

## National School Lunch Program Operations Fall 2020 Questions and Answers for Schools

January 22, 2021

School nutrition programs (SNP) have the option to operate either the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), or the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)/School Breakfast Program (SBP) for fall of 2020. The SFSP/SSO is available through a waiver from USDA through June 30, 2021 or until funding is exhausted. Local schools/districts may be operating in one or more of the learning models, including in-person, hybrid or distance learning throughout the school year. Each of these methods presents unique issues for school food authorities (SFAs). This document provides answers to common questions related to **NSLP/SBP** operations for the 2020-21 school year as schools move through the three learning models. Review the [Minnesota Department of Education's Safe Learning Plan for the 2020-21 School Year](#) that was revised on January 8, 2021.

**Searching this document:** Q&A's are organized in tables by the content areas listed below. New questions that are added will be dated and placed at the top of each content area table. Select the hyperlink in the list below to jump to the content area tables. You can also search this document using a key word. Select the "Control" key and the "F" key at the same time. A pop-up box will be provided to enter a key word. Type the key word in the box and select "Enter". All instances of the key word will be highlighted in the document. Key word searches work best if you limit the search to one or two words.

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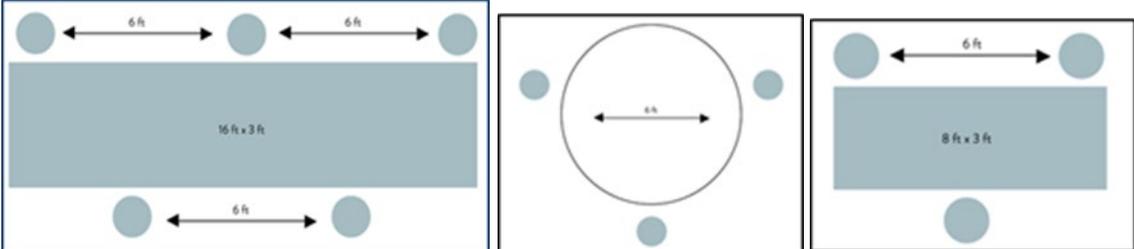
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## What's New

