



USDA Extends Flexibilities, Paves the Way for Meals for Kids to Continue through Summer

(Washington, D.C., May 15, 2020) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the extension of three nationwide waivers, giving child nutrition program operators the flexibility they need to continue to feed children while promoting social distancing and keeping families safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“USDA has been extremely aggressive in expanding flexibilities to ensure Americans who have been impacted by the coronavirus continue to receive the food they need for themselves and their families,” said Secretary Perdue. “As our nation reopens and people return to work, we want to continue to be flexible since there is not a one size fits all approach to feeding kids. Extending these waivers throughout the summer ensures local operators can make plans that best suit their communities and keep children fed.”

Throughout the pandemic, schools and local program sponsors have used flexibilities provided by USDA to find creative ways to [feed kids](#), such as setting up drive-thru pick-ups and delivering meals on bus routes. With the extension of these waivers, these innovative models can continue, without interruption, while state and local social distancing orders remain in place.

Background:

Since March, USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has made maximum use of existing program flexibilities and new authorities granted by Congress to make it as easy as possible for children to receive food through the department’s nutrition assistance programs during the national health emergency. Today’s announcement extends three key flexibilities that will allow current operations to continue without

disruption and ensure states and program operators have time to plan for continued operations throughout the summer.

Today, FNS is extending the following waivers nationwide through August 31, 2020:

- **Non-Congregate Feeding:** FNS is allowing meals to be served to children outside of the normally-required group setting to support social distancing.
- **Parent Pickup:** FNS is allowing parents and/or guardians to pick up meals and bring them home to their children.
- **Meal Times:** FNS is waiving requirements that meals be served at certain standard times to allow for grab-n-go options. This also allows for multiple days-worth of meals to be provided at once.

In addition to granting significant program flexibilities through both nationwide and individual state waivers, FNS is rapidly approving states for [Pandemic-EBT](#), which provides food-purchasing benefits, equal to the value of school meals, to households with children who would otherwise be receiving free or reduced-price meals at school. FNS has approved 26 plans and continues to review new plans as they are submitted.

These actions and more are part of FNS's critical response to the COVID-19 outbreak. To learn more, visit www.fns.usda.gov/coronavirus and follow FNS on Twitter at [@USDANutrition](https://twitter.com/USDANutrition).

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers [15 nutrition assistance programs](#) that leverage American's agricultural abundance to ensure children and low-income individuals and families have nutritious food to eat. FNS also co-develops the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), which provide science-based nutrition recommendations and serve as the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy.

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