The COVID-19 pandemic has school districts across the nation preparing for a variety of learning models. School meals will continue to be an indispensable contribution to children's lives, maintaining their food security and supporting learning and a healthy weight. This resource builds upon the learnings from spring and summer 2020 and provides tools and tips for running successful and sustainable nutrition programs when moving “back-to-school.”

**Best Practices Moving Into SY 20-21**
COVID-19 planning templates, reopening protocols, and additional resources that support school nutrition programs in return-to-school planning efforts.

**Back-to-School Planning Tools**
Center for Ecoliteracy COVID-19 Return to School Planning Resources
LunchAssist Reopening Checklist
LunchAssist Waiver Toolkit

**Resources for Food Service**
LunchAssist Sample 5-Day Meal Kit Tip Sheet
USDA Providing Multiple Meals During Coronavirus

*Note: this is aimed at SSO operations but pages 4-12 provide information that applies to all “bulk meal” provision, including distribution amounts.*

Farm to School Network Local Food in COVID-19 Response and Recovery

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**What are top-of-mind issues for schools as they shift back to operating NSLP?**
- Establishing safe point-of-sale payments for children purchasing school meals
- Ensuring meals provided at drive-through/grab-n-go pick-up sites are distributed only to students enrolled in the school or district
- Providing enough staffing for non-congregate, on-site school meal service
- Keeping employees safe from COVID-19 exposure
- Maintaining quality and innovation in menus despite ongoing challenges and disruptions
- Distributing some foods in bulk – or re-packaging foods – when individually-wrapped items are unavailable or undesirable
- Managing additional costs related to operating during COVID-19 despite potential reductions in revenue
- Navigating regulatory uncertainties on USDA waivers

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Photos: North Monterey County Unified School District (CA) weekly meal kit distribution
Resources for Food Education

Vermont Harvest of the Month
Montana Harvest of the Month Videos
Center for Ecoliteracy Abundant California and Nourishing Students resources
The Edible Schoolyard Project Edible Education for the Home Classroom
LunchAssist Healthy Plate Coloring Sheet and Family Mealtime Recipes
FoodCorps Video Lessons and COVID-19 Resources
Action For Healthy Kids COVID-19 Resources: Physical Activity Nutrition and More

Other Resources for School Nutrition Programs during COVID-19

Back-to-School Meal Service Toolkit Feeding Students During the 2020-2021 School Year Amidst the Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic. Meal service options. (No Kid Hungry – Share Our Strength. Released July 23, 2020)

School Reopening Plans FRAC Tracker. An overview of available state plans for reopening schools in the fall with a focus on meal services. (Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). Ongoing updates)


Resources for Schools to Support Healthy Menu Development. A collection of healthy school meal cookbooks and recipes. (Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). June 2020)

Considerations for Schools includes general recommendations for COVID-19 mitigation strategies when schools are open. (Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Ongoing updates)

School Nutrition Association's COVID-19 Resource Page: Clearinghouse of school nutrition resources, including policy updates, COVID-19 back to school resources, SNA Back to School webinars (free to all), and industry and allied partner resources.

Overview of Federal School Meal Programs

School Year Meal Program Options:

- The National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP) provide meals for all children enrolled in participating schools. Children may be eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. All children attending schools that participate in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 receive breakfast and lunch at no cost.
- The CACFP At-risk Afterschool Program and NSLP Afterschool Snack Program may be used to provide snack/supper at eligible schools.
The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides an extra serving of fruit or vegetable to every child in participating schools.

**Summer Meal Program Options:**
- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) provide meals and snacks for children at eligible sites.

**USDA Waiver Status – School Meal Programs**

In spring and summer of 2020, USDA’s waivers provided SFSP and SSO programs with numerous flexibilities in order to navigate circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to [Summary of Waivers and Memos](from No Kid Hungry - Share Our Strength) for the latest updates, details and hyperlinks for waivers.

- **Waivers in Effect until June 30, 2021 for NSLP, SBP, and CACFP**
  - Non-congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs
  - Meal Service Time Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs
  - Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children
  - Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs
  - Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the NSLP

- **Waivers in Effect until September 30, 2020**
  - Area Eligibility for Closed Enrolled Sites in the SFSP and NSLP SSO
  - Waiver of the First Week Site Visit Requirement in the SFSP
  - Offer Versus Serve Flexibilities in the SFSP
  - Meal Service Time Flexibilities in the SFSP and SSO
  - Food Service Management Contract Duration in the NSLP and SFSP
  - Waiver of Annual Review Requirements for State Agencies in the CACFP

- **Waivers in Effect until August 31, 2020**
  - Area Eligibility Waiver Extensions

- **Waivers in Effect until July 31, 2020**
  - Meal Pattern Flexibility in the Child Nutrition Programs – for SFSP (other programs until June 2021)

The authors wish to thank the North Monterey County USD, CA, for photos, and the Center for Ecoliteracy, LunchAssist, No Kid Hungry-Share Our Strength, CSPI and FRAC for resources and review. All the authors of and contributors to this publication are members of the ad hoc COVID-19 School Nutrition Implications Working Group, jointly supported by Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN). NOPREN is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Cooperative Agreement No. 5U48DP00498-05. The findings in this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC, CEL, CSPI, FRAC, HER, RWJF or NKH-SOS. This project is funded by the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund COVID-19 Response Cluster, managed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation. [Learn more](#).