Date Added	Question	Answer
1/22/21	Should school foodservice staff wear face coverings, face shields, or both?	<p>The <a href="#">MDH Planning Guide for Schools</a> requires all students and staff to wear a face covering when in school buildings, district offices, or riding on school transportation vehicles. It also strongly recommends that districts and charter schools require staff to wear a face covering and a face shield together whenever possible during the school day. It goes on to state that food service workers licensed by MDH or a local health department should follow the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Restaurants and Bars, which allows workers to wear face shields when a cloth covering cannot be worn---such as when working in hot kitchens. <b><i>If you have any questions about face coverings or other COVID-19 issues, please contact your local health inspector/sanitarian.</i></b></p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>
1/22/21	If the school has only one food service employee, does that person have to wear a face covering while cooking/preparing/cleaning?	<p>If a worker is working alone in an office or other enclosed or separated area where food is not stored, handled, or prepared, he/she may remove their face covering. When a worker is serving students or interacting with others during work hours, he/she is required to wear a face covering. In addition, check to see if your school or district requires the use of a face covering and a face shield, as recommended by the MDH Planning Guide for Schools. A worker may wear a face shield alone when a cloth face covering cannot be worn—such as when working in a hot kitchen. <b><i>If you have any questions about face coverings or other COVID-19 issues, please contact your local health inspector/sanitarian.</i></b></p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
1/22/21	Can students eat their meals in the cafeteria, or are they required to have mealtimes in their classroom?	<p><b>Elementary schools:</b> It is required that student meal times be held in the classroom if 6 feet of physical distancing between cohorts of students cannot be accommodated in the cafeteria. Distancing between students in the same cohort in the cafeteria should follow the same guidelines as in the classroom (3-6 feet). If mealtimes need to be held in the classroom, schools may have meals delivered to the classroom or have students bring food from the cafeteria back to their classrooms to eat.</p> <p><b>Secondary schools:</b> It is recommended that meal times be held in the classroom if social distancing is not possible in the cafeteria. These meals can be delivered to the classroom or students may bring food from the cafeteria back to their classrooms to eat.</p> <p><b>In both elementary and secondary schools,</b> schools are required to mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times they may congregate (e.g., during lunch, arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker rooms). They must also have staff monitor arrival and dismissal to curtail students from congregating.</p> <p>For more information, see the <a href="#">MDH Planning Guide for Schools</a>.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
1/22/21	If meals will not be sent to classrooms, what is the best seating arrangement in the cafeteria?	<p>The goal is to ensure adequate spacing between students and to limit the amount of time they spend directly facing each other. When planning seating arrangements in the cafeteria, think about your current table shapes and sizes. How many students can fit at each table while striving for 6 feet of distance between each student? Round tables designed for 8 students should now seat no more than 4 students. Use staggered seating at rectangular tables. Students sit at every other seat on one side and never directly across from each other. See graphic examples below.</p> <p><b>For elementary schools:</b></p> <p>If 6 feet of physical distancing between cohorts of students cannot be accommodated in the cafeteria, then students must eat their meals in the classroom. Distancing between students should follow the same guidelines as in the classroom (3-6 feet).</p> <p><b>For secondary schools:</b></p> <p>When using the hybrid learning model, schools must reduce occupancy to a maximum of 50% and students are required to remain 6 feet apart at all times. You may consider adding alternate eating locations, such as classrooms, gyms, libraries, and outdoor spaces when weather permits.</p>  <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
1/22/21	Regarding Contents of Bulk Meal Boxes for Pick-up or Delivery, can we pack dry ingredients with multiple step recipes in a Child Nutrition Program meal bundle?	<p>MDE and USDA do not recommend the use of multi-step recipes and ingredients, such as beans in a dry state, due to the required preparation and cooking time of those food items. Program operators may provide bulk items as long as individual meals for each daily menu are easily identifiable.</p> <p>When implementing such a meal delivery mechanism, Program operators must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• include the required food components in the proper minimum amounts for each reimbursable meal being claimed;</li> <li>• ensure that food items are clearly identifiable as making up reimbursable meals based on the menu;</li> <li>• provide menus with directions indicating which items are to be used for each meal and the portion sizes.</li> </ul> <p>Operators should also consider that children are of different ages and vary in skills for meal preparation. They are also engaged in distance learning and may not have time for multi-step meal preparation. Thus, operators should ensure that only minimal preparation (i.e. refrigeration or reheating) is required and that food is not provided as ingredients for recipes that require chopping, mixing, soaking, or cooking to prepare each meal.</p>
8/7/20	How do we staff our kitchens when our service model may change throughout the year?	<p>This year will require flexibility. Switching between service models changes the number of needed staff. Each individual school district must determine appropriate staffing levels. Use what you learned during meal service operations in March-June 2020 to help determine staffing levels.</p> <p><a href="#">MDE has created a resource</a> that provides suggestions for schools that experience staffing shortages due to illness or quarantine during COVID-19.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>
1/22/21	What is the verification deadline for SY 2020-21?	<p>USDA Food and Nutrition Service is extending the verification deadline to February 28, 2021. All LEAs that collected school meal applications during SY 2020-21 are required to conduct verification. LEAs have discretion to complete verification ahead of this deadline, if they have the administrative capability to do so. Refer to the <a href="#">Nationwide Waiver to Allow SFSP and Seamless SSO through SY 2020-21 - Extension Q&amp;As #3</a> for further details.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
1/22/21	Why won't the Cyber-Linked Interactive Child Nutrition System (CLiCS) allow me to enter my verification report?	<p>Access to the CLiCS verification reporting system has been temporarily suspended so that MDE can complete a cross program analysis of the system. Please continue the verification process as it is an important aspect of program integrity monitoring. You will be notified of verification reporting requirements when the system analysis is complete through the weekly Nutrition Bulletin. All other features of CLiCS are open and operating as usual. If you do not receive the bulletins, please <a href="#">Subscribe Now</a>.</p>
1/22/21	Will there still be state agency administrative reviews this year?	<p>The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is allowing state agencies (SAs) flexibility in some aspects of the administrative review. The format may be modified and parts of the review may be done off site. MDE will contact sponsors if they will be reviewed in School Year 2020-2021.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>
1/22/21	Has Minnesota asked for a waiver for potable water to be made available during meal times?	<p>Yes. MDE has requested this waiver and is awaiting a response from USDA.</p> <p>USDA has provided the following guidance regarding the potable water requirement during this time (<a href="#">SP 24-2020</a>):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The potable water requirement applies to all meals served in the cafeteria and lunch meals served in the classroom.</li> <li>2. The potable water requirement does not apply to breakfast meals served in the classroom or to meals provided via pick up or delivery for distance learning.</li> </ol> <p><a href="#">Here is a new resource from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</a> that helps promote clean, safe water access for children in schools. These 5-minute modules can be used to meet Professional Standards requirements, and to help achieve the NSLP/SBP potable water requirement.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

## Meal Access/Reimbursement/Free-Reduced

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who is responsible for feeding students who open enroll in our district?</li> <li>2. During distance learning, who is responsible for feeding students who live in our district boundaries but are not enrolled at our school? We know their eligibility status, however the district they live in may not.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open enrolled students may receive meals from a home district with coordination between the enrolled district and the home district to ensure that meals are not being claimed by both district for the same student and the district providing the meal is compensated for the meal. Coordination may include: a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sharing student eligibility, establishing meal accounts.</li> <li>2. This will require coordination between districts. Public schools/districts need to be sure that all students have access to school meals during distance or hybrid learning. The <a href="#">Executive Order 20-82</a> says “if schools move from an in-person to a hybrid or distance learning model, public school districts or charter schools must continue to provide meals to students during the school day to the extent possible.”</li> </ol> <p>The following agreements are for use between two School Food Authorities (SFA) participating in School Nutrition Programs (SNP) when one SFA desires to authorize another SFA to provide reimbursable meals to enrolled students during distance learning periods related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>Two options are available:</p> <p><a href="#">Option 1 – Enrolled District/School Claims Meals for Reimbursement</a>: Used when the district the student is enrolled in is asking another district to provide meals for their student(s) and will be claiming the meals for reimbursement.</p> <p><a href="#">Option 2 – Local District/School Claims Meals for Reimbursement</a>: Used when the district the student is not enrolled in will be providing meals and claiming the meals for reimbursement.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>
9/7/20	Can we send a postcard to households informing them of where to find or how to request an Application for Educational Benefits?	A postcard informing households of where to find the application is acceptable but households must also receive the information letter. The information letter may be distributed via postal service, e-mail or included in an information packet. A detailed list of the information letter requirements is available from the <a href="#">Eligibility Manual for School Meals</a> (page 11-13).

