

Child Nutrition Extension Waivers

Below is the list of child nutrition extension waivers the U.S. Department of Agriculture granted to the Arkansas Department of Education's Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. The waivers allow for the continual serving of meals at no cost to students through the end of the 2020-2021 school year under the Seamless Summer Option.

The purpose of the extension is to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals while the nation recovers from COVID-19. During the pandemic, USDA has continued to provide flexibilities for the purpose of assisting families and ensuring that children are fed whether they attend school in a classroom environment or as virtual students.



In order for schools to operate under these waivers, school districts must submit an opt-in form to DESE's Child Nutrition Unit. For more information, contact your local school district or the DESE Child Nutrition Unit at (501) 324-9502.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021**

- This waiver allows the SSO to continue to operate through the 2020-2021 school year.
- This waiver facilitates the safe provision of meals by eliminating the need to collect meal payments, including cash payments, at meal sites. This speeds up the service of meals and reduces contact and potential exposure to COVID-19.
- Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option**

- Under this waiver, SSO closed enrolled sites during the COVID-19 public health emergency may determine site eligibility through area eligibility guidelines without collecting income eligibility applications. Meal applications should continue to be completed and collected, as the results affect school district funding.
- Under program regulations (not within a public health emergency), SSO closed enrolled sites are required to collect income eligibility applications to determine that 50 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced price meals. This waiver eliminates the requirement of applications to reduce the administrative burden.
- Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver of Meal Service Time Restrictions in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option**
 - This waives the meal service time requirements.
 - Under this waiver, schools can serve breakfast and lunch at the same time and/or offer multiple meals for each school day at one time.
 - Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Extend Area Eligibility Waivers**
 - This extends the ability for states to continue operating open sites in areas that normally would not be eligible.
 - Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option**
 - This waives the requirement that schools must offer students a variety (at least two different options) of fluid milk.
 - This waiver allows schools to continue to provide meals when a meal component (or food item) is not available for the district to purchase.
 - Before receiving this waiver, districts must justify that a food item is unavailable as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
 - DESE will approve this waiver on a case-by-case basis.
 - Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-congregate Feeding in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option**
 - This is a waiver allowing non-congregate feeding, meaning that the meals provided can be taken and eaten offsite.
 - Non-congregate feeding is normally allowed only through the Seamless Summer Option during the summer when schools are closed. With many districts offering virtual school, allowing non-congregate feeding is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures are met for providing and receiving meals.
 - Expires: June 30, 2021.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children**
 - This waiver allows schools to distribute meals to parents/guardians to take home to their children.
 - Districts must develop a process to ensure meals are distributed only to parents/guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals are not distributed.
 - Expires: June 30, 2021.