



Arizona Department of Education

Health and Nutrition Services Division

HNS# 36-2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Local Educational Agencies Operating the National School Lunch Program

From: Melissa Conner, Associate Superintendent
Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services Division

Date: August 13, 2020

Subject: Welcome Back to School Nutrition Programs: School Year 2020-2021

Original Signed

The purpose of this memorandum is to communicate programmatic updates from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), provide information about the annual application process for the National School Lunch/School Breakfast Programs (NSLP/SBP) specific to School Year 2020-2021 (SY 20-21), and the goal of USDA Foods Program.

Important Updates from ADE and USDA

USDA Waivers

On June 25, 2020, USDA announced the extension of waivers established in response to the novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) through June 30, 2021. The extended waivers include the **Non-Congregate Feeding Waiver, Meal Times Waiver, Parent/Guardian Pickup, and Meal Pattern Flexibility**. The waivers can be accessed on the [School Nutrition Programs COVID-19 Resource webpage](#). School Food Authorities (SFAs) who wish to implement the non-congregate feeding and meal time waivers may do so without taking any further action. SFAs who wish to opt into the parent/guardian pickup waiver and the meal pattern flexibility waiver require must notify ADE by following the guidance in memorandum [HNS 33-2020](#).

Allowability of Providing Meals for Multiple Days in SY 20-21

The non-congregate feeding, meal times and parent/guardian pickup waivers allow SFAs to distribute meals for multiple days as long as SFAs have the capacity to execute such an approach effectively. "Prior to distributing multiples days of meals at a time, SFAs must submit a Multiple Days Meal Distribution Plan to ADE to assess the SFA's capacity. Please refer to memorandum [HNS 33-2020](#) for submission details.

COVID-19 Communications

HNS is introducing COVID-19 Communications to ensure all SFAs are informed on released USDA and ADE guidance.

E-blasts: ADE will alert operators the moment new memorandums or resources are released. E-blasts will also announce the date and time of impromptu ADE webinars to review newly released programmatic regulations. To subscribe to receive these emails, click [here](#).

[School Nutrition Programs COVID-19 Resource Webpage](#): ADE has created a webpage to house memorandums, to house Arizona's waiver elections, and resources, recorded webinars and past e-blasts.

Webinars: ADE will host informational webinars to walk operators through the newly released memorandums and provide time for questions. Webinars will be announced immediately following the release of a memorandum. All webinars will be recorded and can be accessed on the COVID-19 Communications webpage.

Administrative Review Schedule

By June 1, 2020, all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) scheduled to receive an Administrative Review (AR) in SY 20-21 were notified by memorandum. ADE will release the SY 2020-2021 Off-Site Assessment Tool as soon as the USDA provides ADE with the 2020-2021 AR guidance. The SY 20-21 AR schedule can be found on the [Administrative Review webpage](#).

USDA Nationwide Waiver of Onsite Monitoring Requirements in the School Meals Programs have been extended through June 30, 2021, which allow State Agencies to utilize off-site monitoring when reviewing SFAs during this school year. ADE has opted into the waiver and will assess the ability to conduct the AR on-site when possible. School Nutrition Programs (SNP) will be posting three online trainings on the [Administrative Review webpage](#) to prepare SFAs on the AR process for this school year:

- *What to Expect of the Administrative Review SY 20-21*
- *What to Expect of the Entrance and Exit Conference SY 20-21*
- *What to Expect of the Resource Management Review SY 20-21*

Community Eligibility Provision – Application Deadline Extended to August 31

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a meal service option available to eligible SFAs and sites operating the NSLP and SBP. A SFA is eligible for CEP if the SFA's (or district's) ISP or individual site ISP is 40% or higher. View the *Arizona Publication of Community Eligibility Provision Eligible and Near Eligible LEAs* to determine if your SFA/schools are eligible to elect for the upcoming SY 20-21. The publication can be found on the [Special Assistance Provision webpage, CEP Eligibility tab](#).

The benefits of operating CEP are:

- Students receive breakfast and lunch at no cost; therefore, unpaid meal charges are eliminated entirely at electing sites.
- SFAs are relieved from distributing and processing household applications at electing sites
- SFAs count and claim total SBP or NSLP reimbursable meals served instead of counting and claiming by student eligibility category at electing sites
- SFAs are relieved from verification activities at electing sites

LEAs that intend to elect CEP for SY 20-21 must notify ADE by submitting a CEP application and supporting Identified Student Percentage (ISP) documentation no later than August 31, 2020. The CEP application can be accessed on pages 5-7 of the following resource: [Apply for Community Eligibility Provision](#).