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/7/20	If a school distributes five days' worth of meals on Monday morning during the school's designated pick-up time, can the breakfast intended to be consumed on Monday be picked up as late as noon and still be claimed that day?	Yes. The USDA has extended the <a href="#">Meal Service Time Flexibility in the NSLP, SBP and CACFP</a> which will allow programs to continue to serve meals and snacks outside of required times.
9/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If meal(s) are ordered but not picked up at the curbside pick-up site, can we still claim the meal(s)?</li> <li>2. For contactless home delivery can we count the drop off as the point of service? Or do we need to give it directly to someone to make sure it is received?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the curbside pick-up distribution method, if a family did not pick up their meal(s), you cannot claim the meal(s).</li> <li>2. In the home delivery method, if the meal is not delivered directly to someone, you may claim those meals. Families must complete a Consent Form for Home Delivered Meals Template— School Nutrition Programs for this school year that indicates that they accept the “terms” of the home delivery method, which would include general expectations with timing of delivery, food safety, etc.</li> </ol>
9/7/20	Some or all of our students are distance learning in the 2020-21 school year. Do they still have the option to go to ANY school and pick up their meals?	<p>SFAs may provide meals to students enrolled in schools outside the SFA only if they have an agreement with the student's SFA to share eligibility information. The following agreements are for use between two School Food Authorities (SFA) participating in School Nutrition Programs (SNP) when one SFA desires to authorize another SFA to provide reimbursable meals to enrolled students during distance learning periods related to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Two options are available:</p> <p><a href="#">Option 1 – Enrolled District/School Claims Meals for Reimbursement</a>: Used when the district the student is enrolled in is asking another district to provide meals for their student(s) and will be claiming the meals for reimbursement.</p> <p><a href="#">Option 2 – Local District/School Claims Meals for Reimbursement</a>: Used when the district the student is not enrolled in will be providing meals and claiming the meals for reimbursement.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/26/20	<p>When a school pivots from one learning model to another, the school can use up to five instructional days to plan for the change even if students may not be receiving instruction during that time.</p> <p>Can we provide and claim meals during this time?</p>	<p>Under this unique COVID-19 pandemic situation, If the days are used as “instructional days” the Local Educational Agency (LEA) can provide meals to students and claim them for reimbursement under the NSLP. It’s up to the LEA. If there is no instruction being provided, the LEA is not required to, but may provide meals.</p>
8/19/20	<p>We will return from a scheduled break with distance learning, and “bundling” five days’ worth of meals for our students in advance. In order for our students to have meals on the first day of school, can we distribute our meals prior to the beginning of the school year?</p>	<p>Yes, this would be allowable. Keep in mind that reimbursement is only available for instructional days. Information should be sent with the meals to indicate which days the meals are intended to be consumed. In addition, record meal counts on the day that they are intended to be consumed even if all meals are distributed on one day.</p>
8/19/20	<p>Do school need to provide meals to students during distance learning regardless of whether this is the household’s choice or the district’s current learning model?</p>	<p>Public schools/districts need to be sure that all students <b>have access</b> to school meals during distance or hybrid learning. The <a href="#">Executive Order 20-82</a> says “if schools move from an in-person to a hybrid or distance learning model, public school districts or charter schools must continue to provide meals to students during the school day <i>to the extent possible</i>.” This allows for flexibility in methods of distribution, including curbside distribution, home delivery if the district prefers, bus stop pick-up, etc.</p> <p>The USDA has extended the <a href="#">Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs</a> which will allow programs to continue to serve meals and snacks outside of required times.</p>
8/19/20	<p>Are we required to provide breakfast meals this school year or can we provide only lunch?</p>	<p><b>Public Schools:</b> Breakfast must be “offered” to students at each site (unless the number of Free/Reduced lunches served at a site is less than 33% for the second prior year) but students/families do not have to order a breakfast. If you operate the School Breakfast Program (SBP), only those students who want to participate should do so.</p> <p><b>Non-public</b> schools are encouraged, but not required to offer breakfast.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/19/20	Can we only offer breakfast to special groups, such as before-school kid's day care, preschool and Kindergarten?	If a school(s) serve breakfast, it must be made available to all students who choose to eat during established breakfast times and locations.
8/19/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who can pick up meals on behalf of a student?</li> <li>2. Do they need to provide proof of which student(s) they are picking up meals for?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A parent or another person who has been given the responsibility to care for the student (such as a grandparent or older sibling) may pick up meals as long as there is a method to verify the student for whom the meals are being picked up.</li> <li>2. Schools may ask for the student's name, grade, PIN number, teacher or other indicator to identify the student for which meals are being received.</li> </ol> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>
8/19/20	Are non-public schools required to provide meals when they dial back in-person learning to distance learning under the Governor's executive order?	Non-public schools are not required, but are encouraged, to comply with the Governor's <a href="#">Executive Order 20-82</a> .
8/19/20	Our school operates under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). How will our meal reimbursement be affected for the school year 2020-21?	You will claim and receive reimbursement for your usual claiming percentage. Reimbursement will continue to be based on the number of meals served/claimed.
8/19/20	If a household lists a P-EBT number on the Application for Educational Benefits, is this considered a case number categorically eligible application?	No, receipt of P-EBT benefits is not a case number application. Households receiving P-EBT benefits but not SNAP, MFIP, or FDPIR would not qualify as categorically eligible, and would need to report earned income on the Application for Educational Benefits.
8/19/20	Do the additional funds received through the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program, count as household income on the Application for Educational Benefits?	P-EBT funds are not counted as income on an Application for Educational Benefits.

