



## Frequently Asked Questions School Divisions

### Backpack Program Questions

- **Where and how are we to store the food for the backpack program?**  
It will be best to store the food in the school just for convenience. Food can be stored in the cafeteria, in an empty classroom, in a large closet, or other space that meets regulations. Regulations require that the food not be stored directly on the floor. The area should be kept at a temperature to ensure that the food doesn't freeze. Pest control measures must be in place in the school. If possible, choose a storage location can be locked.
- **How much food will we have to store at the school?**  
We want to have enough food for two weekends at the school at any given time. We want to ensure that there will be enough food for the children to take home in case of inclement weather, or in the event that FASWVA cannot make a delivery due to weather, mechanical issues, etc.
- **Who will be packing the bags?**  
Food will be delivered to the school already packed in individual gallon-sized zip-lock style bags. However, these bags will need to be placed in the children's backpacks, and the individuals responsible for that task will vary from school to school. Some schools may have volunteers who will place food bags into the backpacks of the younger children, and older children may get their food bags themselves. This is an excellent opportunity for schools to utilize older students, parent volunteers, or even students from a local college or university.
- **What are some best practices distributing the bags on Fridays?**  
Again, this will vary from school to school. Bags can be distributed at the door where students leave, or bags can be placed in the classrooms for teachers to distribute. If volunteers are placing the food bags into backpacks, children will have their food before leaving the classroom. Children who need to leave school early on Fridays can pick up their food from the office, and children who know they will be out on Friday should be allowed to get their food on Thursday.

- **How will backpack distribution be handled for early release days and for Pre-K students who leave earlier than the rest of the student population?**

This will vary from school to school. Bags can be distributed at the door where student leave, or bags can be placed in the classroom for teachers to distribute. If volunteers are placing the food bags into backpacks, children will have their food before leaving the classroom. Children who check out of school early on Fridays can pick up their food from the office.

- **How will we distribute the backpacks on snow days, and other times we are not in session?**

If school officials are anticipating a snow event that will result in missed days, it is acceptable to distribute food packs on a day other than Friday. In the event of an unanticipated snow day, parents should be encouraged to come to the school, if they can do so safely, in order to pick up food packs.

- **What if our students already receive backpacks from a local community organization?**

We are aware that many of the test schools are already participating in backpack programs offered by local churches or civic organizations. We do not want to interfere with these programs and we encourage schools to continue their relationships with these programs. The programs already in place can supplement what is given to the students through the VA 365 Project, or these organizations may choose to shift the focus of their offerings to school supplies or personal hygiene items.

- **What kind of documentation do we need to keep?**

Schools will need to report the number of food packs distributed each week so that those packs can be replaced weekly. Schools will report these numbers weekly, based on the delivery schedule of FASWVA.

- **Will food packs be provided for extended school holiday breaks?**

No. We will only be able to provide food packs for weekends and short weather related school closings.

- **Will more food be provided for older students?**

No. All packs will contain the same amount of food.

- **If a middle school sibling gets a backpack, will their elementary-aged siblings in a non-treatment school receive one as well?**

As this is an evaluation study and grant funds are limited, the benefits cannot be provided to every student in the rural and urban areas. With the funding provided through the

grant, it is only possible to provide benefits for families in the treatments schools. However, all schools involved in the project do offer the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs that are available to all students. By participating in this research study, Virginia schools can contribute in, a critical way, to policies that help feed many more children in the long run. Being a part of the research process can potentially lead to future policy changes helping to prevent childhood hunger and thereby leading to higher student academic achievement among many thousands of children going forward.

- **Will specialty packs be provided for students with food allergies?**

Yes. We will offer an allergen-free food pack that will not contain gluten, nuts or dairy. Students will need to provide physician documentation stating their need for an allergen-free pack.

### **Supper/3<sup>rd</sup> Meal Questions**

- **If students do not finish their supper meal, can they take the rest of it home?**

Meals or meal components may not be taken home by children for later consumption. The CACFP has a mandatory congregate feeding requirement that may not be waived at this time. There are, however, some flexibilities with regard to the meal service that aim to limit waste and increased food costs. The State agency suggests that sponsors implement the use of a share table. Children may place items on the share table for others to eat during program time. USDA Policy Memo SP 35-2011, CACFP 23-2011 provides School Food Authorities the flexibility of implementing Offer Versus Serve in the CACFP for meals. OvS may not be used for snacks.

