

Secretary Perdue Announces Proactive Flexibilities to Feed Children When Schools Close

(Washington, D.C., March 10, 2020) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced proactive flexibilities to allow meal service during school closures to minimize potential exposure to the coronavirus. You may click [HERE](#) or on the image below to watch Secretary Perdue discuss the proactive flexibilities during today’s House Appropriations hearing.

[video](#)

Background:

During an unexpected school closure, schools can leverage their participation in one of USDA’s summer meal programs to provide meals at no cost to students. Under normal circumstances, those meals must be served in a group setting. However, in a public health emergency, the law allows USDA the authority to waive the group setting meal requirement, which is vital during a social distancing situation.

As always, States may request waivers of other Program requirements, as needed, and those will be considered on a case-by-case basis. States may submit waiver requests immediately by providing their FNS Regional Office with the required waiver information. Information on how to submit a waiver request is available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/child-nutrition-program-waiver-request-guidance-and-protocol-revised>. The Regional Offices are also available to provide technical assistance on development of waiver requests.

Today’s announcement is effective immediately and will cover efforts triggered by school closings through June 30, 2020. USDA stands ready to provide additional assistance to areas impacted by the coronavirus as part of the much larger government-wide response, in accordance with the law.

All Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs – including the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#); Special Nutrition Program for [Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#); and the [National School Lunch](#) and [Breakfast Programs](#) – have flexibilities and contingencies built-in to allow them to respond to on-the-ground realities in the event of a disaster or emergency situation. For more information on FNS programs, please visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic>. For more information about the coronavirus response across USDA, please visit: www.usda.gov/coronavirus.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers 15 [nutrition assistance programs](#) that leverage America's agricultural abundance to ensure children and low-income individuals and families have nutritious food to eat. FNS also co-develops the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) with HHS' Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP). The Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide science-based nutrition recommendations and serve as the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy.

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