<b>Date Added</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
8/19/20	Can Applications for Educational Benefits be emailed or faxed to/from households to minimize the risk of exposure?	Applications for Educational Benefits may be provided to households and submitted to the school via fax or email. All disclosure restrictions must be met. Typed signatures are not permitted.
8/19/20	We use paper “check-list” rosters and then transfer the information into our electronic POS system. Do we need to keep all the paper rosters as documentation?	Yes, please keep the paper checklist rosters for a minimum of three years plus the current school year on file.
8/19/20	We are asking households to sign up for weekly pick up of meals. Is it acceptable to communicate to parents that if they have difficulty picking up meals at the school they should contact their school social worker to see how we might be able to assist or must we deliver meals to these households?	This is acceptable. SFAs are not required to deliver meals to households that cannot pick up meals from the distribution site.
8/7/20	Has MDE received any waivers for this upcoming school year?  Do SFAs have to apply to receive any of these waivers?	USDA has provided a number of waivers that will offer flexibility in preparing and distributing meals to students during distance, hybrid and on-site learning. For a complete description of the waivers, including whether or not SFAs must apply to receive the waiver, <a href="#">View USDA Food and Nutrition COVID-19 Waivers.</a>
8/7/20	What methods can be used in place of PIN key pads to obtain a point of service (POS) count?	A POS meal count is required, however the method to obtain POS counts is flexible. Electronic systems, manual systems and combination systems are allowed. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bar code scanners using printed bar codes tied to students' names or from a student ID card</li> <li>• Paper “check-off” rosters</li> <li>• Students stating their name or lunch number to the cashier and the cashier entering data into electronic counting system</li> </ul>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	How would student meals be counted if traditional cafeteria service is not used? (e.g., serving student meal trays at the table, serving meals in the classroom, serving meals at curbside/bus stops)	A point of service (POS) meal count is required regardless of the meal service location. If a student does not go through a traditional cafeteria line/cashier, a mobile/portable POS device or a manual checklist could also be utilized. Please refer to the <a href="#">Point of Service and Meal Counting Procedures</a> and <a href="#">Standards for Alternative Point of Service Meal Counts</a> documents located on our <a href="#">CLiCS Claims and Reporting</a> page of the MDE website. You can compare your situation to the guidelines in these documents to evaluate your point of service.
8/7/20	Our students will pre-order their meals. Must we still take another count when the students receive their meals?	Yes. The point of service meal counts <b>must</b> be made at the point the students receive their meals. Pre-counts may be useful for the purpose of preparing the appropriate number of meals, but may not be used as the count submitted for reimbursement.
8/7/20	Do meals need to be claimed at the physical school site a student is enrolled in or where meals are served?	<p>Schools within the same district may report reimbursable meal counts through the CLiCS SNP Claim screen at <b>either</b> the site where the student is enrolled or the site where the student receives the meal. It is up to the SFAs discretion depending upon the counting and claiming systems.</p> <p>In addition, schools must have a method for ensuring that meals are claimed by student eligibility type (free, reduced-price, paid), and that no more than one breakfast, lunch, and/or snack meal per day is counted/claimed for each student. All meals must be counted at the point of service, the point where the student receives the meal(s).</p>
8/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can we serve bulk meals under NSLP and SBP?</li> <li>2. During hybrid learning, can I send next week's meals home with students on their last day of in-person learning?</li> <li>3. How do we claim the individual meals if a few days' worth of meals are "bundled" together?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes. You may distribute bulk meals during hybrid and distance learning.</li> <li>2. Yes. Multiple days' worth of meals can be bundled and sent home.</li> <li>3. Claim the meals on the days they are intended to be consumed/eaten.</li> </ol> <p>Under the NSLP/SBP programs, you may only provide meals for student instructional days. No meals can be provided for weekends, holidays or other days when school is not in session. If your students are in hybrid/distance learning on alternating days, then these would be classified as learning days.</p> <p>Remember, meals must be counted by eligibility category (free, reduced-price, paid) at the point of service (distribution site).</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	Can we distribute meals using curbside pickup for those doing distance learning at the same time that students are doing in-person learning?	Yes. Meals provided to distance learning students while other students are doing in-person learning may be distributed by whatever method works best for the school following guidelines to minimize the spread of illness. (Curbside, in school building, home delivery, bus-stops, etc.)
8/7/20	For hybrid/distance learning: Must parents pick up meals during the traditional meal times, or are alternate schedules permitted?	SFAs can establish distribution schedules to meet the needs of their school district. The USDA has extended the <a href="#">Meal Service Time Flexibility in the NSLP, SBP and CACFP</a> which will allow programs to continue to serve meals and snacks outside of required times.
8/7/20	Will home delivery of meals continue to be at “no charge” to the Paid Eligible households when operating under the NSLP?	No, when operating under the NSLP students eligible for paid meals will need to be charged according to the school’s meal charge policy. SFAs operating the NSLP and SBP must follow program regulations, which means counting and claiming by student eligibility determination, i.e., free, reduced-price or paid.
8/7/20	How can we ensure that we do not run out of meals for students?	Many schools are choosing to use a pre-order system to obtain an idea of how many to prepare. Pre-order systems can be established by using simple surveys, email campaigns, phone systems or software programs.
8/7/20	Now that students eligible for meals will need to pay for their meals both meals may not be wanted. Do we send just lunch or breakfast or both?	<p>Participation in the NSLP and SBP means that SFAs need to <b>make meals available</b> to students. Only meals requested should be distributed to students. This is true if students are eligible for free, reduced-price or paid lunch or breakfast meals. Only provide the students the meals that they request, whether it’s during on-site, hybrid or distance learning. Some students will request all meals, some will only request lunch and some students may not request any distance learning meals at all.</p> <p>It may be wise to develop a pre-order system for distance learning.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	During distance or hybrid learning, a school sends home five breakfasts and lunches on a Monday and the student is marked 'absent' on Wednesday because they are sick. Would the school still be able to claim the meals that Wednesday since they were already given to the child?	Yes. SFAs accountability for counting and claiming the meal is at the point of service and stops there.
8/7/20	We have rented space at a local community building to physically distance students. Meals will be delivered to the building from the main kitchen. Do we need to apply for a new site in CLiCS for this building?	MDE does not advise creating new sites in the Cyber-Linked Interactive Child Nutrition System (CLiCS) that will be <b>temporarily</b> used only for the 2020-21 school year.  Meals from this temporary site <b>must</b> be claimed from the site where the student is enrolled.
8/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When approving applications for educational benefits, do we need to count the Federal CARES Act stimulus as part of regular income?</li> <li>2. Do we need to count the additional unemployment payments that some folks receive?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No. The stimulus payments do not need to be included in calculating household income.</li> <li>2. Yes. Additional unemployment payments due to COVID-19 are considered household income.</li> </ol> <p>Households should report current income on the Application for Educational Benefits. Current income means the gross income received by a household, before deductions, for the <i>current month</i>, or the <i>amount projected</i> for the first month for which the application is filled out, or <i>for the month prior to application</i>.</p>

