



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: September 12, 2018

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Disaster Response for USDA Child Nutrition Programs

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance for School Food Authorities (SFAs) and non-school sponsors on responding to situations due to natural disasters or other emergencies.

The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs has compiled guidance and information to help prepare, plan, and respond to disasters or emergencies that disrupt child nutrition program provision. Attachment A is a memo from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) dated May 19, 2014, that provides an overview of using the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in disaster situations. These programs are only intended for feeding children in disaster situations. Information on the use of USDA food for adult feeding is also included.

Eligibility for Free Meals and Disaster Benefits

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Children residing in or evacuated from a disaster may be determined homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The SFA's homeless liaison coordinator makes a determination of homelessness due to a disaster situation. The SFA, institution, or sponsor must certify these children for free meals.

In cases where a household moves in with another household due to a disaster situation, the homeless liaison coordinator may determine the displaced individuals as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act.

Disaster Benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP)

Children in households receiving D-SNAP are categorically eligible for free meals in all Child Nutrition Programs. Certification of these children may be accomplished through the Department of Social Services or an application submitted by a household with a case number.

Certification by School Officials

School officials may submit an application on behalf of students they know to be homeless and are therefore eligible for free meals. The school official can complete the free and reduced price meal application by indicating the student name, and signing the application, printing their name and including the school official's title.

Duration of Benefits

Children certified for free meal benefits because of a disaster situation (including homelessness or D-SNAP) are eligible for benefits for the entire school year and up to 30 days in the next school year.

Carry-Over of Previous Year's Eligibility

The 30-day carry-over of the previous year's eligibility for school meals is based on operating days. If schools are temporarily closed due to a disaster situation, these days are not counted in the carry-over period. A child's prior year free or reduced eligibility continues until a new eligibility status is determined for the current school year or upon completion of the 30 operating days, whichever is less.

Using the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) in Disaster Situations

If schools are closed due to disaster situations, SFAs and non-school sponsors with an existing SFSP or SSO application may use the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option to feed children in the area. Preparation for this is critical. **SFAs must revise their application in SNPWeb to enter all potential disaster feeding sites and email your assigned specialist. These sites must be entered before the program begins feeding.**

Based on the needs of each community, USDA may waive requirements that SFSP and SSO sites must serve areas in which poor economic conditions exist. Sites may be approved in areas not damaged by the natural disaster that are otherwise not eligible.

Emergency Shelters

Emergency shelters that provide temporary housing to displaced families are eligible to participate in CACFP. The Virginia Department of Health can designate any appropriate facility as an emergency shelter and may waive institution application requirements in this situation.

Upon designation of a facility as an emergency shelter, all children through age 18 may receive up to three free meals per day (breakfast, lunch, and supper).

Please contact the Virginia Department of Health at 804-864-7795 for more information.

USDA Foods in Disasters

USDA does not have the authority to replace USDA Foods that are lost, destroyed, contaminated, or rendered unusable as a result of a disaster, emergency, or situation of distress. If any of your schools lose food, the division can submit a claim to its insurance carrier.

The use of USDA Foods in a disaster situation is allowed. Any food donated by USDA to public schools may be used in disaster feeding. Recognizing the emergency and the need to feed people, school food service management and other outlets must cooperate fully to make the USDA food available to groups involved in disaster feeding activities. Accurate records must be kept by the SFAs of all food provided or used for disaster feeding purposes. Please refer to the Food Distribution Program's website for more information. USDA also has a Foods Program Disaster Manual available on its website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>.

Flexibilities that Require State Agency Approval

In order to continue to provide meal benefits to participants in disaster areas, certain flexibilities are allowed with VDOE approval. The Virginia Department of Education can provide approval with regard to time of meal service and offer vs serve. If there are emergency conditions that prevent schools or sponsors from obtaining fluid milk, VDOE may allow service of meals without milk or with an alternate form of milk. If other changes to meal components or menu planning are needed, please contact VDOE SNP with the specific details and complete the waiver information below.

Waivers

Attachment B to this memo provides a template for the types of flexibilities granted in a disaster situation and the justification of need. If requesting a waiver, please complete Attachment B. Fill in the date, school food authority, contact information and all of the information as outlined in the template. Please send all waiver requests to SNPPolicy@doe.virginia.gov.

The VDOE Office of School Nutrition Staff is ready to assist with any questions. Please call the specialist assigned to your region, email SNPPolicy@doe.virginia.gov or call 804-225-2074 for assistance.

JFL/SCC/bdb

Attachments

- A. USDA Disaster Response Memo
- B. Waiver Request