



Food Distribution Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Response to Survey Comments

Question: Why don't I get more time between when an item is allocated to me and when I have to place it on an order for delivery?

Answer: Once USDA Foods are received by the warehouse and allocated to a sponsor, the sponsor then has 45 days to place the USDA Foods on an order for delivery. This 45-day window is what we refer to as "free storage". We do not charge a sponsor storage fees during this 45 day window. A sponsor may order part of the allocation and receive weekly deliveries until the amount remaining is zero, or they may order the entire allocation at the time items are made available. A sponsor may leave their USDA Foods inventory at the warehouse for longer than 45 days, but they will then begin incurring an excess storage fee of \$1.10/case. The surplus items and the fresh produce allocations have a different close date. The surplus request allocation must be placed on an order for delivery within 7 days, and a fresh produce allocation must be placed on an order for delivery within 14 days. These procedures are in place to ensure our sponsors receive fresh, high quality foods in a timely manner.

Question: When I have a question, should I contact the delivery company, the warehouse, or the ADE?

Answer: When a sponsor has questions or concerns about their USDA Foods delivery, they may contact the ADE's Food Distribution Program by phone at (602) 542-8700 or by email at FDP@azed.gov from 8:00am - 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. If the question requires communication with the warehouse, the Food Distribution Program will call the warehouse directly or instruct the sponsor to contact the warehouse at that time.

Question: When I attend training it seems there is so much information to go over. Is it possible for the program to get a makeover to simplify even just a little bit?

Answer: The Food Distribution Program is continually working to simplify the program as well as the ordering system. We have enhanced CNP2000 to reduce the many pages and clicks one must visit in order to place an order/refusal, submit surplus requests, and monthly verifications. We will continue to make improvements based on customer feedback. However, this is a Federal program and we must follow all Federal regulations in order to maintain the integrity of the program.

Question: Any chance the ADE can offer additional trainings? I had a hard time getting registered because all the classes were full.

Answer: The Food Distribution Program is aware of the need for more training. We are working to provide online and pre-recorded training sessions. We have also scheduled training earlier in the summer to accommodate sponsors new to the program and want to ensure participation in the USDA Foods program prior to the first day of school.

Question: Our cafeterias are open at 5:30am every day, so why can't US Foods give priority delivery to schools first?

Answer: US Foods has a daily delivery window from 6:00am - 2:30pm (Phoenix time) for schools. This time frame was established to account for the many variables that may affect any one delivery due to things such as product availability, heavy routes, staffing, or traffic/mechanical issues.

Question: Will we be having site visits and more training available?

Answer: We are in the process of hiring a USDA Foods Program reviewer. This position will conduct site visits to ensure program compliance and provide technical assistance. Trainings are held regularly throughout the year. If you have a suggestion for a training topic not currently being offered, please don't hesitate to share your ideas with the ADE's Food Distribution Program.

Question: Could schools please get a phone call reminder to complete their surveys or orders?

Answer: Due to the volume of sponsors currently participating in the Food Distribution Program it is not possible for us to make reminder calls to each sponsor. The Food Distribution Program staff does send out emails and posts reminders in CNP2000 when surveys and orders are due.

Question: Why are we not given more time to complete our surveys before the deadlines?

Answer: The ADE's survey deadlines are based on the USDA's timeline for loading the available items into their online ordering system. 2011-2012 was the first year USDA required us to use their new online ordering system so there were issues throughout the transition. For this reason, we had to shorten the normal 30 day window usually given to sponsors to complete their surveys. Going forward, provided there are no additional issues with the online ordering system, we plan to give sponsors 30 days to complete their surveys.

Question: Are there other methods of communication that the Food Distribution Program could use to disseminate information instead of via memorandum (e.g., newsletter)?

Answer: In prior years, Health and Nutrition Services has disseminated a newsletter and will consider bringing it back to communicate relevant information to sponsors of the Child Nutrition Programs. We do post information on all of our programs on the ADE website. This website recently went through a complete renovation and is now current and timely in its content.

Question: Why don't I always receive response to emails sent to the Food Distribution team and sometimes have to send it twice to get a response?

Answer: The Food Distribution email inbox (FDP@azed.gov) is checked several times throughout the work day. An internal policy has been developed to ensure that emails are responded to in a timely manner.

Question: Why is the time allowed to submit USDA Foods requests from the surplus list request so short?

Answer: Surplus foods are additional items that other sponsors reject from their order and need to be liquidated from inventory quickly. The surplus list timeframes have been created to ensure quick liquidation of inventory so that the items remain fresh and of the highest quality. The surplus list is posted twice a week during working hours that are conducive to cafeteria hours.

Question: Why are there limitations on the types of foods that can be ordered as USDA Foods? Many of the fruits and vegetables offered are repeated frequently.

Answer: Over 180 nutritious foods are provided through the USDA Foods program and are intended to supplement foods used in the Child Nutrition Programs - not to be a sole source of foods for school meals. Based on the emphasis of fruits and vegetables in the New Meal Pattern, the ADE wishes to provide food items that will assist sponsors in complying with the lunch and breakfast menus. Since menu planners in schools tend to plan menus on a cycle basis, items are consistently offered to give the menu planner flexibility. If there is an additional item you are interested in obtaining through the Food Distribution Program, please share your thoughts with us.

Question: What is the policy on refusing USDA Foods and why does it exist?

Answer: Sponsors have 14 calendar days to refuse unwanted items once they are made available through CNP 2000. Any items refused within this timeframe will be credited back to a sponsor's entitlement. The refusal process allows a sponsor to omit items they do not want/cannot use from their existing inventory and is made available to other sponsors via the surplus request list. The 14 day window ensures the items being refused are still of the highest quality for the next recipient.

Question: What are surplus USDA Food items; who are these available to and why?

Answer: Surplus USDA Foods are products that were refused by sponsors who could not use them. A surplus list allows any sponsor in need of additional USDA Foods a chance to request those additional items. The surplus list is offered twice a week and is allocated to schools on a first-come-first-serve basis that same day. The surplus list helps the ADE liquidate inventory in a timely manner while ensuring the freshness and quality of the products.

Question: We are a school who uses a caterer and would like our USDA Foods delivered to our caterer rather than to our school site. Why aren't we allowed to do that?

Answer: The USDA Foods Program has always mandated that all USDA Foods be delivered directly to the school site rather than to caterer prep sites.