## Meal Pattern/Nutritional Quality

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/28/20	What are the Offer vs Serve requirements for grades 9-12 this year?	The <a href="#">Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the National School Lunch Program for School Year 2020-2021</a> allows schools the option to waive OVS principles to all senior high school students (grades 9-12). OVS is always an option for grades K-8 at lunch and all grades at breakfast.

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/28/20	Do meal pattern requirements need to be met over a five day calendar week (i.e., Monday through Friday)? Or would schools that distribute five days of meals on a Wednesday (intended to be consumed on W, Th, Fr, and M, Tue of the following week) use these five days to evaluate meal pattern requirements?	Five consecutive days of meals must be planned to meet meal pattern requirements. Plan the five consecutive days to match up with the distribution schedule that your school is following. This applies to the <b><i>distance learning model only</i></b> .
8/19/20	Can I follow the K-8 meal pattern for all students?	<p>SFAs may apply for a waiver to allow for meal pattern flexibility. USDA has recently issued a waiver that allows modifications to meal pattern requirements. MDE is accepting meal pattern waiver requests via an online survey. <a href="#">Select this link to apply</a>. Waiver requests are intended to support access to nutritious meals while minimizing potential exposure to COVID-19. Requests must be for current needs of short duration and must be submitted by sponsor (not site or foodservice management company) contacts.</p> <p>Additional information about the waiver may be found in the USDA meal pattern waiver memos: <a href="#">National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program</a> or the <a href="#">Summer Food Service Program/Seamless Summer Option</a>.</p>
8/19/20	What serving size of vegetables is required for grades 9-12?	You will need to provide 1 full Cup of vegetables to the 9-12 group.
8/19/20	Our preschool program is launching an all-day care option this school year. Can I follow the K-5 meal pattern or would I need to follow the Pre-K meal pattern?	<p>If the Pre-K students are <a href="#">co-mingled</a> with K-5 students, you can use the K-5 meal pattern for all. The Pre-K meal pattern must be used if the Pre-K students are not co-mingled.</p> <p>SFAs may apply for a waiver to allow for meal pattern flexibility. MDE is accepting meal pattern waiver requests via an online survey. <a href="#">Select this link to apply</a>. Waiver requests are intended to support access to nutritious meals while minimizing potential exposure to COVID-19. Requests must be for current needs of short duration and must be submitted by sponsor (not site or foodservice management company) contacts.</p> <p>Keep in mind that only meals served on instructional days can be reimbursed.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	How will the vegetable subgroups be evaluated if students are only attending school two days a week?	<p>If the school serves five days of meals, regardless of the number of days students are physically <i>in</i> school versus distance learning, vegetable subgroup requirements must be met. Regardless of method of delivery/distribution (curbside, home delivery, parent pick-up, etc.), all students must have access to meals that meet meal pattern requirements.</p> <p>If your food service program is only serving/operating two days per week, you can meet the meal pattern requirements over a five-day period that spans multiple weeks. If your food service program is only serving/operating three days or four days per week, refer to the <a href="#">Lunch Meal Pattern Three-Day School Week</a> or <a href="#">Lunch Meal Pattern Four-Day School Week</a> as applicable.</p>
8/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If we serve meals in the classrooms, will that eliminate offer vs serve?</li> <li>2. If we are individually packaging meals, does the offer vs serve provision still apply?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not necessarily. Offer vs Serve (OVS) is still allowed even if meals are served in the classroom. There may be some logistical challenges, but SFAs are encouraged to work through specific site concerns to utilize OVS if possible.</li> <li>2. Offer vs Serve (OVS) is still allowed even if meals are individually packaged. One method of continuing OVS with individually packaged meals could include implementing a pre-order system in which students choose the desired food components and staff package the selections to ensure a reimbursable is provided.</li> </ol> <p>SFAs can decide to not participate in OVS if logistics of meeting the full OVS requirement is too challenging. The <a href="#">Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility for Senior High Schools in the National School Lunch Program for School Year 2020-2021</a> allows schools the option to waive OVS requirements to all senior high school students (grades 9-12). OVS has always been optional for grades K-8 at lunch and all grades at breakfast.</p>
8/7/20	If teachers take student meal orders on paper (or in a computer system) allowing students to select the required meal components and submit it to foodservice prior to the meal, does that count as OVS?	Yes, this would meet OVS requirements. Care must be taken to ensure the meals served are reimbursable.