Extension of LWP Assessment

Based on the July 1, 2017 implementation of the local school wellness policy regulations, the first triennial assessments of the local school wellness policy were to be completed by June 30, 2020. However, USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) has established a nationwide waiver that Arizona has elected to implement to support schools unable to complete a triennial assessment of the local school wellness policies by June 30, 2020 due to school closures as a result of COVID-19. The extended deadline for the first triennial assessment of the local wellness policy is June 30, 2021. LEAs that choose the extended deadline, instead of the June 30, 2020 deadline, are required to complete a second triennial assessment by June 30, 2024.

To assist LEAs with the development, implementation and assessment of their local school wellness policy, HNS has a [Local Wellness Policy webpage](#) that houses resources from ADE and outside partners. ADE's Activity and Assessment Tool is an excellent resource for LEAs. This tool helps identify wellness activities to focus on, as well as describe the policies and goals that will be implemented throughout the LEA. This document is completely customizable and was created for all sizes and types of LEAs. ADE has also provided four Wellness Policy Report Templates to assist LEAs in publishing their local school wellness policy assessment findings. Using these fillable word templates ensures that the LEA reports all local school wellness policy assessment findings and can easily post them on their preferred platform.

Finally, ADE is excited to announce a partnership with AZ Health Zone in the state of Arizona, with the objective of unifying SNAP-Ed's local wellness policy implementation efforts in SNAP-Ed eligible schools. Starting in SY 20-21, SNAP-Ed partners will be trained on utilizing ADE's resources to better serve schools while navigating the development, implementation, and assessment of their local wellness policy and will prepare eligible schools for the local wellness policy portion of their AR.

School Nutrition Programs Advisory Council (SNPAC)

ADE formed the School Nutrition Programs Advisory Council (SNPAC) in SY 19-20 to serve as a liaison between ADE School Nutrition Programs and SFAs in the state of Arizona. The council will continue to meet this school year to understand one another's needs, challenges, and priorities specific to operating under the waivers of COVID-19. SNPAC will be meeting monthly starting in October and updates and meeting notes will be shared on the [School Nutrition Program Advisory Council webpage](#).

Staying *upLIFT*ed

Last year, HNS launched the [upLIFT platform](#) which included our *upLIFT* webinar series as well as a number of additional resources released monthly in our “What’s up with *upLIFT*?” e-blast. This new platform was created for you, the school nutrition professional, to learn and get inspired on how and what you feed your students.

This year, we hope to continue to inspire you with stories from your peers across the state who are staying *upLIFT*ed during times of adversity. Each month we will be featuring a different Arizona school nutrition program that is continuing to uphold nutrition integrity while serving meals in the face of numerous challenges and obstacles. SNP will provide a platform where school nutrition professionals across the state can connect to share tips of the trade, knowledge gained, and lessons learned as we navigate through the school year together. ADE invites you to share how you are planning on upholding principles of nutrition integrity during your COVID-19 food service operations. Please complete [this survey](#) to describe your plans with us!

Join us for the first Stay *upLIFT*ed webinar featuring Dysart Unified School District on September 15, 2020 at 1:30pm by registering in [EMS](#).

Farm to School Grant

HNS was awarded \$99,972 from the USDA Farm to School Grant Program and will be obtaining an \$52,260 funding match for a total of \$152,231 to expand HNS’s capacity to build farm to school programs in Arizona via the Arizona Farm to School Network. Targeted projects that will be directly supported from this award include: 1) exploring local purchasing incentive program 2) building an Arizona-specific agriculture education database and 3) expanding Arizona Farm to School Network membership. In addition, HNS will hire a Project Director who will directly oversee the Arizona Farm to School Network’s development and the targeted projects that it supports in forecasting menus, crop planning and facilitating communication among key farm to-program stakeholders.

SFAs are encouraged to apply for one of the upcoming Arizona Farm to School Network Chair positions; SFAs can join one of the four work groups or join as a member to stay up-to-date on Arizona Farm to School Programs throughout the school year.

Equipment Grant

HNS awarded a total of \$679,531 in funding to 20 LEAs for Round 6 of the NSLP Equipment Grant last spring. The NSLP Equipment Grant makes a significant impact in schools by allowing the purchase of capital equipment items (>\$5,000 per item) that help to serve healthier meals, meet the program nutritional standards with emphasis on including more local foods and fresh fruits and vegetables, improving food safety, and adopting lunchroom changes that provide more convenience and appeal to the student population which can increase participation. Examples of equipment items that sites were funded to purchase in Round 6 include dishwashers, freezers, walk-in refrigerators, point of service (POS) systems, steam kettles, salad bars, ice makers, tilting skillets, milk coolers, and more.

