

Child Nutrition USDA Waivers for School Year 2021-2022

Below is the list of child nutrition waivers the U.S. Department of Agriculture granted to the Arkansas Department of Education's Division of Elementary and Secondary Education/Child Nutrition Unit. The waivers allow for the continual serving of meals at no cost to students through School Year 2021-2022, under the Seamless Summer Option.

The purpose of the USDA waivers for school year 2021-22 is to ensure children have access to nutritious meals while the nation continues to recover from COVID-19. During the pandemic, USDA has continued to provide flexibilities for the purpose of assisting families and ensuring children are fed whether they attend school in a classroom environment or as virtual students.



Arkansas Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) opted-in to the following waivers and flexibilities to increase funding, support access, and balance operational needs with the goal of providing nutritious meals for school year 2021-2022. School Food Authorities (SFAs) have the option to opt-in to these waivers with a submitted Schedule D. The Schedule D is an addendum to the 2021-2022 Agreement between CNU and the SFA. For information regarding the waivers utilized by an SFA, contact your local district.

USDA expect the flexibilities provided for this school year will only be utilized as needed, and that schools will seek to meet the nutrition standards to the greatest extent possible.

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2021-2022**
 - This waiver allows the SSO to continue to operate through school year 2021-2022.
 - 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, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year
- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program Reimbursement Rates in School Year 2021-2022**
 - This waiver recognizes the increased cost of providing child nutrition programs meals in the public health emergency, and supports efforts to serve meals in a safe and accessible manner that minimizes potential exposure to COVID-19.
 - Expires: June 30, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year
- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Meal Service for School Year 2021-2022**
 - This is a waiver allowing non-congregate feeding, meaning that the meals provided can be taken and eaten offsite.
 - Non-congregate feeding is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures are met for providing and receiving meals.
 - Non-congregate feeding flexibilities provide schools and child care operators the opportunity to provide meal pick-up options for students learning virtually, and also facilitate grab-and-go meals for students in school.
 - Expires: June 30, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year

- **Nationwide Waiver of Meal Times Requirements for School Year 2021-2022**
 - This waives the meal service time requirements.
 - This waiver is for the purpose of implementing appropriate safety measures by supporting alternative meal service models and social distancing in child nutrition programs.
 - 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, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children for School Year 2021-2022**
 - 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, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Specific School Meal Pattern Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022**
 - 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, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year

- **Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in School Year 2021-2022**
 - FNS recognizes, waiving the offer versus serve requirement will support safe access to nutritious meals.
 - Also facilitates implementation of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for safe school meal service, which include serving individually plated or pre-packaged meals.
 - Expires: June 30, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year

- **Nationwide Waiver of Area Eligibility in the Afterschool Programs and for Family Day Care Home Providers in School Year 2021-2022**
 - This nationwide waiver of area eligibility requirements provides improved access to nutritious meals and snacks for children by allowing state agencies to provide benefits to children who may be newly eligible due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.
 - This waiver allows schools, regardless of their location, to claim all afterschool snacks at the free rate.
 - Expires: June 30, 2022 or until the close of the regular school year