## General Program Areas (Food Safety/Professional Standards/Civil Rights)

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/19/20	Do Smart Snack standards and fundraising requirements still apply during distance learning or have they been waived?	Smart snack standards and school fundraising requirements have not received a waiver from USDA to operate any differently during on-site, hybrid or distance learning. Minnesota does not intend to apply for a state waiver.
8/19/20	What is the protocol on students being able to bring their own lunch into school? Is that going to be a possibility?	Students will be able to bring their own lunch from home following local school or district policies. Nothing has changed regarding lunches from home.
8/19/20	Are we required to display the "And Justice for All" poster in every classroom if we serve meals in classrooms?	No. It is not feasible or cost effective to require that each classroom display an And Justice for All Poster. Instead, schools can display posters in prominent locations throughout the school, such as a bulletin board in the main building entrance, the school office or another area frequently visited by parents and children. School may prefer to copy posters and put one in each classroom, but that is not required.
8/19/20	In the different learning models, is social distancing recommended for students standing in the lunch line?	<p>As described in the <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a>, this depends on the learning model being utilized.</p> <p><b>For in-person learning:</b></p> <p>MDH lists maintaining 6 feet of social distancing as a recommendation, recognizing that this may not always be feasible with this learning model: "Minimize opportunities for exposure (especially when students are around each other for 15 minutes or more) by ensuring social distancing of at least 6 feet between people <i>whenever possible</i>." Schools are required; however, to mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times they may congregate (e.g., during lunch, arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker rooms, etc.).</p> <p><b>For hybrid learning:</b></p> <p>MDH lists maintaining 6 feet of social distance as a requirement: "Ensure sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people at all times when in school facilities.</p> <p>Please contact your local health sanitarian for assistance.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/19/20	Is there guidance available on whether or not transparent dividers should be added to serving lines or at the cash register?	The <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a> recommends but does not required the installation of transparent dividers “at reception desks or other similar areas.” The goal is to provide a barrier when close interaction can't be avoided.
8/7/20	Will share tables still be allowed during the pandemic?	Yes. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will allow share tables in schools. MDH has determined that SFAs can refer to the <a href="#">Share Table guidance</a> . There has been no evidence of the COVID-19 virus being transmitted from food.
8/7/20	Are we able to serve hot meals in the classroom?	Yes, hot meals are allowed. See <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a> for further guidance.
8/7/20	Are we allowed to offer a salad bar?	No. A typical “self-serve salad bar” or other food bars would currently not be allowable. The <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a> addresses this on page 5 of the guidance: <i>Discontinue self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria</i>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can students come to the cafeteria to pick up their meals?</li> <li>2. Do all food items need to be individually packaged?</li> <li>3. Can students choose items if staff are serving the items?</li> <li>4. Can students grab their own food if it is individually packaged?</li> <li>5. Can students carry their own trays to their classrooms? Do the trays have to be covered?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes. A traditional serving line in the cafeteria is absolutely permitted and might be the best choice for your schools. See <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a> for further guidance.</li> <li>2. MDH guidance says that. "Meals, snacks, and beverages served at school must be individually packaged, wherever possible. Where individual packaging is not possible, food and beverages must be served directly to students. As always, ensure the safety of children with food allergies."</li> <li>3. Yes, students can indicate to staff which food items they would like. The food service staff needs to place the food on the student tray if the food is not pre-wrapped or packaged. This would allow for OVS to be implemented.</li> <li>4. Yes, students can select their own food, including milk, if it is prepackaged. However, care should be taken that they do not touch multiple items at once. For example, students can self-select the milk carton, but schools are encouraged to display the milk in a way that students would have minimal contact with milk cartons. Staff may want to limit the number of milk cases in the milk cooler, or set the milk cartons out individually in a chilled salad bar (which would not be in operation) for each service. See <a href="#">MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools</a> for further guidance.</li> <li>5. Yes, students can carry their own trays back to their classroom.</li> </ol> <p>If the students are coming to the cafeteria and taking the tray back to another location, it is not required that the tray be covered. You may consider a "clam shell" container, similar to a "to-go" box from a restaurant, which could be shut if students are taking the meal to another location.</p>
8/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are we allowed to use real silverware and trays, or do we have to purchase disposable items?</li> <li>2. Can items such as silverware and napkin be placed on each student's tray by foodservice staff?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes, "real" silverware and trays are allowed. Schools are not required to utilize disposable items.</li> <li>2. Yes, but caution should be taken to ensure these products are not touched by multiple people.</li> </ol>
8/7/20	What would be a sanitary method for providing silverware and condiments to classrooms if bag lunches are provided?	If providing bagged lunches, the best practice would be to include the silverware, napkin, and condiments in the bag. If this is not possible, then care should be taken to ensure items are not handled by multiple individuals. One option could be for a school staff member to distribute the items to each student.

<b>Date Added</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
8/7/20	Can we provide frozen entrees that need to be heated at home for distance learning and hybrid models or does food need to be ready to eat?	Yes. You may provide frozen meals intended to be reheated at home as long as you have provided clear re-heating instructions and an ingredient label if it is a commercially prepared product. Cold, ready-to-eat items do not need the ingredient list (including allergens) listed. Refer to the <a href="#">Food Safety Guidance for Meal Distribution</a> page of our website.
8/7/20	In a hybrid model are we allowed to send meals home on the bus with students for distance learning days?	Yes. If sending meals home with students, consider such how to safely transport the food to the child’s home via the bus (for example, if students are on the bus for a number of hours with frozen food), training potentially non-foodservice staff on proper counting and claiming procedures, etc. One suggestion might be to consider shelf-stable meal options for some of the days to simplify your planning and ensure perishable meals are consumed first. Ask your <a href="#">local health inspector/sanitarian</a> for additional guidance to ensure you are meeting all local health and safety requirements.

