

Considerations for Preparing to Provide Non-Congregate Meals and Snacks during Child Care Center Closures due to COVID-19

Pursuant to the COVID-19 Child Nutrition Response Act (H.R. 6201, Title II), and based on the exceptional circumstances of this public health emergency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is allowing child care centers to provide non-congregate meals and snacks to children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) during child care center closures due to COVID-19.

“**Non-congregate meals**” are packaged unitized meals and snacks that are not provided in group settings. Examples include grab-and-go drive-up service outside and ordering ahead for grab-and-go pick up. “**Unitized meals**” are complete reimbursable meals or snacks that meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements.

This document provides considerations that child care centers must address before providing non-congregate CACFP meals and snacks to children during a closure due to COVID-19. For questions or additional guidance on how to operate non-congregate meal service, please contact the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [CACFP staff](#).

- Identify methods to inform households about the availability of non-congregate meals and snacks.
 - E-mail blast.
 - Phone messaging.
 - Paper notice sent home before the child care center closes.
 - Location of distribution sites.
 - One or multiple child care centers.
 - Timing of availability of non-congregate meals and snacks.
 - How to inform households of the locations.
- Conduct a capacity assessment.
 - How to staff the operation.
 - Determine the child care center’s inventory of food and supplies, such as bags and containers to package the meals and snacks.
- Contact vendors regarding delivery availability.
 - Notify distributors of child care center closures.
- Identify which non-congregate meals (breakfast and lunch) and snacks will be offered. **Note:** CACFP child care centers may serve up to two non-congregate meals (breakfast and lunch) and one snack per eligible child at each site per day.

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- Determine the types of non-congregate meals and snacks that will be offered. **Note:** Non-congregate meals and snacks must be unitized.
 - Consider portability.
 - Packaging to take food offsite.
 - Food safety considerations.
 - Will you publish a daily menu?
- Determine the days of the week when non-congregate meals and snacks will be distributed. CACFP child care centers may distribute meals and snacks on any days of the week. **Note:** CACFP child care centers that do not normally operate on Saturday and Sunday, but would like to start providing meal service on these days, must receive prior approval from the CSDE.
- Determine the number of non-congregate meals and snacks that will be prepared.
 - Estimate an accurate quantity of meals and snacks to prepare.
 - Can the leftover meals and snacks be stored for meal service the following day?
 - Will you ask households to preorder meals? How will you create equal access for people without internet access?
- Determine how the non-congregate meals and snacks will be distributed. Examples of distribution methods include grab-and-go drive-up service outside and ordering ahead for grab-and-go pick up.
- Determine how the child care center will accurately count the served non-congregate meals and snacks to be claimed for reimbursement. **Note:** The CACFP child care center must maintain separate meal counts for breakfast, lunch, and snack, using the name of each eligible enrolled participating child. All meals and snacks are claimed based on each child's current eligibility status and the regular CACFP reimbursement rates. The CACFP child care center must continue to maintain updated master lists of children's free, reduced, and over income eligibility categories for each site that will be claimed for reimbursement.
 - Separate counts for breakfast, lunch, and snack.
 - Daily meal and snack count sheet.

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreaks](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/COVID-19/CACFP_Child_Care_Centers_Emergency_Meal_Considerations.pdf.

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