

NO KID HUNGRY RESPONDS: CORONAVIRUS

ACTION NEEDED:

Extend the Nationwide Child Nutrition Waivers

To reach hungry children with the food they need throughout the coming school year, the USDA must extend all nationwide child nutrition waivers through June 30, 2021.



The coronavirus has caused a catastrophic health crisis around the globe. It also created an economic crisis that has pushed millions of families with children into poverty and hunger here in the United States.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has the power to help. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave the USDA the authority to issue nationwide child nutrition waivers. When schools closed and moved to remote learning in March, these waivers allowed school districts and community providers the necessary flexibility to serve meals during the pandemic. Until now, they have been able to utilize the summer meals programs. Combined with available waiver flexibilities, the summer meals programs have allowed organizations to more easily reach kids wherever they are during these unprecedented times.

But as schools across the country begin the new school year, they will face more obstacles. While the USDA has offered some flexibilities for the upcoming school year, they are not sufficient to meet the challenges that schools and communities face. Schools will now be required to feed kids through the school meals program, even if some or all students continue distance learning. The traditional school meals program requirements are not well suited to schools starting the year virtually or implementing a hybrid instruction model with a mix of in-person and distance learners during a national health emergency.

Limiting the options for schools and community partners not only hurts the organizations that have been working tirelessly under enormous financial strain since March, it places undue burdens on families and kids facing hunger right now.

The USDA must use its existing authority to extend the summer meals program waivers and give schools and local organizations the ability to continue operating the summer meals programs this school year to meet the nutritional needs of low-income kids during a national pandemic.

Without this flexibility, many schools and community organizations across the country will not be able to reach children the meals they need. It is critical to act now as the school year has already begun in many part of the country.

Nationwide Child Nutrition Waivers will help schools and community organizations feed kids throughout the coming school year, but the summer meals waivers must be extended. If they are not, many communities **will not be able to reach hungry kids** with the food they need.

Why Kids Still Need the Summer Meals Programs

Schools that have started the 2020-2021 school year virtually have encountered many challenges that reveal why the summer meals programs are still critical. Without the summer meals programs:

- Schools are limited to serving students enrolled in their district unless they have an agreement and the ability to share eligibility data with other districts. It is especially challenging in areas where elementary schools and high schools are operated by separate districts, meaning families may have children enrolled in multiple districts.
- Few districts have the technology to track students across schools in real time as they pick up meals. Students may be limited to getting meals at the school where they are enrolled, which puts a burden on families with children at multiple schools.
- Schools must check students' enrollment and eligibility one by one, which slows down meal distribution. Many schools do not have the technology to do this outside the cafeteria.
- Schools cannot serve students' younger siblings. Parents may choose to go without meals for their enrolled student if they cannot get meals for all of their children.
- Schools cannot serve students attending charter schools that may be further from home.
- Schools can no longer serve at community sites, which may be more conveniently located near where kids live. This is particularly challenging for families without reliable transportation options.
- Community organizations have limited options for serving kids and extending schools' capacity.
- Organizations providing care for distance learners have few options available for feeding kids without complicated coordination with each child's school. This burdens low-income working parents.

Action Needed Now

Schools that have started the school year are experiencing dramatic drops in participation; many are reaching less than 10 percent of the students they serve in a normal school year. This has happened at schools with low free or reduced-price meal eligibility rates, those with high rates and even those able to offer free meals to all students with options like the Community Eligibility Provision. Without more flexibility soon, not only will children go hungry, but schools will have to lay off staff, leaving them less prepared for normal school operations in the future.

Acting now gives schools and local organizations the tools they need to ensure kids get the food they need.



Note From The Frontlines

"I personally have seen a **drastic** drop in participation from when we were providing meals under SFSP to when we started NSLP [...] participation dropped by over 85% in my district."

- MICHAEL CLARKE, CRANE SCHOOLS, ARIZONA

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Read [this blog post](#) for more on why USDA must extend these waivers and this [statement](#) from No Kid Hungry Senior Vice President Lisa Davis on why USDA's latest waiver extensions are inadequate.

About No Kid Hungry

No child should go hungry in America, but in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, 1 in 4 kids could face hunger this year. No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger through effective programs that provide kids with the food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of Share Our Strength, an organization working to end hunger and poverty. Join us at NoKidHungry.org

