



Summary of Child and Adult Care Food Program Operations During COVID-19

Arizona Department of Education
Health and Nutrition Services

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the extension of waivers established in response to the coronavirus outbreak (COVID – 19). The purpose of this guidance is to assist Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors in understanding which waivers apply to them and the procedure to notify the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) of their decision to opt into the use of the extended waivers.

To read the nationwide waivers and flexibilities issued by USDA, please visit their Food and Nutrition Services website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/cn-waivers-flexibilities>.

Meal Pattern Flexibility – extended through June 30, 2021

The meal pattern flexibility waiver is available to **all** CACFP facilities: Childcare Centers, Adult Day Care Centers, Head Start facilities and Emergency Shelters.

This flexibility allows sponsors to submit a waiver request to ADE to claim meals served that do not meet the meal pattern. ADE will review and approve these waiver requests on a case-by-case basis. CACFP facilities are expected to maintain and meet the nutrition standards for each meal to the greatest extent possible. These waivers will be approved for specific meals and dates.

How do I opt into the meal pattern flexibility waiver?

Sponsors must complete a [meal pattern waiver request](#) for each day a flexibility is requested. In the waiver request, Sponsors must indicate the flexibility requested, by meal service, and report how many meals were impacted by the shortage of food/component. Centers wishing to opt into this waiver must continue to take meal counts for meals served that do not meet the meal pattern.

Once a meal pattern waiver is submitted and approved, the meals with an approved waiver may be included in the monthly meal count summary and claimed for reimbursement. ADE maintains the authority to deny a meal pattern waiver request and will notify sponsors via email if the waiver request is approved and the meals may be included in the monthly claim. ADE may also request additional information as needed to ensure approval of as many requests as possible, while also maintaining program integrity and the highest meal quality possible.

Does the meal pattern flexibility apply to infants?

This waiver does not apply to infants. Infants must continue to receive breastmilk or iron-fortified formula. Infants who are developmentally ready for solid foods must also be served food in accordance with their established eating patterns.

Meal Service Time Flexibility – extended through June 30, 2021

The meal service time flexibility waiver applies **only** to Head Start facilities implementing virtual learning. All Childcare Centers, Adult Day Care Centers and Emergency Shelters must follow traditional CACFP meal service time requirements.

This waiver allows Head Start facilities to claim meals served outside of the traditional CACFP meal service times. Head Start facilities opting into this waiver are still expected to maintain and meet all other meal service standards. This flexibility will support safer access to nutritious meals during virtual learning prior to returning to the classroom.

How do I opt into the meal service time flexibility waiver?

Head Start facilities must send an email to the CACFP Inbox (CACFP@azed.gov) with the following information:

- A. Sponsor name.
- B. Site(s) requesting waiver.
- C. Description of meal service and times children are being served.
- D. Date range of expected flexibility.
- E. Description of recording keeping procedure to ensure only enrolled children are receiving a credible meal.

Non-Congregate Feeding & Parent/Guardian Pick Up of Meals for Children – extended through June 30, 2021

The non-congregate feeding and parent/guardian pick up of meals for children waivers apply **only** to Head Start facilities implementing virtual learning. All Childcare Centers, Adult Day Care Centers and Emergency Shelters must follow traditional CACFP meal service requirements.

The non-congregate feeding waiver allows Head Start facilities to serve meals to enrolled Head Start children in a grab and go or delivery distribution method. Children must be present to receive meals unless the facility has opted into the parent/guardian pick-up of meals for children waiver.

The parent/guardian pick-up of meals for children waiver allows a parent/guardian to pick up meals without enrolled children present when meals are distributed in a grab and go style meal service.

These waivers are intended for Head Start programs providing virtual learning or hybrid models of in-person and virtual instruction. Meals can only be provided for the days when the program is in operation. Meals cannot be provided for weekends if the Head Start program does not operate on the weekends. These waivers do not apply to in person learning or those participants who are temporarily absent.

How do I opt into the non-congregate feeding and/or parent/guardian pick up of meals for children waiver(s)?

Head Start facilities must send an email to the CACFP Inbox (CACFP@azed.gov) with the following information:

- A. Sponsor name.
- B. Name of each site where these waivers will be utilized.
- C. Description of enrollment process for the site/program.
- D. Description of distribution plan including when the meals will be available for pick up, how many meals will be provided at one time, who will be distributing them, and who will be conducting the point of service meal counts.
- E. Description of recordkeeping plans that include-how the sponsor will ensure meals are only served to enrolled participants, are accurately counted and claimed, and that each participant received no more than 2 meals and 1 snack per day.
- F. Description of meal service and food safety processes that ensure the meal pattern is met, and food is maintained at safe temperatures.

An ADE Program Specialist will notify the sponsor when approval is granted. Sponsors must maintain documentation to support accurate meal counts, meal pattern compliance, and appropriate costs/purchasing practices.

Onsite Monitoring – extended through September 30, 2021

The onsite monitoring waiver extension applies **only** to multi-site operations in the CACFP.

Multi-site sponsors must continue to conduct monitoring; however, onsite monitoring has been suspended. This waiver allows for the following adjustments to the traditional CACFP monitoring regulations:

- Sponsors must conduct two reviews of each facility, instead of three;
- Only one review must be announced, instead of two;
- The meal observation on the unannounced review is not required;
- More than six months can elapse between visits;
- Review of new facilities can be conducted as a desk audit.

How do I opt into the onsite monitoring waiver?

Multi-site sponsors must send an email to the CACFP inbox (CACFP@azed.gov) with the following information:

- A. Sponsor name.
- B. Number of sites needing the waiver.
- C. Statement that you are opting into the 'Sponsoring Organization Monitoring Waiver.'

This waiver does not need to be approved by ADE. Organizations who previously indicated intent to utilize this waiver are not required to submit anything additional. All sponsors must maintain documentation of all monitoring visits conducted for each site this year.

Does this mean I do not have to do monitoring for the remainder of the year?

No, this does not waive monitoring requirements for the remainder of the year. The waiver provides flexibility for meeting the requirements due to social distancing during the COVID-19 national emergency. Sponsoring organizations are strongly encouraged to conduct monitoring visits to the maximum extent practicable, including on-site meal observations. Sites can scan and email meal counts, menus, rosters and attendance documents, and other records that are typically reviewed on site. As community health begins to improve, sponsors are encouraged to conduct on-site visits when possible. The USDA and ADE want to remind sponsors that program integrity and accountability are still required.

For additional assistance contact your specialist or call the specialist of the day at 602-542-8700 and select option 1.