## Resource Management

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/28/20	What UFARS codes do we use to record revenue and expenses for SY20-21?	<p>For school year 2020-2021, school districts have the option to operate either the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or remain on the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program (NSLP/SBP). Each of these programs have specific Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) numbers that allow for funding transparency. SSO is considered an extension of the NSLP/SBP and therefore has the same CFDA numbers.</p> <p><b>Revenue</b></p> <p>As reimbursement is paid, the payment description will indicate under which program the claim was made and will direct which Finance Code should be used to record the revenue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 02F701 – National School Lunch Program and Summer Seamless Option; Finance Code 701</li> <li>• 02F705 – School Breakfast Program and Summer Seamless Option; Finance Code 705</li> <li>• 02F709 – Summer Food Service Program; Finance Code 709</li> </ul> <p><b>Expense</b></p> <p>UFARS requires school districts to allocate their foodservice expenses by program (which is signified by Finance Code). For schools operating SSO, expenses should be recorded under Finance 701 and 705, just as they are with NSLP and SBP.</p> <p>If you are unsure if an expense is allowable, please contact <a href="mailto:mde.fns@state.mn.us">Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)'s School Nutrition Programs</a> (mde.fns@state.mn.us), 651-582-8526, 800-366-8922 (toll-free Minnesota only).</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/2021)</i></p>
9/28/20	Can schools charge students for meals that have been ordered for pickup, but the student and/or parent does not come to pick them up?	The school cannot charge for the meals if they weren't picked up.

<b>Date Added</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
9/28/20	Can transportation costs to deliver meals to bus stops or homes be charged to food service?	No. Transportation is included in the per-pupil funding the district receives during the school year. Home delivery or bus route delivery of meals is not required. It is a district decision to use those methods of distributing meals. This allows for some flexibility in methods of distribution: curbside, home delivery, bus stop pickup, etc.
8/19/20	If we have a food service employee that requires leave due to COVID-19, can we continue to pay this employee from the NSFSA, since it is related to a leave?	If the leave is covered under the employee's work agreement, then it is an allowable expense to the NSFSA. If the employee has exhausted all pertinent leave afforded under the work agreement, then the expense must be paid from other funds. Work with your human resources department to determine paid leave specifics.
8/19/20	Are there any guidelines for an Angel Fund account? How is it utilized?	<p>The following are general guidelines but overall it is a local decision.</p> <p>Consider the following:</p> <p>State Statute 123B.02 Subdivision 6. Bequests; donations; gifts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives school boards the authority to receive donations for any proper purpose and apply them to the purpose designated.</li> </ul> <p>Board Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your district's Board Policy to see if there is already a policy or procedure in place to address donations.</li> </ul> <p>Department Procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SFAs should develop a Department Procedure that outlines the process for applying funds so there is no real or apparent conflict of interest.</li> </ul> <p>Transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your accounting department to see if there is an established process for recording the receipt of donations. In general, record donations separately and create a transparent process.</li> </ul> <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>In no case, should the identity of any student whose meal account has benefited from a donation be revealed.</p>

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/19/20	<p>We will be delivering meals using our bus routes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are we required to provide meals for only free and reduced-price eligible students?</li> <li>2. How do we handle overt identification in this scenario?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SFAs must <b>make meals available to all students</b> regardless of the student’s eligibility category. There is no requirement to provide meals to students that do not request them. While free and reduced-price students will receive meals at no charge, paid students must be charged for meals according to the SFA’s meal charge policy.</li> <li>2. In making meals available to all students, overt identification is prevented. Ensure that meal counting documentation provided to staff counting meals delivered via bus routes does not indicate student eligibility.</li> </ol>
8/7/20	<p>If a student eligible for paid meals orders a meal while they are learning from home but they don’t have any funds in their account, are we required to provide meals to them?</p>	<p>Refer to your district's Unpaid Meal Charge policy. If your district does not have one, there are multiple resources available on our <a href="#">Meal Pricing and Non-Program Foods</a> page of the MDE website.</p>
8/7/20	<p>Are face coverings for foodservice staff permitted to be paid for using the school foodservice fund?</p>	<p>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is an allowable use of funds from the Nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA). However, limited PPE (1 cloth face covering per employee) is being provided by the State of Minnesota. In addition, some districts have included food service in their procurement of PPE.</p>
8/7/20	<p>If staff are not currently working in food service (i.e., reassigned within the school), can we still code their time to the food service fund?</p>	<p>No, Federal regulation prohibits the use of funds from the Nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA) for anything other than the operation or improvement of a food service program.</p>
8/7/20	<p>Will additional funds be available to food service to offset the increased cost of providing meals associated with the three learning models?</p>	<p>Yes. For SY2019-20, the unused state funds from NSLP/SBP were divided among eligible SFA’s based on meals served during the emergency closure and distance learning period. These funds were disbursed starting on September 11, 2020 and can be seen in the Sponsor Payment screen in CLiCS.</p> <p>In addition, districts may also use CARES Act Funding for certain expenses related to the food service operation. Please consult your district’s business manager for details.</p>