HNS is excited to share that \$651,249 is available in funding for Round 7 of the NSLP Equipment Grant in Spring 2021! The Request for Applications (RFA) for Round 7 will be released in January 2021. Applications will open on February 1, 2021 in Grants Management Enterprise (GME) and must be submitted by March 1, 2021 at 11:59 PM. Awards are anticipated to be announced April 1, 2021. Those awarded the grant will have until June 30, 2021 to expend all awarded funds. Visit the [NSLP Equipment Grant webpage](#) for more information or contact Jessa Zuck, NSLP Equipment Grant Coordinator, at 602-542-8790 or Jessa.Zuck@azed.gov with questions.

Health and Nutrition Services Restructuring

School Nutrition Programs will now oversee and direct the work of Farm to Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and the USDA Foods and Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Produce Program. The HNS Business and Operations team will oversee and direct the Procurement Reviews and oversee vendor contracts for CNPs.

Training

Typically, SNP will release two training schedules (summer and spring) during the school year outlining the self-paced online trainings, live and recorded webinars, in-person regional trainings and professional development events to support SFAs operating the CNPs.

This summer, SNP released our first e-Training Curriculum and Brochure for the months of June-August, providing only online instruction during the summer months due to COVID-19. ADE anticipates continuing to offer only virtual training through 2020 and will reassess for spring of 2021. ADE will release the next e-Training Curriculum and Brochure at the end of August for the months of September-February offering webinars and online trainings for program operators. Topics will include meal counting and claiming, alternative points of service, and food safety. These topics were based on the SNP survey related to anticipated planned learning and food service operation models for site(s) for the upcoming school year to best direct our efforts as we develop new resources and trainings.

Highlighted Webinars

ADE will continue to offer the webinar series “Staying on Track” and has created a complimentary series “Staying on Track for Special Provision Options” to provide a monthly walkthrough of the new Monthly Checklist for SFAs operating a Special Provision Option. Additionally, SNP will continue providing assistance to SFAs to prepare for verification activities and submitting the Verification Summary Report; however, this year will occur in an e-learning format versus and in-person drop-in workshop.

As shared earlier in this memorandum, SNP intends to continue using the COVID-19 Communications platform to provide impromptu webinars on regulatory clarifications from USDA and ADE while operating under these nationwide waivers. All webinars will be announced through the COVID-19 Communications e-blasts. To subscribe to receive these emails, click [here](#).

CNPWeb Applications

SFAs are required to submit their site and sponsor applications using CNPWeb each school year. SY 20-21 site and sponsor applications were made available on/after June 1, 2020 for SFAs to complete and submit for approval. The annual submission and approval of the site and sponsor applications is a required step for LEAs to submit reimbursement requests for meals served under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Afterschool Care Snack Program (ASCSP) and At-Risk Afterschool Meals. ADE expects applications to reflect changes in meal services due to COVID-19.

At this time, LEAs should report participation in meal services that the LEA plans to operate as well as all known meal counting methods and points of service. At any time, the LEA should update the site and sponsor applications to ensure the application reflects what is occurring at the sites. Due to COVID-19, ADE has provided further guidance on the sections below:

Sponsor Application, Section 6: Reporting Meal Counting and Point of Service

In Section 6 of the Sponsor application, LEAs are required to describe the method of meal counting, explanation for multiple methods of meal counting, and describe all points of service. Due to COVID-19, ADE anticipates LEAs will have multiple meal services occurring to support the different learning methods implemented at their sites. It is in this section that the LEA will describe how meal counts will be obtained and the location of all POS.

- **Method of Meal Counting:** This section has four options to select the methods in which meal counts are collected. Please choose the selection "In Use" if a method is used at any site.
- **Method of Meal Counting Description:** This section is an open narrative where LEAs describe how the option(s) selected above will provide an accurate and reliable count of the number of meals, by eligibility type, served each day to eligible children. If an LEA has adopted a meal service model that allows enrolled students from different sites to collect meal(s) at one POS, please describe how the LEA will record meal counts to be claimed at the site the student is enrolled. If the LEA has adopted a meal service model that allows both breakfast and lunch to be served at the same time, please describe how the LEA will accurately record separate meal counts for each meal service.
- **Explanation for Multiple Methods of Meal Counting:** This is an open narrative and only needs to be completed if the LEA selects more than one option of meal counting. ADE is requesting that the LEA describe the reason for more than one method of meal counting. For example, a checklist is used in the classroom since the computer system is not an option.
- **Point of Service Description:** This section is an open narrative. Please describe all POS locations that will be used during the school year. This includes but is not limited to: curbside grab 'n' go, in the cafeteria, in the classroom, at the student's home during home delivery, and bus stops on bus routes.

