# Superintendent’s Memo #070-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: March 13, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: COVID-19: School Nutrition Program and Meal Options

This memo outlines the options available to provide meals to children in the event of an unanticipated school closure due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition (VDOE-SNP) has received approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to waive the congregate feeding requirement to allow local school divisions to provide meals using the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). Waiver of the congregate feeding requirement allows SFAs and non-school sponsors to provide meals in non-congregate settings due to COVID-19.

The waiver and application in SNPweb must be submitted and approved prior to serving meals.

### Using the SFSP or SSO during an Unanticipated Closure

**SFSP** - School Food Authorities (SFAs) that operated the SFSP during the 2018-2019 school year should use this program to provide meals during an unanticipated school closure. The application is open for the 2019-2020 year. Sites that participated in SFSP in 2018-2019 will not require additional approval. New sites will require review and approval.

**SSO** - SFAs that have not participated in SFSP can utilize the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). This is an extension of the National School Lunch or the School Breakfast Program used in the summer and during unanticipated closures. The biggest difference in the two programs is the meal pattern (same pattern as NSLP for SSO) and the reimbursement rate (is higher in SFSP, but a lengthier application process).

**To participate in either program, SFAs must revise their application in SNPWeb to enter all potential sites. These sites must be entered and approved before the SFA can claim meals**

### Non-Congregate Feeding

The VDOE-SNP was approved by the USDA to approve waivers to allow SFAs and non-school sponsors to provide meals in non-congregate settings due to COVID-19. SFAs and non-school sponsors **must** apply for a waiver from VDOE-SNP to allow the service of non-congregate meals. The waiver is Attachment A to this document.

When providing meals in a non-congregate setting, meals must meet the regular menu planning requirement of SFSP or SSO. A complete reimbursable meal that meets all requirements of the menu planning methods must be served. The meals must be unitized and provide all components. Milk must be included with each meal and shelf stable milk is allowable.

The maximum number of meals that may be offered is up to two meals or one meal and one snack, per child, per day, in any combination except lunch and supper. Meals may be distributed for multiple days. The SFA or non-school sponsor must have the capacity to provide multiple meals and document the process in the waiver application. This must include meeting food safety and meal counting requirements.

Please provide a plan as to how meal service is intended to be provided. Maintaining supporting documentation is mandatory. Meal counts and records must be maintained for meals served under the waiver.

### Process to Apply for Meal Service during COVID-19 Related Closure

1. Revise the application in SNPWeb. Choose either the SFSP or SSO option and enter all potential sites.
2. Complete the waiver if the SFA or non-school sponsor would like to provide meals in a non-congregate setting. The wavier is Attachment A. Email the waiver to SNPPolicy@doe.virginia.gov.
3. Email your assigned SNP Regional Specialist to let them know that your application and waiver have been submitted.

VDOE is working diligently to approve all applications and requests promptly.

### Other Available Resources

#### *No Kid Hungry*

No Kid Hungry created a fund that will be deployed nationally to ensure access to free meals continues for children in need as the Coronavirus pandemic leads to temporary school closures across the country.

As the Coronavirus situation is ever changing, No Kid Hungry will continually assess how to deploy these funds for maximum impact and to reach those who need it most. Areas of need that the funding may support include: non-congregate and home delivered meals, emergency meals programs and extended meals service, school and community pantries, backpack programs, and other identified opportunities to address the growing number of children and families who may lose access to meals.

Virginia school divisions, community organizations, and government agencies in need of assistance can contact Sarah Steely at ssteely@strength.org or 570-854-5023.

#### *Food Banks and Pantries*

Food bank programs and pantries will continue to operate as long as it is safe for clients, volunteers, and staff. If you would like to provide your families with information about resources that may be available to them while school is closed, please [contact your local food bank](https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank).

#### *Virginia Department of Social Services*

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on families in Virginia.  Social services agencies are preparing options to ensure the most vulnerable populations have continued access to critical services, including food supports. VDSS has created a COVID-19 portal on its [agency website](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/corona.cgi;%20at%20this%20site). You can find the latest updates and resources as it relates to COVID-19 and guidance specific to that agency. The portal will be updated, as new information is available.

#### *USDA Foods in Disasters*

The use of USDA Foods in a disaster situation is allowed. Any food donated by USDA to public schools may be used in disaster feeding. Recognizing the emergency and the need to feed people, school food service management and other outlets must cooperate fully to make USDA Foods available to groups involved in disaster feeding activities. Accurate records must be kept by the SFAs of all food provided or used for disaster feeding purposes. USDA also has a Foods Program Disaster Manual available on the [FNS](https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance) Website. The website has a new reference for pandemic planning.

Because of the time sensitivity of this issue, the VDOE-SNP will immediately distribute additional information as it becomes available. Please contact the SNP Regional Specialist assigned to your region or Dr. Sandy Curwood at sandra.curwood@doe.virginia.gov if you have any questions.

JFL/SCC/bdb

### Attachment

1. [Waiver for Sponsors to Provide Meals in Non-Congregate Settings](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/070-20a.docx)