

School Nutrition Programs COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Volume 2

1. **Question:** We are having troubling receiving enough milk. What can we do?

Answer: *Milk* in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) means whole milk, lowfat milk, skim milk, and buttermilk. All milk must be fluid and pasteurized and must meet State and local standards for the appropriate type of milk. Milk served may be flavored or unflavored. There is no milk choice requirement in the SFSP meal pattern, so sponsors only have to provide one type of milk.

Per 7 CFR 225.16(f)(6) of the SFSP regulations and 7 CFR 210.10(d)(2)(i) of the NSLP regulations, the State Agency has the authority to allow meals to be served and claimed without milk during a temporary emergency condition. Should this issue arise, please reach out to [Child Nutrition Programs](#) to request a temporary waiver of this requirement.

Please also see question 3 for options on offering milk in larger cartons or jugs.

2. **Question:** We are having trouble meeting other aspects of the meal pattern due to food shortages. What can we do?

Answer: First, attempt to substitute other items for the planned item. The SFSP meal pattern is quite flexible, so in most cases a substitution should be possible.

If a substitution is not possible, reach out to [Child Nutrition Programs](#) for a meal pattern waiver, per the nationwide USDA waiver issued on March 25, 2020. This allows sponsors who are experiencing disruptions to the availability of food products resulting from COVID-19 to request a meal pattern waiver from the state agency. Sponsors must provide a description of the circumstances and the meal pattern component affected. The State Agency will approve these waiver requests on a case-by-case basis. Sponsors must have approval prior to serving meals that do not meet meal pattern requirements. This nationwide waiver is effective immediately and remains in effect until April 30, 2020 or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

3. **Question:** If we are sending home multiple days of meals at a time, may we provide bulk food for the household to assemble the meals, such as a loaf of bread and peanut butter?



Answer: Currently, meals must be unitized. A unitized meal is when all meal pattern components are packaged in the minimum required serving sizes and delivered and served as a unit. The state agency has reached out to USDA to see about additional flexibilities in this area, however pending further guidance, bulk meals (i.e., a loaf of bread and jar of peanut butter) should not be sent out.

Milk does not need to be unitized. If the sponsor is distributing multiple days' worth of meals at a time, they may consider distributing a larger carton/jug of milk, as long as the number of ounces adds up to at least 8oz per meal being distributed. For example, if 5 days' worth of breakfasts and lunches are being distributed at one time, the carton/jug of milk would need to contain at least 80oz of milk. 3 quarts (32oz each), or one half gallon (64oz) and one quart (32oz), or a whole gallon (128oz) would accomplish this.

4. **Question:** If we are serving multiple meals at one time, such as breakfast and lunch, and providing multiple days' worth of meals, how must be document meal counts?

Answer: Sponsors may use a single meal count sheet to reflect that multiple meals were sent out at one time, however the sheet must clearly show which days and which meals were claimed. For example, if one column is checked off to include breakfast and lunch on both Monday and Tuesday, the column should be very clearly labeled to show what meals are being claimed. The count sheets should still show daily totals for each meal. These count sheets will then be consolidated to a monthly count for breakfast and for lunch before claiming for reimbursement.

5. **Question:** How do we submit a claim for reimbursement?

Answer: Child Nutrition Programs will be providing a slide deck and recorded training to show how to submit the claim.

6. **Question:** Do children need to be present to provide meals?

Answer: No. However, USDA has indicated in their nationwide waiver on March 25, 2020 that the state agency and sponsors must take additional steps to ensure that only children receive meals. In Vermont, we are accomplishing this by requiring that sites label any meals that are distributed when children are not present to say that they are intended for consumption by children age 18 and under.

7. **Question:** Can school food service operations continue under the Per Governor Scott's "[Stay Home, Stay Safe](#)" order that went into effect March 25, 2020?

Answer: Yes. In guidance provided by the Secretary of Education on March 25, the Agency of Education clarified that schools should continue with feeding students. The continued provision of these services is required under section 6(q) of Addendum 6 which speaks to the maintenance of services for economically disadvantaged populations.

Food Service and meal distribution staff may continue to report to work to provide these services. However, staff should be reminded that when they are not working, they should follow the directive to stay home, and maintain social distancing if they must go out.

Food service programs are encouraged to continue exploring ways to limit employee interactions and exposure with each other and the public. The Agency has issued [COVID-19 Food Service Health and Safety FAQs](#) and [Best Practices for Bus Stop Meal Delivery During COVID-19](#). Programs may consider breaking staff up into multiple teams and having these teams work out of multiple kitchens, to limit the number of staff members working in one kitchen and reduce interactions.

In addition, programs are strongly encouraged to consider distributing multiple days' worth of meals at one time, to limit interactions. Child Nutrition Programs can approve up to one weeks' worth of meals distributed at one time.

8. **Question:** If an employee has been in close contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19, should they stay home?

Answer: Yes. If someone has been in contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19, they should stay home. Please see [What to Do if You Have Been in Contact with Someone Who May Have COVID-19](#) for more information.

9. **Question:** What are the reimbursement rates for meals served in the SFSP?

Answer: Area-eligible sites will claim all meals at the rate listed below. Sites that are not area eligible will claim free/reduced meals at the rates listed below, but will not receive federal reimbursement for the paid meals, unless more than 50% of the children who eat end up being free/reduced status. In that case, the site may transition to "closed-enrolled in a non-needy area" and all the meals will be claimed at the rates below. There is not a "reduced" rate for SFSP, all free/reduced meals are claimed at the same rate.

Meal	Rural/Self-Prep, Rural/Vended, and Urban/Self-Prep	Urban/Vended
Breakfast	2.3750	2.33
Lunch/Supper	4.1525	4.0875
AM/PM Snack	.9775	.9550