## Staffing/Foodservice Operations

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/7/20	Will an updated template consent form for home meal delivery be required for the 2020-21 school year?	A new <a href="#">Consent Form for Home Delivered Meals Template—School Nutrition Programs</a> should be completed by households if meals will be delivered to homes during the school year.
8/19/20	If staff received civil rights training this summer for SFSP, do they need to complete it again for School Nutrition Programs?	<a href="#">Civil Rights</a> training only needs to be completed once a year.
8/19/20	Will USDA be waiving the professional standards training requirements?	There is no waiver for professional standards training requirements at this time.
8/19/20	Are non-food service staff permitted to assist with meal service/tray delivery?	Yes. Non-food service staff should be trained in proper handwashing, food safety, food distribution, delivery and follow all COVID-19 protocols.
8/19/20	Are teachers required to obtain a certain number of professional standards training hours if they are serving meals and doing the point of service meal counts in the classroom but OVS is not being implemented?	<p>No. When teachers/other non-foodservice staff are serving meals in the classroom and not utilizing OVS, professional standards training hours are not required. Additional guidance on special situations and training requirements is outlined in the <a href="#">Annual Training Requirements for School Nutrition Program Staff</a>. Training should be provided on the point of service system/manual checklist and proper counting procedures.</p> <p>As a reminder, all staff that work with meal program participants are required to complete civil rights training. Our one page Civil Rights training document is a good resource for providing training to non-foodservice staff.</p> <p><a href="#">Alternative Civil Rights Training for Student and Adult Volunteers</a></p>
8/7/20	Can students help serve lunch?	Refer to the <a href="#">2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools</a> and the <a href="#">Food Service Worker Safety Information: Guidance for School Food Programs</a> ; both of these guidance documents were created by the Minnesota Department of Health. Questions can also be directed to your local health inspection agency.

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/7/20	Our staff are part of a union. How do we follow union requirements while also meeting staffing needs of these alternate meal service/learning models? For example, longer hours in the morning; every other Friday off.	Each school district should work with their human resources department to determine requirements for providing work hours to staff.
8/7/20	What recommendations can you provide in the event a small foodservice team is required to quarantine and meal service must be suspended?	<p>Suspension of meal service due to the pandemic is an option, but now is the time for identifying a “Plan B”. Things to look in to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Brainstorm with school administrators to determine if the school wants to suspend food service.</li> <li>b. Can they receive meals from a nearby school district?</li> <li>c. Could a nearby district prepare bag lunches that could be held for a few days?</li> <li>d. Is there a local restaurant or health care facility that could prepare meals?</li> <li>e. Can you “borrow” a food service employee from another school/district to prepare simple meals? Maybe a cold bag lunch or simple heat and serve menu items?</li> <li>f. Can they “borrow” a food service employee from a health care facility in the area?</li> <li>g. Pare down to a very simple menu – maybe a 2-3 day rotating menu if you are “borrowing” staff from another district.</li> <li>h. Is there a retired food service employee that you could hire temporarily?</li> <li>i. Consider preparing for some “emergency meals” that require minimal preparation and can easily be stored on site.</li> <li>j. Convenience items to consider: canned soups/stews, ravioli, frozen entrees, prepackaged fruits/veggies are easy to distribute.</li> </ol> <p>Additional guidance can be found on the <a href="#">Handling Food Service Staff Shortages</a> page of MDE’s website.</p> <p><i>(Revised 1/22/21)</i></p>

## Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Date Added	Question	Answer
8/19/20	Is there a way to get the list of the number of COVID-19 cases in the various counties?	Every Thursday at 11:00am, the Minnesota Department of Health will update the <a href="#">Schools and Child Care: COVID-19</a> page with <a href="#">Data for K-12 Schools: 14 day COVID-19 Case Rate by County</a> . This document provides data that can be used by schools in making decision about their safe learning model.

## Other Federal Programs (Afterschool Snack Program)

Date Added	Question	Answer
9/7/20	Can we still participate in the Minnesota Kindergarten Milk Program (MKMP) during a hybrid or distance learning model?	The MKMP can continue to be operated during both hybrid and distance learning models. Schools must ensure that milk is distributed only to Kindergarteners. Multiple days' worth of milk can be bundled and sent home, however the school must ensure that no more than one half-pint per Kindergartener per instructional day is claimed. Schools may ask for the student's name, grade, PIN and/or teacher to identify the student for which milk is being provided. The number of half-pints of milk must be recorded at the POS. Refer to the <a href="#">Minnesota Kindergarten Milk Program Fact Sheet</a> for additional information.
9/7/20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there still a waiver for the afterschool snack activity requirement?</li> <li>2. Can we provide snacks with distance learning?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The waiver for the afterschool activity requirements expired at the end of June 2020.</li> <li>2. You may choose to continue to operate the Afterschool Snack Program, however an activity would be necessary. Program operators may consider offering online homework assistance, activity packets, electronic games and books, or other e-learning activities for the children to partake in at home. For example, Team Nutrition offers a variety of online games, books, and nutrition education activities for children at: <a href="#">Digital Nutrition Resources for Kids</a>.</li> </ol>
8/19/20	Can we provide afterschool snacks for students in "child care for essential workers" programs?	Yes, children in child care for essential workers may participate in the <a href="#">Afterschool Snack Program</a> . Keep in mind that the afterschool snack program requires an enrichment activity and adult supervision. During distance learning, the requirements for an enrichment activity and adult supervision could be met through offering virtual tutoring opportunities, sending home activity plans for parents/guardians to complete with students or other virtual activities that are led by adults.