

UNANTICIPATED SCHOOL CLOSURE FACT SHEET

Montana OPI has an approved state-wide waiver for all **‘Open’ Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** sites to operate the SFSP during an unanticipated school closure because of a COVID-19 outbreak. This waiver is for both eligible School Food Authorities and Community Organizations. The waiver allows for an alternative grab-and go meal service that will limit participants’ interaction and proximity to other participants and therefore decrease the risk of COVID-19 exposure. **Schools are not required to provide meal service during school closures.** The Office of Public Instruction appreciates the willingness of schools and community organizations to consider continuing their meal service operations to ensure children receive the meals they need.

For prompt response to school closures, **interested SFSP sponsors should submit their 2020 SFSP application in advance for approval by the State agency.** Montana OPI encourages Community Organizations and School Food Authorities to work together to respond to the needs of families during school closures. Please see below for tips when filling out the SFSP application under the conditions of this waiver. If a district is not currently a SFSP sponsor, please contact our office to check on area eligibility and options for becoming a sponsor with open sites.

Meal sites must be open to the public and serve meals to all children 18 and under. The maximum number of meals that may be offered remains the same under SFSP, up to two meals or snacks or a combination of the two, per child, per day (except for lunch and supper). The State agency will consider the capacity of the sponsor to execute grab-and-go meals effectively, including meeting food safety and accommodation requirements when approving applications. Please contact [your County Sanitarian](#) with food safety questions.

Application Requirements to Participate in the Waiver:

- *Sponsors applying for this waiver should **complete their SFSP applications as soon as possible.***
- *Meals can only be claimed for dates indicated in the site application. These dates can be modified before claims are submitted.*
- *If you are applying for the waiver, make sure to indicate **‘Yes’ on Site Application Question #34.***
- *New and returning sponsors applying to participate in this waiver will receive training by phone before meal service begins.*

Waiver Requirements:

- *Separate meal counts and records must be maintained for meals served under the waiver.*
- *All meals must be unitized, meaning a complete reimbursable meal that meets the requirements of menu planning, including milk, must be distributed. No Offer versus Serve.*
- *Shelf-stable milk may be used.*
- *USDA Commodity foods may be used.*

General questions about SFSP operation and eligibility can be directed to [Kim Lloyd](#), (406) 444-0772. New SFSP sponsors should contact [Clay Hickman](#) (406) 444-2501 at OPI to gain access to the system.

COVID-19 Closure FAQs

How do I apply to participate in this waiver?

Schools anticipating closure will need a 2020 SFSP application submitted and approved before providing free meals. Montana OPI recommends schools and community organizations to complete and submit their application ASAP.

If a sponsor anticipates all of their summer sites to be potential locations for grab and go meal locations, they will need to fill out a separate site application for each site, entering the dates they anticipate to serve through the end of the summer (if applicable).

Do I need to attend training before operating the SFSP during an emergency school closure?

Yes, Montana OPI will provide training for all Summer Sponsors applying for this waiver.

Under this waiver, could I operate a grab-and-go meal at a site that would normally be closed or does not qualify for the 50% free or reduced-price lunch.

No. Montana OPI applied for the waiver to only apply to *Open* Summer Food Service Program Sites. Open sites eligible for 2020 SFSP or any new sites eligible to operate an Open Summer Food Service Program will be allowed to operate grab and go meals under the emergency school closure waiver.

Are the reimbursement rates based on the previous summer or current school year, if serving under SFSP?

Emergency grab-and-go meals will be reimbursed based on [2020 SFSP reimbursements](#).

How do I keep records such as meal counting?

Separate meal counts and records must be maintained for meals served under COVID-19 waiver. To receive reimbursement, total meals must be reported in MAPS. Make sure dates in the Site Application are correct before claiming meals.

If utilizing open sites under SFSP during unexpected school closures, would we be able to serve anyone under the age of 18 or would it be restricted to school-aged students?

Meals may be served to all children 18 and under.

What do grab-and-go meals look like? Do we continue to use Offer vs Serve?

The meals must meet the regular menu planning requirements of the SFSP. Offer versus serve (OVS) will not apply and all meals must be unitized, meaning a complete reimbursable meal that meets the requirements of the menu planning method used, including milk, must be distributed. Shelf-stable milk may be used. USDA commodity foods may also be used. If availability of milk or other meal components becomes an issue, FNS will work with the State agency to provide the needed waivers or flexibility.

How many meals per child may be offered each day? May supper be provided? Can meals be distributed for more than one day?

The maximum number of meals that may be offered remains the same as under SFSP: up to two meals, or one meal and one snack, per child, per day, in any combination except lunch and supper. The State agency may approve a distribution approach that includes meals for multiple days. The State agency should consider the capacity of the SFA or CO to execute such an approach effectively, including meeting food safety requirements.

Best Practices to announce free meals to the community

Using local resources to announce meals – Consider announcing closures on the local news channel, adding that you will be serving meals, use reader boards, use social media resources.