

Guidance on School Meals on Inclement Weather Days During the 2020-21 School Year

Purpose

The Agency of Education has issued [Clarification on Hybrid Learning Guidance for Inclement Weather Days](#), which discusses how schools may count inclement weather days as school days if remote learning is used on those days. 16 V.S.A. § 1264(a) requires that public schools make available school lunch and school breakfast to each attending child every school day. If public schools choose to use the flexibility provided by the AOE to count inclement weather days as school days when remote learning is used, they must also make available lunch and breakfast to their students on those days. In the event of an emergency, 16 V.S.A. § 1264(b) allows the school board to apply to the Secretary of Education for a waiver of the requirement to provide meals.

This document provides guidance on ways that schools may attempt to provide meals on inclement weather days. If these options are not feasible or safe on a particular inclement weather day, then schools may submit a simplified emergency waiver for this requirement.

Options for Providing Meals on Inclement Weather Days During SY20-21

USDA has provided extensive flexibility regarding meal service during the SY20-21 school year, as a result of COVID-19. Current waivers allow multiple days' worth of meals to be provided at one time, allow for non-congregate meal service, allow parent pick up of meals if the child isn't present, and allow for meals to be provided outside of scheduled mealtimes. Schools may use these flexibilities to provide meals in the following ways in inclement weather days:

- If there is enough advance warning of the school closure due to inclement weather, food service programs may provide students with meals to take home with them for the following day(s) on the last day that school is open.
- If there is advance warning, but meals cannot be sent home with students, the school could consider providing meals for pick-up at the school or other locations the evening before the weather arrives.
- If the inclement weather day causes an early dismissal, meals for later in the day may be sent home with students when they are dismissed.
- If the inclement weather occurs in the morning, but travel is safe later in the day, meals may be provided at alternate locations or times later in the day. This could include making meals available for pickup at the school or other locations in the afternoon or evening. Alternatively, the school could provide home or bus-stop delivery of meals, either on a planned route or on-demand to households who request this service.

Communication about Availability of Meals

Schools should take student, staff and public safety into consideration when deciding if any of these options are feasible. Remember, it takes time to prepare meals. If providing meals later in

the day, the weather will need to have cleared enough for food service staff to safely travel to school and produce the meals before meals are provided.

After determining how to provide meals on inclement weather days, communication with households is important. Use local media, automated phone calling, social media and the school website to get information out about when and where meals will be available.

Exemption Process When it is Not Feasible to Safely Provide Meals

If it is not feasible to safely provide meals during an inclement weather day that the school wishes to count as a school day due to remote learning taking place, AOE is offering a simplified process to apply for a waiver of the meals requirement under 16 V.S.A. § 1264(b). A designee of the school board, such as the superintendent, business manager or food service director, may complete the [Inclement Weather Day Meal Waiver Request Form](#) as soon as it is apparent that it is not feasible to provide meals.

Waiver requests may not be granted for periods longer than 20 days, so please do not submit requests for the entire winter in anticipation of occasional inclement weather days. This waiver process is only required if the school wishes to count the inclement weather day as a school day and cannot feasibly provide meals.