

NO KID HUNGRY RESPONDS: CORONAVIRUS

Nutrition Assistance for Disaster Relief During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Hunger remains a pressing issue in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. When disasters strike, kids are even more likely to struggle with hunger. Many families lose all the food in their refrigerators. Schools and other meal distribution sites in affected areas may close. Families may be evacuated to new areas. Even months later, families continue to struggle with food insecurity due to home repair, lost wages and medical bills.

There are many opportunities for state agencies to work with sponsors, school districts and the USDA to provide critical nutrition to kids impacted by natural disaster through the existing federal nutrition programs. COVID-19 has complicated some traditional aspects of disaster response, like mass feeding sites. However, some COVID-19 flexibilities may be leveraged along with usual disaster response and recovery options.



MEALS FOR KIDS Under current COVID-19 waivers, schools may provide free meals to all kids with the Seamless Summer Option. Schools and non-profits may also serve free meals through CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals or CACFP emergency shelters. With available waivers for these programs, meals can be served in bulk, up to one week at a time, for off-site consumption. Non-profits may be able to serve free meals through the Summer Food Service Program during disaster-related school closures. More disaster flexibilities may also be granted for certain requirements (e.g. site eligibility and approval, etc.) [[Read more](#)]

DISASTER SNAP (D-SNAP) The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) can help eligible low- to moderate-income households buy groceries in the wake of a hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster. The program assists those who may not normally receive SNAP benefits but are struggling due to lost income or damages, as well as those who are already enrolled in SNAP. The program is administered through the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, which coordinates with state, local and voluntary organizations to issue D-SNAP benefits. [[Read more](#)]

PANDEMIC EBT & SCHOOL MEALS ELIGIBILITY Children displaced due to a natural disaster meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless, qualifying them for free school meals as well as [Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\)](#). P-EBT provides families with eligible children with a small grocery benefit when schools are closed due to COVID-19 as well as the following summer. School districts may keep lists documenting kids impacted to qualify them for free meals and P-EBT without collecting individual applications. [[Read More](#)]

FREE SCHOOL BREAKFAST & LUNCH FOR ALL STUDENTS State agencies can apply for a USDA waiver that allows school districts to provide free meals to all students in areas hard-hit by a natural disaster. The length of the waiver may vary depending on the extent of the damage. This may be particularly helpful for long-term recovery efforts once current COVID-19 waivers expire. [[Read more](#)]

The available program flexibilities require varying degrees of advance planning and state agency or USDA approval. Some also require an official disaster declaration.

Resources

[USDA Food & Nutrition Service Disaster Response 101 Fact Sheet](#)

[USDA Food & Nutrition Service Disaster Response Website](#)

[USDA Fact Sheet: Child Nutrition Programs During Disaster](#)

[USDA Memo: Child Nutrition Program Benefits and Eligibility for Disaster Survivors and Evacuees](#)

[USDA D-SNAP Toolkit](#)

[USDA Fact Sheet: Programs that Assist Individuals and Small Businesses Following Disasters](#)

[No Kid Hungry Brief: 365 Days of Service with Child Nutrition Programs](#)

For more information on COVID-19 waivers and program and policy options, see No Kid Hungry's [Coronavirus Emergency Response Resources](#) and [Back to School Resources](#).



Disaster Assistance in Action

Following Hurricane Harvey, the Houston School District offered students three free meals a day for the entirety of the 2017-2018 school year. [[Houston Chronicle](#)]

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the USDA issued \$680 million to nearly 1.5 million households in 2005. [[Huffington Post](#)]

When schools closed during the Oregon wildfires in 2017, the USDA granted a waiver allowing the state to use a Summer Food Service Program demonstration project to send meals home with kids. [[USDA](#)]



For more information on how the federal nutrition programs can support disaster relief efforts and COVID-19 response, contact Bernadette Downey at bdowney@strength.org.

About No Kid Hungry

No child should go hungry in America. But in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, millions of kids could face hunger this year. No Kid Hungry is working to end childhood hunger by helping launch and improve programs that give all kids the healthy food they need to thrive. This is a problem we know how to solve. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of Share Our Strength, an organization committed to ending hunger and poverty.

Join us at NoKidHungry.org