

SERVING MEALS ON WEEKENDS, HOLIDAYS, SCHOOL BREAKS AND CLOSURES DURING THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Students need healthy meals every day of the year to learn and grow. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool component, often called the Afterschool Meals Program, allows sponsors to serve meals and snacks to children on weekends, holiday and school breaks. This year, [USDA waivers](#) expand site eligibility and allow for flexibility in service model. Communities continue to feel the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and serving meals and snacks when school is out is a great way to support children and families in your community.

Program Options for Serving Meals on Weekends, Holidays, School Breaks and Closures During School Year 2021-2022

Both schools and non-profit sponsors can use the Afterschool Meals Program to serve meals and snacks on weekends, holidays, and school breaks. One meal and one snack can be reimbursed through Afterschool Meals. On non-school days (e.g. weekends or school breaks), sponsors have the flexibility to choose which meal to serve. All meals are reimbursed at the free rate¹:

- Breakfast - \$1.97
- Lunch/Supper - \$3.66 (plus cash-in-lieu = \$3.92²)
- Snack - \$1.00

Meals and snacks served through the Afterschool Meals Program are open to all children 18 and younger and are paired with an enrichment component.

Flexibilities Available to Your Afterschool Meals Program this Year

A summary of all available waivers and guidance memos is available [here](#) (updated regularly).

- **Every school and non-profit site location is eligible to provide meals at no cost.** The [Area Eligibility Waiver](#) eliminates the need for a program site to be in an area where at least half of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. This gives flexibility to site selection for weekends, holiday, and school break meal service. This waiver is available for the full school year without restrictions based on level of need or operating status.
- **Sites can serve meals through alternative service models.** The [Non-Congregate Meal Service](#), [Meal Service Time](#), and [Parent/Guardian Pick-Up](#) waivers have been central to many alternative service models, such as direct home delivery, curbside or grab-n-go meals, and multi-day meal bundles. They will be available to support students as needed, such as those continuing with virtual learning or those affected by a school or program closure or quarantine. Work with your state agency to determine what is possible based on your operating status and student needs.
- **Virtual and take-home enrichment activities are allowed for non-congregate meal service.** See [Q36](#) in USDA's most recent guidance.
- **Sites can track attendance of children participating virtually in the enrichment activity through documentation of meal pick-up or delivery upon state agency approval.** See [Q41](#) in USDA's most recent guidance.

¹ Reimbursement rates effective July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

² Cash-in-lieu of USDA commodity foods is the most common reimbursement for CACFP At-Risk sponsors.

Tips and Best Practices

Serving During Inclement Weather

The best way to have a successful meal service during weather-related closures is to be prepared. Have a detailed plan in place before bad weather hits, and in your plan, outline a team responsible for decision making so that you are ready to act quickly.

- Confirm in advance with your state agency whether you can use the non-congregate and related waivers in the event of inclement weather.
- Consider keeping shelf stable items or pre-bagged meals on hand to distribute in advance of bad weather.
- Create a communications plan to ensure that families know about any changes in operation including distribution day, time, location, meal type and number of meals.
- Work with families on distribution location and estimated meal counts. Consider a simple meal pre-order and pick-up scheduling system using Google forms, other free tools, or even texts and phone calls.
- Super snowy? Arrange central distribution point for families that live on impassable roads and use sleds to help deliver meals.
- Consider mid-day delivery or distribution if mornings are cold or icy.
- Distribute from buses in the parking lot. Multiple lanes speeds up the process, and staff can stay warm in the bus.

Serving Over Weekends and Scheduled School Breaks and Holidays

- Consider staff capacity to work on weekends, holidays and breaks as well as logistical issues like building access. You might find staggering staff could give some a break while others work. Or, it could make the most sense for your program to distribute meals in bulk ahead of the weekend, break or holiday on your last day of operation.
- Take advantage of [USDA guidance](#) on bulk food items for multi-meal distribution up to one week's worth of meals (e.g. a loaf of bread and sliced deli meats vs. pre-assembled sandwiches).
- Consider a combination of perishable and shelf stable meals for longer breaks and holidays.
- Consider items that could be a part of family holiday meals, like dinner rolls or canned green beans, and [survey families](#) for favorite, culturally appropriate holiday meal items to include in meal kits or boxes.
- Identify additional resources to support kids and families. For example, partner with a local food bank or pantry to provide grocery boxes or consider a winter coat or holiday gift drive to pair with your meal distribution.

Tap Into The Strengths of Your Community

- [Survey](#) kids and families for convenient distribution locations and times.
- Partner with local organizations who might be providing childcare during school breaks and holidays. Parks, libraries, places of worship and recreation centers are great starting points.
- As needed, partner with other program sponsors to fill gaps. Another sponsor might be able to operate out of your usual sites while your staff take a break, or families could be referred to nearby sites that will continue to operate.
- Explore partnering with a restaurant or caterer that may be able to prepare meals and add capacity to your program.

For more resources on back-to-school and serving meals during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit:

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/coronavirus-response-recovery>