

Child Nutrition – School Breakfast and Lunch

Document Updated on March 15, 2020 at 5:30PM

One of Ohio's highest priorities during the ordered school-building closure period, which seeks to diminish the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), is to ensure that students receive nutritious meals. This is fundamental to supporting the whole child. We recognize this will be challenging, but we are already heartened and encouraged by the way in which the education community and food service operations are stepping up to meet the needs of students.

To achieve this goal, the Ohio Department of Education has developed this technical assistance document to help schools think through important child nutrition opportunities. This information will help ensure the most successful outcomes.

Schools should file the specified applications as quickly as possible to ensure the smoothest transition to alternate food service operations during the ordered school building closure. This process will not take much time.

School or District Closure

During the ordered school-building closure period, all closed schools may continue to receive reimbursement for meals served during the closure by following the simple steps described in this document. Schools can apply to participate in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to continue serving meals during the ordered school-building closure period.

Schools that have student enrollments of 50 percent or more free or reduced-price or that are Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools

Schools with 50 percent or more free or reduced-price enrolled students participating in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or area eligible based on [census data](#) may offer meals to students and count and claim meals served under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Reference the [Summer Food Service Program versus Seamless Summer Option comparison chart](#) for more information.

Schools with less than 50 percent free or reduced-price enrolled students

Schools that do **not** have at least 50 percent free or reduced-price enrolled students must operate as a closed enrolled site under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Schools operating as a closed enrolled site must maintain a roster for students receiving meals to track eligibility and aim to serve free and reduced-price enrolled students during the ordered school-building closure period.

Note: Schools should not turn away students. *In those cases where an ineligible student is provided a meal, the school should track this activity for further consideration. At the present time, reimbursement requests through the normal procedures should not include ineligible meals. We have initiated a waiver request to allow reimbursement for such meals.*

Steps for Operating Effectively

Step 1: Request waiver to serve meals during the ordered school-building closure period

Schools that opt to serve meals during the ordered school-building closure period must complete the [Feeding Children During Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Related Unanticipated School Closures Application](#). When completing the application, schools must provide information about participating sites, dates of closure and meal service, meal distribution methods used, methods to serve free and reduced-price students, methods for communicating meal availability with families and how schools will conduct program oversight.

Upon approval from the Ohio Department of Education, the school must choose to operate under the Seamless Summer Option or the Summer Food Service Program. Then, schools will work with their assigned education program specialist to complete the application.

Step 2: Complete Either the Seamless Summer Option Application or the Summer Food Program Application

Seamless Summer Option Application

Schools that opt to serve meals through the Seamless Summer Option during the ordered school-building closure period must list the sites participating in the Seamless Summer Option in the waiver request. Upon approval, the school can complete the application in the [Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System \(CRRS\)](#) School Nutrition Program module in the 2019-2020 Application Packet.

- Once in the application packet, click **Seamless Summer Option** under **Site Applications**. Make sure to fully complete each site application.
- In the periods of operation section, document the meal service start date and anticipated date by which meal service will end. A revised application may be submitted to amend this date as needed.
- Enter the number of serving days anticipated for March and April in the top boxes and the estimated number of students served daily in the bottom boxes.
- Make sure you save each screen and check certification boxes as needed. Schools must **Save** then **Finish** the Seamless Summer Option site application then click **Submit**.

Summer Food Service Program Application

Schools that opt to serve meals through the Summer Food Service Program during the ordered school-building closure period must complete the application in the [Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System \(CRRS\)](#). It is important to complete the application in the following order. Most of the information submitted last year has pre-populated into the fiscal year 2020 application. Be sure to save each screen and check certification boxes as needed.

1. Sponsor Application
2. Management Plan
3. Food Production Facility List (even if self-prep)
4. Site Applications
5. Budget Detail: Complete after all sites have been entered and submitted error free
6. Checklist Summary for sponsors and sites (supporting documents)
7. Submit completed application packet for approval

Meal Pattern Requirements

Meals must meet the regular menu planning requirements of the [Summer Food Service Program](#) or [Seamless Summer Option](#), which follows the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) menu planning. Offer versus serve (OVS) will not apply and all meals must be unitized, meaning a complete reimbursable meal that meets the requirements of the menu planning method used, including milk, must be distributed. Shelf-stable milk may be used. USDA foods also may be used. (Note: If a school encounters a situation where it runs out of an item that prevents the achievement of a unitized meal, it should immediately contact the Ohio Department of Education to notify of the situation, but then continue to serve meals.)

If availability of milk or other meal components becomes a persistent issue, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will work with the Ohio Department of Education to provide the needed waivers or flexibility.

Non-Congregate Feeding Options

Schools choosing to feed students can use non-congregate feeding options during the ordered school-building closure period. Non-congregate feeding sites are those where the meal is consumed offsite. The following options are available to schools:

- Meal distribution at a school site
- Meals delivered to set locations in neighborhoods
- Volunteers delivering meals to households
- Meal distribution at a community location
- Other methods as identified (including by mail)

If schools deliver meals to households, they must:

1. Seek approval from the local or county health department for the school's chosen mode of delivery.
2. Ensure that volunteers or non-food service employees sign an appropriate non-disclosure form to protect private information about eligible students and households.
3. In cases where volunteers or non-food service employees are used to provide home-meal delivery, obtain the consent of the household for information about the family's free and reduced meal status being shared with delivery personnel to facilitate service of meals to the children. (This is an important privacy protection.)

