

## ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

March 18, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the point-in-time answers provided by the department. For additional guidance and up-to-the-minute supports, please check the TDOE website for more information: <https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus.html>.

### Nutrition

- If a parent comes to a feeding site and needs meals for a bedridden or immune-compromised child and the district has proof of that can districts send a meal with the adult?
  - **RESPONSE:** The Department's focus is ensuring that children are safe and fed. Please prioritize that every child gets a meal and the meal is counted. The Department trusts that districts will make decisions that are in the best interest of the health and safety of children.
- Do districts have permission to distribute frozen meals, particularly for weekend consumption?
  - **RESPONSE:** There is no requirement that meals have to be cooked. However, please keep in mind the capacity of each community to ensure they are able to heat meals and keep them food safe.
- Do multiple meals - such as 5 at a time - require them to be shelf stable?
  - **RESPONSE:** There is not a requirement that they have to be shelf stable, but the Department wants to keep health and safety at the forefront of everyone's minds. Please know the limitations of each community and ensure children are not receiving meals that will spoil.
- Can you provide any guidance related to current meal pattern requirements?
  - **RESPONSE:** Currently there is no flexibility regarding meal pattern requirements. If this is a supply chain issue, for example, if there are not vegetables available, please communicate that to the Nutrition State Director, Sandy Dawes. She is communicating those issues to USDA and working on getting exceptions when there are supply chain issues. The Department has submitted a waiver to the USDA for meal pattern requirements.
- Could districts provide a half-cup serving of fruits/vegetables?
  - **RESPONSE:** This depends on the age/grade group which drive the meal pattern requirements. Normally at school districts are allowed to do "offer vs. serves," with half a cup of fruit or vegetable. However, under this COVID-19 guidance, the USDA has said all meals should be

unitized and “offer vs. served” should not be utilized. This means that for breakfast all age/grade groups should receive one cup of fruits/vegetables. For the K-8 meal pattern at lunch districts must serve 3/4 cup of vegetables and for the 9-12 meal pattern districts must serve 1 cup of fruit and 1 cup of vegetables for lunch.

- Can you speak to the opportunity for expanding services where family circumstances may change due to the pandemic?
  - **RESPONSE:** Parents can submit a new application for Free and Reduced Lunch at any time. The Department is working to determine if schools can be reclassified without having to go through that additional step. If a district is having issues with area eligibility, they should contact your Nutrition Director. Also, the Seamless Summer option means districts can serve meals to any child who is under 18 years old regardless of where they are enrolled or live. All of these are being reimbursed at the free rate.
- Are there guidelines or best practices for limiting possible exposure to COVID-19 for district staff when serving students?
  - **RESPONSE:** Please reference the [guidance options](#) listed on the Department’s website. Districts can offer drive up options, or delivery via bus stops. Some of these options are located in the [staffing toolkit](#) on our website.
- Can districts use Seamless Summer next week once school is on spring break to feed students and does it allow districts to pay cafeteria staff during this time?
  - **RESPONSE:** Districts can use Seamless Summer options through spring break which means they can continue food services through spring break. School districts will get reimbursed as usual, so they may use that reimbursement to cover the labor of workers.