

# SCHOOL MEALS DURING COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURE

## Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs

### Background Information

- Superintendent of Maryland Public Schools, Karen Salmon, with the consent of the State Board of Education, ordered public schools to close effective March 13, 2020, in response to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. On March 25, 2020, Dr. Salmon and The Board extended the temporary school closures until April 24, 2020.
- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs (OSCNP) and Maryland schools are committed to continuing meal service for children and teens during the temporary school closures.
- Maryland schools and agencies are offering free 'Grab-N-Go' meals, in a non-congregate setting through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

### Who can receive the meals?

- All children 18 and younger.
- A person 19 years of age and older who has a disability and participates in a public or private non-profit school program during the school year is also eligible.

### Where & When are meals served?

- Visit [MDsummerMeals.org](https://www.mdsummermeals.org) to find up-to-date information on site locations and meal times.
- Most meals sites are located at schools, parks, libraries, and community centers.

### Can people leave home to get meals?

- **Yes.** This is allowed under Gov. Hogan's Stay at Home order, "Traveling to and from an educational institution for purposes of receiving meals or instructional materials for distance learning."

### How are meals distributed?

- **Mobile Meals:** A bus, van, or truck makes scheduled stops along a predetermined route where families can come to pick up meals
- **'Grab-N-Go' Pick-Up Sites:** Sites use either a drive-up or walk-up system.
- **Social distancing rules must be followed.**
- **Meal Delivery to Homes:** Agencies must get parental consent from households of eligible households.

### What meals are being served?

- All sites provide at least two meals, such as breakfast and lunch.
- Many sites also provide Supper and Snack.

### Can children get multiple meals at one time?

- **Yes.** Sites provide meals for each day on a daily basis, or multiple meals for the week on one day.

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### Can parents pick-up meals without bringing their children?

- **Yes.** Agencies have the option to allow parent/guardian meal pick-up, though it is not mandated.
- Interested agencies must submit a plan to MSDE and receive approval to ensure that meals are distributed only to parents/guardians of Program participants and that duplicate meals are not provided for any child. In some cases, parents may be asked to show a student ID for each child receiving meals.
- For children with special needs, compromised immune systems, and/or respiratory symptoms, parents should contact the agency to arrange parent-only meal pick-up.
- Social distancing rules must be followed.

### USDA SFSP Waivers Adopted by Maryland during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:

- **Non-Congregate Feeding:** Allows meals to be provided outside of a congregate/group setting. Meals can be distributed at sites where families can pick up the meals, or be delivered to children's homes.
- **Meal Time Flexibility:** Provides flexibility to the meal service time requirements.
- **Meal Pattern Flexibility:** Waives the requirements to serve meals that meet the meal pattern requirements. Agencies must submit a *Meal Pattern Flexibility Form* to MSDE for approval. Requests must be targeted and justified based upon disruptions to the availability of food products.
- **Meal Pick-Up by Parents/Guardians:** Allows a parent or guardian to pick up meals and take home to children. MSDE must first approve a plan from agencies that ensures accountability and program integrity.
- **SFSP Monitoring Flexibility for Agencies and MSDE:** Waives the requirement for MSDE and all sponsoring agencies that on-site monitoring must be conducted.
- **Maryland Granted Ability to Adjust Eligibility Level for Sites:** MSDE will monitor and adjust the SFSP eligibility percentage during the COVID-19 event based on unemployment statistics.

**For information about other programs to support families and adults, visit:**  
**[MarylandUnites.org](https://www.MarylandUnites.org)**