Multi-Day Distribution: Schools are permitted to deliver up to one week of meals at a time. In the Seamless Summer Option or Summer Food Service Program application, the school food authority must detail to the Office of Integrated Student Supports its multi-day distribution approach.

Requirements for Mailing: If a school decides to mail shelf-stable, reimbursable meals to households, postage would be an allowable cost using food service funds.

Collaboration with Local Health Department: Schools are encouraged to work with their local or county health department to determine the safest non-congregate feeding option for their district.

Shelf-Stable Foods: To further ensure food safety, schools may choose to select shelf-stable foods that meet the meal components including shelf-stable milk.

Claims for Reimbursement for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

Reimbursement claims for meals served before the ordered school-building closure:

School meals served prior to the unanticipated ordered school-building closure period under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) must follow the Child Nutrition Program's [claim deadline requirements](#). Claims for reimbursement are submitted through the [Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System \(CRRS\)](#).

Reimbursement claims for meals served during the ordered school-building closure:

Reimbursement claims for meals served during the ordered school-building closure are submitted in the CRRS under the program the school selected to operate during the closure. If a school opts to serve under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), claims are submitted in the CRRS School Nutrition Program module. If a school opts to serve under the Summer Food Service Program (SFPS), claims are submitted in the CRRS Summer Food Service Program module.

Log in to the [CRRS](#) and select the School Nutrition Program for the Seamless Summer Option or Summer Food Service Program module.

- Click the Claims section and then select Claim – SSO or Claim – SFSP. This displays the Claim Year Summary screen.
- Select the Claim Month to display the Claim Month Details screen.
- Select the site, enter all claim information then click Save and Finish.
- Click Continue, check Certification box and then Submit for Payment and Finished.

Schools may not submit a claim for a month that does not have an approved application packet in effect. If you cannot access claims for a specific month, check that the application packet is approved for that month. If your application packet is approved and you still are unable to submit a claim, contact your assigned education program specialist.

Other Considerations for Schools Participating in USDA Foods Program

Canceling scheduled food supply deliveries from state warehouses to schools: Schools participating in the USDA Foods Program are permitted to cancel scheduled deliveries of USDA Foods. For direct deliveries from the state-contracted warehouse, please contact [Christine Farmer](#) or [Justin Chapman](#) with the scheduled delivery date and location. Schools must notify the Ohio Department of Education by 12 p.m. the day before the scheduled delivery.

Changing Delivery Locations: Schools may also change delivery locations to accommodate delivery location closures. Schools may opt to consolidate orders to one delivery location if needed. For direct deliveries from the state-contracted warehouse, please contact [Christine Farmer](#) or [Justin Chapman](#) with the new delivery location and dates of operation.

Co-Operative Purchasing Groups: Schools that receive USDA Foods through a co-operative purchasing group (co-op) must work with their co-op administrator to modify deliveries.

1. Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Participants: Schools that participate in the USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program must contact Premier Produce One directly to cancel or modify orders. Contact [Casey Bauer](#) at Premier Produce One.

Expiration Dates: For all USDA Foods, schools should note the expiration dates of all products and take steps to use or dispose of perishable food inventories before the expiration date. Schools may contact manufacturers to verify a product's expiration date. If a school cannot use products prior to the expiration date, the school may donate those items to charitable organizations such as a food bank. Keep a record of any donated or disposed items.

Schools Opting Not to Serve Meals

Schools and districts should make all decisions in the best interest of the health and safety of students and the community. Local school districts have the discretion to serve meals during the ordered school-building closure period; however, schools and community organizations are encouraged to ensure that the needs of low-income children are met during extended school dismissals. Schools should communicate and work with local community partners and organizations to identify ways to serve children during a school closure.

Additional School Nutrition Food Program Waivers Being Requested

Meal Pattern Flexibility Waiver: The U.S. Department of Agriculture is not currently processing meal pattern waivers due to adequate food supply. **If a school or site experiences food shortages, contact the Office of Integrated Student Supports immediately at Child.Nutrition@education.ohio.gov or contact your Education Program Specialist.**

Waiver Requesting Approval for All School Sites to Operate as Open Sites: The Ohio Department of Education filed a waiver with the U.S. Department of Agriculture requesting approval for all school sites to operate open sites under either the Seamless Summer Option or the Summer Food Service Program. If the waiver is approved, the Ohio Department of Education will notify school food authorities. If approved, this would allow sites to be reimbursed for all meals served regardless of a student's eligibility. Until the waiver is approved, sites with less than 50 percent of enrolled students eligible for free and reduced meals must operate a "closed enrolled" site and only count and claim meals for reimbursement served to free and reduced-price eligible students.

Please check back for updates to this page frequently. For more information and questions, contact: Child.Nutrition@education.ohio.gov or contact your Education Program Specialist.