



## Supporting Schools, Communities, and Nutrition Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic Recommended State Policy Actions *Updated August 21, 2020*

### Leverage Federal Waivers, Resources and Programs

- Implement and Strengthen Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT). This ensures that families of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals have access to commensurate grocery benefits. P-EBT is a state option to provide food benefits through EBT cards to children who have temporarily lost access to free and reduced-price meals at school due to a COVID-19 triggered school closure.
- Extend and Expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Waivers and Flexibilities, as authorized by Congress, to strengthen SNAP. Congress has granted USDA broad authority to issue waivers and flexibilities for existing SNAP rules to ease administrative burden and respond to social distancing and stay-at-home orders.
- Draw Down Federal Emergency Relief Funds. Use the options listed below to provide schools, local governments, and other entities have access to federal funds to support nutrition assistance in response to COVID-19.

The [Governor's Emergency Relief Fund \(GEERF\)](#), established by CARES Act, provides a total of \$3 billion to Governors to support school districts impacted by the pandemic and their efforts to maintain core functionality and ongoing essential and emergency educational services including funding any other services that Governors deem critical for students.

The [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund \(ESSERF\)](#), established by the CARES Act, appropriates \$13.5 billion to support Local Educational Agencies' effort to provide a range of services and activities to meet the unique needs of low-income children and schools such as funding for planning and coordination of essential services like meal delivery.

The [Coronavirus Relief Fund](#), established by the CARES Act, appropriates \$150 billion to state, local, and tribal governments to broadly cover expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### Opportunities for State Leadership

- Ensure racial equity in responding to the impact of COVID-19 by gathering data about the health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities and allocating state resources accordingly to address disparities.
- Support school and child nutrition program workers by ensuring access to personal protective equipment, supporting child care needs, and recognizing them for their incredible service to their communities.
- Support schools and school district budgets by covering the costs emergency meal distribution and delivery and enhancing the school nutrition department's capacity to continue meal service throughout the school year.
- Ensure that schools and child nutrition program operators have the flexibilities they need to continue serving meals by working with the state agency to request and adopt all available waiver options.
- Promote options that will help schools to reach more low-income families, like the adoption of the Community Eligibility Provision or active promotion of the application for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Establish emergency response funds to ensure that food banks or other organizations have the resources they need to meet the unprecedented surge in demand for food services by vulnerable families.
- Support restaurants and culinary workers by creating a statewide "Community Meals Fund" to establish public/private partnerships to connect the restaurant community in the provision of emergency and nutritious foods to families and children and providing financial support to industry workers impacted by restaurant closures.

For more details visit: <http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/resource/supporting-schools-communities-and-nutrition-programs-during-covid-19-pandemic-recommended>

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