



## PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER, HOLIDAYS & BREAKS DURING SY 2020-2021

Good food makes holidays and snow days brighter. Nutritious meals also help students to be ready to learn when school resumes. With staggering rates of food insecurity this year, it's more important than ever to provide meals without gaps or breaks. While operating through school breaks and bad weather may take extra planning, serving meals during these times has the added benefit of bringing in more meal reimbursements to support your program.

### Program Options

With the [waivers available](#) this school year, sites may serve meals seven days per week -- including weekends, school breaks, and holidays -- through SFSP, SSO, and/or CACFP At-Risk Afterschool.

[As usual](#), sites can provide meals through the summer or afterschool meals programs during unanticipated school closures, like snow days, as long as they can do so safely. This takes on new meaning this school year when many schools are operating through SFSP or SSO already and instruction may shift online instead of stopping altogether. Sites can continue serving meals like usual for this year, regardless of the weather and school operating status.

Sites can serve through the summer and afterschool meals programs concurrently, offering each child a breakfast, lunch, supper and snack daily through both programs together. Usual daily meal limits apply to each program. Also, this year, sites can serve meals for multiple days at the same time, with meals for up to one week distributed together.

As always, work with your state agency to ensure that you have the necessary approvals to serve the meals that you intend to serve.

[Typically](#), the only option for serving meals on non-school days during the school year is CACFP At-Risk Afterschool. This year, though, the summer meals programs are also an option, whether on their own or alongside afterschool meals.

Whether meals could be served through the summer meals programs over spring break in 2020 was a source of confusion, but [USDA guidance](#) later clarified that serving during spring break and other non-school days was permitted. More [recent guidance](#) confirms that summer meals are an option for any day during school year 2020-2021.

For more resources on serving meals during the coronavirus pandemic, visit our website:  
<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/coronavirus-response-recovery>

## Prepare for Winter Weather & Other Unanticipated Closures

- As needed and where possible, procure equipment and supplies that will support continued operation of outdoor meal distribution sites during inclement weather, like portable outdoor heaters to keep staff warm.
- Determine if everyday operations should change in anticipation of cold weather, like distributing meals from just inside a door or [working with families](#) to set a narrower distribution window that limits staff time outside.
  - Consider a simple meal pre-order and pick-up scheduling system using Google forms, other free tools or even texts or phone calls. This can maximize the efficiency of meal preparation and outdoor distribution times, or it can help to space out when families come for indoor meal pick-up.
- Develop a plan for deciding if it's possible to safely operate, which may include:
  - Forming the team responsible for making the decision.
  - Designating someone to monitor the weather forecast.
  - Deciding what factors will be considered, like whether someone can clear ice and snow from driveways, parking lots, and walkways in a timely manner.
  - Determining which meal distribution locations are most likely to be accessible for families.
  - Securing building access, especially if other operations at the location will be suspended.
  - Ensuring that staff with building access can get there, i.e. have a four wheel drive vehicle or live nearby.
- Consider keeping shelf stable items or pre-bagged meals on hand to distribute in advance of possible inclement weather (as long as no more than one week's worth of meals will be distributed at once).
- Create a communications plan to ensure that families know about any changes in operation, like:
  - Whether extra meals are being distributed in advance of possible bad weather.
  - Changes in distribution days, hours or locations.

## Prepare for Weekends, Breaks, and Holidays

- Consider staff capacity to work over weekends, holidays and breaks as well as logistical issues, like building access. Staggering staff could give some a break while others work.
- Determine storage & staff capacity to distribute additional meals in advance of weekends, holidays or breaks if staff could not distribute meals during those times.
  - Take advantage of [USDA guidance](#) on bulk food items for multi-meal distribution (up to one week at a time).
- Consider items that could be part of family holiday meals, like dinner rolls or canned green beans.
  - Review this [sample holiday menu](#) from LunchAssist for inspiration.
  - [Survey families](#) for favorite, culturally appropriate holiday meal items to include in meal kits or boxes.
- Think about setting up a pre-order system for breaks and holidays, especially if the distribution schedule would be different. This can both promote the availability of meals and help with preparing the right number of meals.
- Explore partnering with a restaurant or caterer that may be able to prepare meals in order to add capacity.
- As needed, partner with other sponsors to fill gaps. Another sponsor may be able to operate out of your usual sites while your staff takes a break, or families could be referred to nearby sites that will continue to operate.
- Identify additional resources to support kids and families. For example, if it is not possible to serve additional reimbursable meals to cover a school break, work with a food bank or pantry that may be able to provide or distribute food for the entire family on the last day of operation before the break.

Tolleson Elementary School District (AZ) typically distributes meals each weekday, Monday through Friday, and includes meals for the weekend on Fridays. For Thanksgiving, the staff will distribute meals for Thursday through Sunday on the Wednesday before the holiday.