

Serving “Bulk Meals” in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and CACFP At-Risk After School Meals During COVID-19

Purpose

Using the COVID-19 waivers provided by USDA, schools and other program sponsors may use a “bulk meals” model to provide meals to children on days when they are not receiving meals at school in-person. “Bulk meals” consist of the ready-to-eat ingredients for several days’ worth of meals. These items should require only minimal preparation. An example would be providing a loaf of bread and sandwich meats rather than providing pre-made sandwiches. Using this model of service allows the school or sponsor to save on packaging and labor costs, and it makes delivery or pick-up of the meals more efficient.

This document outlines the requirements that a school or program sponsor would need to follow to implement this model of service correctly.

Background and Application Changes

To use this service model, some updates are needed to the site applications in the CNP Web system.

For Meals Served Under the Summer Food Service Program

In the SFSP site application, double-check that the Calendar in the Breakfast and Lunch sections of the Site Application is up to date to reflect the days you wish to provide meals.

Please ensure question 43 is up to date with important information about non-congregate meals. Include these specific details about grab and go meals: dates available, time(s) of pick-up, specific location of pickup at the school (such as the back door or curb in front of the school or something), how many days’ worth of meals will be provided at a time, indication that the meals will be provided in the “bulk meal” format (if applicable), and any other necessary logistical information. Once you have made all the changes your 2021 SFSP Application Packet, please resubmit for approval.

If a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) provides meals for your School Food Authority (SFA), please have a representative of the SFA and a representative of the FSMC complete the [Unitized Meal Waiver](#) and submit it to jamie.curley@vermont.gov.

For Meals Served Under the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals

In the CACFP site application, update Question C6 in each site application to indicate the type of non-congregate meal service distribution the site plans to follow (i.e. grab-n-go, home delivery and/or bulk meals). Please include specific information related to the meal service distribution which should consist of the day the meals will be available/distributed for pick up, the number of days’ worth of meals that will be provided through bulk meal distribution, etc.

Meal Pattern Considerations

Bulk items may be provided as long as individual meals are easily identifiable as reimbursable meals ([SP 13-2020](#)). To accomplish this, we recommend including a menu that identifies which items and quantities are to be used to make up each meal.

Considerations:

- Bulk meals must include the required food components in the proper minimum amounts for each reimbursable meal being claimed;
- Bulk meals must ensure that food items are clearly identifiable as making up reimbursable meals;
- You are strongly encouraged to provide menus with directions indicating which items are to be used for each meal and the portion sizes;
- Consider whether households have access to refrigeration, stoves, microwaves, etc., when providing food that requires refrigeration or further preparation, such as reheating; and
- Ensure that only minimal preparation is required, and that food is not provided as ingredients for recipes or meals that require chopping, mixing, baking, etc. (dried rice, pasta, beans, uncooked meat cannot be provided as components);
- You may consider distributing a larger carton/jug of milk, as long as the number of ounces adds up to at least 8oz per meal being distributed. For example, if 5 days' worth of breakfasts and lunches are being distributed at one time, the carton/jug of milk would need to contain at least 80oz of milk. Three quarts (32oz each), or one-half gallon (64oz) and one quart (32oz), or a whole gallon (128oz) would accomplish this.

Please provide food safety information with the meals, including refrigeration and freezing information, when to throw food away, and cooking instructions including cook temperatures, if necessary.

For a suggested menu, sample communications to households, and additional food quality and food safety information, please see this tip sheet from USDA: [Summer Food Service Program: Providing Multiple Meals at a Time During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#).

Bulk Meal Distribution

Consider the different bulk meal options that could be provided based on school operation (i.e. in-person instruction, remote learning or hybrid model) and site type (closed-enrolled vs. open). One week's worth of meals (seven days) is the maximum number of meals that may be provided at one time. If students are doing in-person learning some days, bulk meals should not be provided to those students for the in-person learning days. Students should receive prepared meals at school on the days they are learning in-person at school.

A pre-order system does help with planning when preparing bulk meals. Households may be strongly encouraged to use a pre-order system. However, please remember if the site is an open

site, all eligible individuals who show-up, even without pre-ordering, must be provided meals. The suggestions below are based on seven days of operation and are not exhaustive. They meant to serve as an example of the different options available.

1. If the site has students fully in-person five days per week, the site needs to provide prepared meals on-site five days per week, but may also provide grab and go meals or two days' worth of bulk meals for weekend meals.
2. If the site has fully remote students, these students and other children could be provided seven days' worth of meals at one time.
3. If the site is following a hybrid schedule of two days in-person and three days remote, the site can provide bulk meals for five days. These meals would cover the three remote learning days and weekend meals. Prepared meals would need to be provided on-site to students who are attending school in-person.
4. Open sites can provide community children, such as siblings or homeschooled children, with up to seven days' worth of meals at one time.
5. A site could provide any combination of the scenarios referenced above.

Sites may also provide households the *option* of choosing unitized meals or bulk meals.

Please have an "integrity plan" in place to prevent duplication of meals served. Children who are attending in-person instruction must be prevented from also receiving grab and go meals on the same day they are receiving meals in school. This can be accomplished through signage at the grab and go location, information provided with the meals, and information provided to households on the program website, in the form of newsletters, email or social media communication. The signage can advise that they should only receive one of each meal type (breakfast and lunch for SFSP, snack and supper for CACFP), per child, per day.

Please be sure to advertise the option to your communities through a variety of outlets.

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