Site Application, Section 8: Reporting Meal Service Types for Breakfast

LEAs are required to report all types of meal service(s) implemented for the SBP on each site application. In this section, LEAs are indicating whether any of the USDA-promoted Alternative Breakfast Models are used. ADE uses this data to track the implementation of USDA's Alternative Breakfast Models and determine the location of the POS at breakfast. Please note, there are two narrative fields to be completed if the LEA selects Second Chance Breakfast and/or Other; otherwise there is no requirement to complete these fields. Please review the meal service type options below.

- **Breakfast in the cafeteria/main dining area** - Select if the meal is counted at a point of service in the cafeteria.
- **Breakfast in the classroom** - Select if the meal is counted at a point of service in the classroom.
- **Grab 'N' Go breakfast carts** - Select if the meal is counted at a point of service at the cart. This would include a cart in the cafeteria or hallway where a meal would be taken for consumption in the classroom.
- **Breakfast on the school bus** - Select if the meal is counted at a point of service on the bus.
- **Second Chance Breakfast**- Select if a meal is provided after the start of school. This is often referred to as "Breakfast after the Bell". In the description, please provide where the point of service occurs for this model. The description of meal counting and POS will be described in Section 6 of the sponsor application.
- **Other**- Select if a meal is provided in a method other than those identified above. Due to COVID-19, this may be a bus route/bus stop or home delivery. In the description, please identify where the point of service occurs for this model. The description of meal counting and POS will be described in Section 6 of the sponsor application.

Reminders

- Please allow three weeks for approval of the site and sponsor applications.
- The site application(s) must be submitted before the sponsor application.
- Accuracy of contact information on the site and sponsor applications is critical for ADE to provide SFAs with program information throughout the year. Our primary method of communication will be via email, which will be sent to the person listed as the School Food Authority Contact and Program Contact within the sponsor application.
- Review the application checklist to ensure that all of the required documents have been submitted. The sponsor application will not be approved until all the checklist items are submitted and approved.
- SFAs adding sites to CNPWeb must complete and submit the Add/Change/Delete form to ADE to add a new school to the online application. The form is located at: <http://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/forms/>.

- SFAs with sites that are opting to use a bus route/bus stop for meal service must describe the point of service in Section 6 of the Sponsor application, not as a separate site application in CNPWeb.
- SFAs with sites that have a separate Head Start/Preschool operation on their campus to which they provide and claim meals must describe the point of service in Section 6 of the Sponsor application, not as a separate site application in CNPWeb.

School Year 2020-2021 Program Forms

All program forms on [School Nutrition Programs webpage](#) have been updated for SY 20-21. USDA did not make any changes to the household application for free and reduced-price meals or notification letters from the previous program year.

USDA Foods Program

A primary goal of the USDA Foods Program at ADE is to ensure 100% of all Federal entitlement dollars during the school year for CNPs is spent by Recipient Agencies (RAs). This goal reflects efforts to increase nutrition integrity within Arizona schools.

Certain strategies and monitoring techniques enable the USDA Foods Program to thoroughly monitor and evaluate entitlement balances of RAs during the school year to ensure nutritious foods are getting to the schools through the various options offered by ADE. These options include Direct Delivery (previously referred to as Brown Box commodities) which offers USDA approved dry, refrigerated, and frozen materials; the Department of Defense Fresh Produce Program, (DoD Fresh) which offers local and American grown produce; and processed foods including nutritious end products from raw and bulk material that is diverted to manufacturers.

The USDA Foods Program will be monitoring DoD Fresh entitlement and pounds diverted to processing throughout the school year and have developed strategies for ensuring entitlement and diverted pounds are utilized.

- For the DoD Fresh, entitlement usage recommendations for balances should reflect 25% of total set aside entitlement at the end of October, 50% of total set aside entitlement at the end of January, and 75% of remaining set aside entitlement for the end of March.
- For processing, pound balance recommendations should reflect 25% usage of total pounds diverted at the end of October, 50% of total pounds diverted at the end of January, and 75% of remaining pounds diverted for the end of March. The USDA Foods Program encourages only a 20% balance of diverted pounds remain by May 28, 2021 for carry over.

Unused entitlements and stagnate or excessive diverted pound inventories will be addressed for each RA during the school year. The USDA Foods Program reserves the right to reallocate funds should excessive funds remain in an RA's entitlement balance.

If an RA has a plan implemented that requires the conservation of funds so entitlements can be strategically used for other times of the school year, please send an email to USDAFoods@azed.gov. Usage guidelines can be found in the Monthly Checklist on the National School Lunch Program website here: <http://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/>.

Please contact your School Nutrition Programs Specialist with questions regarding this guidance. Your assigned specialist can be found at the top of the sponsor application in CNPWeb. You may also send an email to ADESchoolNutrition@azed.gov or call 602-542-8700, option 2, for the NSLP Specialist of the Day. Additional questions related to the USDA Foods Program may be directed to USDAFoods@azed.gov, or by phone at 602-542-8700, option 3.

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