- **Will it be possible for us to serve three meals while keeping our 5.5 hours of required instructional time intact?**

This is entirely possible. The supper meal must be served in combination with an afterschool program, although not all students have to participate in the program to be fed. Scheduling students to eat the supper meal will likely require some creativity in planning in order to ensure that all students who want to eat are able to do so, with minimal disruption to the transportation schedule. Each school will be able to determine their schedules to best fit their needs.

- **Are there any time constraints between the serving of meals?**

There are no time constraints between serving of meals. Should you have a concern about the time between the meals, please contact the Virginia Department of Health to seek assistance in devising a solution.

- **How will students qualify? Is it based on their free/reduced lunch status or will every student qualify?**

All students at each treatment school are eligible for three meals per day at no cost to them. All students and their families at each treatment school are eligible for the nutrition education sessions offered by the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Any student who is eligible for free or reduced lunch prices will be eligible to receive \$60 per month during the months of June, July and August, 2016, on an EBT card issued by the Virginia Department of Social Services. It will still be very important for families to complete and submit eligibility forms for free and reduced lunch prices.

- **How is the supper meal administered in the daily schedule?**

The supper meal is to be served after the traditional school day, in combination with an afterschool program. This may mean that the test schools end their day 20 minutes earlier than usual, or that those 20 minutes are added to the morning for a non-traditional breakfast program.

- **Is the supper meal a “pick up and go” meal?**

No. This meal must be served and eaten at school.

- **How is the supper meal prepared?**

The supper meal can be prepared all at once after the lunch meal is served, or components of the supper meal can be prepared during preparation for breakfast and lunch. Preparation will be up to individual schools, depending on their specific needs.

- **Will the food service employees have a longer employment time? How will their duties and compensation change?**

There will be grant funds available for the hiring of additional food service employees, or to pay for additional hours of existing employees. It will be important for divisions to work with food service employees to schedule their hours to comply with state and federal regulations.

- **Will funds be provided or staff for meal preparation, delivery, back pack distribution, and clean-up?**

There will be grant funds available for the hiring of additional food service employees, or to pay for additional hours for existing employees. It will be important for divisions to work with food service employees to schedule their hours to comply with state and federal regulations.

- **We have a Pre-K class that leaves at 1:30 and another at 2:00 each day. How will we feed them the 3<sup>rd</sup> meal?**

USDA has confirmed that, under these circumstances, it is acceptable for Pre-K classes that leave early in the day to be excluded from receiving the third meal. However, they

have requested that we provide the evaluators with which schools are affected by this exemption.

- **What kinds of documentation will we need to keep?**

For CACFP, meal counts and attendance are required. Counts may be taken on the same form but must be two separate counts. So, schools may use a point of sale to document meals served and have students sign in and out or take a head count for attendance.

- **Will our ordering change?**

Food purchasing will have to accommodate the additional meals being served. The VDOE can provide School Nutrition Program Directors with estimates of how many more meals they will be serving based on schools who are currently serving the supper meal.

- **Will claims be submitted monthly?**

Yes, claims should be submitted in a timely fashion and can be filed after the claim month has concluded. For example, the claim for January may be filed on February 1<sup>st</sup> and sponsors have 60 days from the last day of the claim month to file the claim for reimbursement.

- **Can USDA food be used in these meals**

USDA foods may be used in the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program. 7 CFR Part 226.5 provides details on the use of commodities in the CACFP.

- **Where will food for the supper meal be stored?**

Logistics of storage will be handled by the individual schools. School division personnel will assist schools with the plan for storage.

- **How will waste/full dumpsters be handled?**

This will be handled by the individual schools. School division personnel will assist schools with the plan for waste removal.

- **How can schools coordinate with other after-school programs?**

We will work through this on a case-by-case basis.

