of State agencies who oversee each program.

Exhibit F.6. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage of SFAs that reported any operational challenges providing meal service during SY 2020-2021 and October through December 2021

Time period	Experienced operational challenges	Did not experience operational challenges	No response
SY 2020-2021	68.3	31.2	0.3
October through December 2021	64.2	35.6	0.2

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported operational challenges by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. 1,078 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in October through December 2021.

Exhibit F.7. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported certain factors contributed to operational challenges in SY 2020-2021 and October through December 2021

Factors contributing to operational challenges	SY 2020-2021	October through December 2021
Using different Child Nutrition Programs to provide meals	14.2	7.0
Identifying meal site locations	10.8	1.4
Obtaining approval for new meal sites	4.9	1.4
Establishing and using new or alternative meal service methods or new meal delivery methods	37.6	12.0
Obtaining needed meal service equipment	24.3	18.4
Obtaining needed storage facilities	19.4	11.0
Staffing meal sites	44.7	39.2
Ensuring staff safety or obtaining personal protective equipment	30.0	15.4
Managing meal service during staff absences	52.2	46.2
Food shortages or supply chain issues	55.9	59.3
Obtaining meal packaging	46.4	47.3
Availability or distribution of USDA Foods	22.5	25.7
Unclear guidance from FNS	13.0	8.0
Unclear guidance from the State	15.0	8.1
Untimely guidance from FNS	14.7	9.3
Untimely guidance from the State	15.4	9.0
Not enough technical assistance from the State	9.7	6.0
Other ^b	1.2	0.4
No response	0.7	0.5

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 778 SFAs reported facing operational challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021. 736 SFAs reported facing operational challenges providing meal service from October through December 2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each factor by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program, for each time period.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021. 1,078 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in October through December 2021.

^b Other reported factors contributing to operational challenges in SY 2020-2021 included excessive changes in guidance, issues with meal pickup, and lack of communication or support from school leadership. Other reported factors contributing to operational challenges from October through December 2021 included administrative review, increased costs, vendor challenges, and lack of guidance on procurement.

Exhibit F.8. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program, percentage experiencing any financial challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021

SFA characteristic	Experienced financial challenges			
	Yes	No	No response	n
All SFAs	38.6	61.0	0.2	1,081
SFA size (enrollment)				
Very small (1–499)	26.9*	72.8*	0.0	389
Small (500–2,499)	40.7	58.7	0.3	326
Medium (2,500–4,999)	53.5*	46.5*	0.0	168
Large (5,000–99,999)	64.3*	35.1*	0.5	171
Very large (100,000+)	81.5*	18.5*	0.0	27
SFA poverty level				
<60%	40.6	59.2	0.1	737
60% +	34.6	64.8	0.3	344
SFA urbanicity				
Suburban	50.0*	49.3*	0.7	319
Urban	34.3	65.1	0.0	226
Rural	34.8*	65.0*	0.0	536

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs. SFA poverty level obtained from the latest available FNS-742 file, with missing values obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey. SFA urbanicity obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey, with missing values imputed according to the SFA’s geographic location.

Note: Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported facing challenges by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

* Indicates that when comparing SFAs that have the characteristic to all other SFAs, the difference in the percentage of SFAs reporting each factor between the following two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exhibit F.9. Of SFAs that used a Child Nutrition Program^a, percentage that reported certain factors contributed to financial challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021

Factors contributing to financial challenges	Yes	No	Not applicable	No response
Meal packaging costs	31.6	4.7	1.7	0.6
Increased food costs	35.1	2.6	0.7	0.2
Meal transportation or delivery costs	17.8	12.6	7.4	0.8
Purchasing equipment for alternative meal service approaches	15.9	13.8	8.0	0.9
Additional storage for alternative meal service approaches	12.7	16.8	8.1	1.0
Staff overtime or hazard pay	18.5	14.2	5.3	0.6
Staff turnover	21.7	11.7	0.0	5.2
Staff training	18.8	14.4	4.4	0.9
Purchasing personal protective equipment for staff	23.8	11.4	2.8	0.6
Fixed staff-related costs, such as salaries or benefits	20.3	12.8	4.9	0.6
Other fixed costs, such as those related to utilities, maintenance, or vendor contracts	14.3	17.1	6.3	0.9
Decreased Federal reimbursement due to decreased participation	22.5	11.4	0.0	4.7
Other ^b	0.8	4.5	9.8	23.4

Source: School Meals Operations Study, SFA Director Survey School Year 2021–2022. Nationally representative sample of 1,094 SFAs.

Note: 458 SFAs reported experiencing any financial challenges providing meal service in SY 2020-2021. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of SFAs that reported each factor contributing to financial challenges by the total number of SFAs that reported using a Child Nutrition Program.

^a 1,081 SFAs reported using a Child Nutrition Program in SY 2020-2021.

^b “Other” responses included funding issues, supply shortages, school closures, staffing shortages, and reduced participation.

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