

Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 School Nutrition Guidance

This document will serve as a guidance resource for School Food Authorities (SFAs) wanting to serve school meals during school closures related to COVID-19.

1. **Is there a way to feed kids if my district closes due to the COVID-19 virus?**
Yes. SFAs can apply to operate Area Eligible feeding sites using the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) in the Tennessee Meals Accounting and Claiming (TMAC) system.
2. **What type of feeding sites can be operated?**
All feeding sites should be open sites.
3. **Who can I feed?**
Open sites can feed all children age 18 and under who come to the site for a meal. The child must be present to receive a meal.
4. **Where can I have a feeding site?**
Feeding sites can be located at a school or in the community. All the regular SSO Area Eligibility requirements must be met. This means sites must be a) located in the attendance area of a school that has 50% free-reduced eligibility; or b) at an address that is Census area eligible.
5. **Do meals have to be consumed on site?**
No. The congregate requirement which states food must be consumed on-site has been waived for school closures related to COVID-19, meaning students can leave once they receive a meal.
6. **How many meals can I serve?**
Only one meal type per child per day can be claimed for reimbursement. You will need to estimate the anticipated number of meals each site will serve on the SSO Site Application.
7. **What meal counting resources are available?**
An example meal counting sheet titled “Meal Counting Forms for Provisional Schools” is available on the Tennessee Department of Education School Nutrition Program website at <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/education/snp-resources/snp-meal-counting.html>.
8. **What combination of meals can I serve?**
Only two meal types can be served at a site during a single day. A site cannot serve both lunch and supper. Possible meal combinations are:
 - a. Breakfast and lunch
 - b. Breakfast and snack
 - c. Breakfast and supper
 - d. Lunch and snack
9. **What are serving time requirements?**
Breakfast meals must be served during morning hours. Lunch meals must be served between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. A.m. snacks must be served during the morning hours and p.m. snacks in the afternoon. Suppers are served after 2:00 p.m. Meal times must not overlap.

10. **What are meal pattern requirements?**

All meal pattern requirements must be met. Since many meals will be served as grab and go without implementing offer versus serve, all daily minimum serving amounts are required. This includes a variety of milk.

11. **Can I purchase food/supplies off-bid to have what is needed to serve emergency meals on short notice?**

Yes, micro and/or small purchasing procedures can be utilized to purchase items that may be needed to implement emergency feeding.

12. **Can I implement mobile feeding?**

Yes, however the site at which the children are fed must be area eligible and all other regulations apply.

13. **What are monitoring requirements?**

Each SFA implementing SSO during a closure for COVID-19 is required to monitor one site, at least one time. Monitoring can be documented with the “SFA Monitoring Form” located at this address: <https://www.tn.gov/education/snp-resources/snp-programs.html>. This monitoring will not replace monitoring requirements under SSO during summer months.

14. **Can I feed kids during spring break?**

No, SSO cannot be implemented during regularly scheduled school breaks scheduled for less than 10 school days. Because spring break is already scheduled, it is not an unanticipated school closure. Even if spring break is rescheduled, the “break” would not be considered an unanticipated school closure. *However, if spring break is extended related to COVID-19, the days not previously scheduled would be unanticipated closure days and SSO could be operated for those days.*

15. **Can I serve meals to adults?**

Meals served to adults cannot be claimed for reimbursement. Adults can purchase meals as they would meals during regular breakfast and lunch service.

16. **Will there be special reporting required associated with utilizing the COVID-19 and Unanticipated School Closure waivers?**

Yes. Meals served under a waiver require additional reporting to USDA, therefore the claim for reimbursement is neither sufficient nor timely enough to provide the level of detail needed for required reports. The state agency is required to submit daily reports to FNS detailing the number of schools using the waivers and the number of meals served under the waivers for each meal type. Therefore, each SFA utilizing waivers (feeding at schools during unanticipated closures or in a non-congregate manner) will be required to submit that information daily to the state director via email. **The state director will communicate with the SFA deadlines for submitting this information on a daily basis.** Meals served from community (non-school) sites do not require the additional data reporting and thus the claim for reimbursement will suffice.

17. **What is my first step to feeding kids if our district shuts down due to COVID-19?**

If your district would like to utilize the waiver and operate SSO during closures due to COVID-19, please follow these steps:

- Email the following information to Sandy Dawes, State Director of School Nutrition at Sandy.Dawes@tn.gov. CC Randa Meade at Randa.Meade@tn.gov and your regional consultant on the email. **See an example/template email at the end of this document.**

Feel free to copy and paste the template into your email and input relevant information for your district.

- All sites you plan on providing meals;
- Type(s) of meal Programs that will be served (NSLP, SBP, Snack, Supper);
- Number of students you anticipate serving;
- What meal distribution method(s) you will be using for school closures due to COVID-19;
- Methods you will use to ensure proper operation of the program including meal content, meal counts, food safety, oversight, etc.; and
- Methods of communication with families.
- Complete a SSO application in TMAC for each site you want to operate:
 - Reach out to your regional consultant.
 - Work with Randa Meade, Office Number (615)-532-0372, or email Randa.Meade@tn.gov.

18. Do I need my SSO application to be approved to begin serving meals?

The SSO application **does not** have to be approved prior to meal service for meals to be claimed for reimbursement in emergency situations. As long as the site is area eligible, anticipate the site being approved for meals to be claimed for reimbursement.

Template Email

SFAs may utilize this email template to notify the school nutrition state director of SSO operation during unanticipated school closure due to COVID-19.

- Email Sandy Dawes and cc Randa Meade and your regional consultant.

Email body template:

Hello Sandy,

- Sites you plan on providing meals;
 - ABC Middle School, ABC County High School
- Type(s) of meal Programs that will be served (NSLP, SBP, Snack, Supper);
 - NSLP, SBP
- Number of students you anticipate serving;
 - We anticipate serving between 150-200 students each day
- What meal distribution method(s) you will be using for school closures due to COVID-19;
 - Meals will be served at both ABC Middle School and ABC County High School. Students will enter the cafeteria, take their sack lunch, and leave the site to consume the meal offsite.
- Methods you will use to ensure proper operation of the program including meal content, meal counts, food safety, oversight, etc.;;
 - We will use our field trip menu options in order to stay in the meal pattern. We will utilize the state-provided "Meal Counting Forms for Provisional Schools" to record and consolidate meal counts. Since we will be preparing the food in our kitchens, the trained staff will continue to implement our HACCP plan as per the usual operation. We will utilize the state-provided "SFA Monitoring Form" to monitor one site at least one time.
- Methods of communication with families.
 - We will use social media and district-wide phone tree to notify families of the availability of meals.