- **What if we are already on the Twenty First Century Learning Grant?**

You can continue providing programming through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning Grant as normal. Through CACFP, you can provide supper in your school and snacks to students in your 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Grant Program. In fact, No Kid Hungry encourages you to continue offering snacks during 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning program. Additionally, the

reimbursement from CACFP may free up additional funding that can be used to enhance your 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning program.

- **We currently provide snacks through NSLP. What are our options?**

It is as simple as checking a box to apply to provide snacks in the same application that you are already completing for CACFP. Switching from NSLP to CACFP means that you can serve supper and snacks for a higher reimbursement. It's a win-win. However, keep in mind that you can only provide snacks through NSLP **or** CACFP, not both.

- **How can we provide both supper and snack through CACFP?**

Supper and snack can be served to the same population of students, as long as the supper and snacks meal counts are taken separately. There is not a minimum time required between serving supper and snack. Here are a few scenarios:

- A. Serve supper in the classroom and then snack during afterschool programming; or
- B. Serve snack at the beginning of afterschool programming and supper before the conclusion of programming (or vice-versa); or
- C. Serve supper through the cafeteria line and then allow the children to obtain a snack through the cafeteria line, as long as the students are going through the cafeteria line twice

- **We understand that the supper meal must be linked to an afterschool program. What counts as enrichment, or learning activities?**

Pages eight through ten (8-10) in the At-Risk Handbook define activities as the following:

“Programs must provide educational or enrichment activities in an organized, structure, and supervised environment. Although there are no specific requirements for the types of educational and enrichment activities that a program can offer, examples include, but are not limited to, arts and crafts, homework assistance, life skills, remedial education, organized fitness activities, etc.”

The enrichment and academic component of CACFP has flexibility. Additional examples of enrichment activities include: reading/story time, educational games, nutrition education, gardening, SAT/ACT preparation, homework review, tutoring, foreign language clubs, science clubs, drama clubs, band practice, non-competitive sports, etc.

Students receiving meals are not required to participate in the offered activities. However, the activities must be offered.

- **Can we apply for the CACFP for schools that are not involved in the VA 365 Project to end Childhood Hunger?**

Absolutely. The CACFP is a federal program that you may apply for regardless of your participation in the VA 365 Project. Schools that have a 50% or higher free and reduced population, or, schools that fall in the attendance zones of schools that have a 50% or higher free and reduced meal population are eligible for the CACFP to all student ages 18 and under. You can provide supper and snack through CACFP as long as there is some form of enrichment or academic component offered.

- **How sustainable is CACFP?**

CACFP is a federal nutrition program authorized by section 17 of the National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766). As a federal program, you can fully expect its permanency beyond the VA 365 Project. Schools are encouraged to continue participating in the CACFP and to even expand programming after completion of the VA 365 Project.

- **What is the verbiage that is to be used for the official communication for the third meal between school divisions and families?**

Official letters have been sent out to the schools to distribute to the families and those letters contain the official language that needs to be communicated with the families.

### **Miscellaneous Questions**

- **With a delay in the actual feeding, how long will be benefit from this grant?**

At the current time, students will receive the benefits of the program from June 2016 through the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Should an extension of the project be granted, the Virginia Department of Education will notify all school divisions and partners immediately.

- **What will be the role of the school in the parent/family education piece of the program?** The educational aspect of the program will be offered by the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Program Assistants will work with school personnel to schedule these sessions. Sessions can be held at the schools, at community centers or other facilities. Facilities should have a kitchen to allow for demonstrations of food preparation. Schools can assist the VA Cooperative Extension in announcing the dates, times and locations of these educational sessions.

- **Do we send the letters from VDOE and Mathematica to students who will be entering the treatment schools in the fall (for example, to students who are in elementary school now but will be entering a treatment middle school in Fall 2016)?** We will not be sending out any additional letters other than those that are being sent to families of children who are currently in a treatment school. This issue will be brought to

the attention of the evaluators.

- **How will we handle transfer students, and students who will be leaving a non-treatment school and entering a treatment school, and vice-versa? When will schools provide updated enrollment?**

This issue has been addressed with the evaluators, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. The evaluators are working with the data already provided for the current school year. They are working with a sampling of the data and follow-up with the families. School divisions are asked to track changes to contact information. VDOE will provide a letter at the beginning of the new school year notifying new families about the benefits being received.