



Food and
Nutrition
Service

March 29, 2020

Braddock
Metro
Center

Kala Shipley
Bureau Chief of Nutrition and Health Services
Iowa Department of Education
400 E 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

1320
Braddock
Place
Alexandria
VA 22314

Dear Ms. Shipley,

This letter is in response to the Iowa Department of Education's (IDOE) waiver request to maintain children's access to meals during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, submitted March 23, 2020. IDOE requests a waiver of the restrictions on site eligibility requirements in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO). Specifically, IDOE requests to waive the requirement that open sites must be located in areas where at least 50 percent of NSLP participants are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Instead, IDOE requests to allow non-area eligible service providers in good standing to operate during unanticipated school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In its request, IDOE asserts that many businesses are expected to be negatively affected by closures, which will result in decreased household incomes and increased need. IDOE explained that many public school districts in Iowa have less than 50% eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Additionally, rural areas are food deserts where access to nutrition and healthy foods are a challenge. IDOE states that this waiver will maintain children's access to the SFSP and SSO meal service during school closures related to the pandemic. To maintain children's access to meals, and to support families experiencing financial hardship, IDOE requests to waive the requirement at 7 CFR 225.14(c)(3) to conduct a regularly scheduled food service in "*Areas in which poor economic conditions exist.*"

Pursuant to the waiver authority granted under Section 2102(b) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) (the Act) to approve waivers that may increase cost to the Federal Government and have the purpose of providing meals and meal supplements, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves this request. However, State agencies must have a plan for ensuring that new meal sites are targeting benefits to children in need, for example, children who may be newly eligible for benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. State agencies should work with local Program operators in developing their plans as local Program operators are best situated to determine how to provide these assurances. This approval applies to sites operating during temporary school closures related to COVID-19. Additionally, FNS reserves the right to withdraw this approval subject to availability of funding.

Therefore, effective as of March 23, 2020, this waiver allows SFSP and SSO sponsors in good standing to operate open sites in areas approved by IDOE and consistent with the

Ms. Kala Shipley

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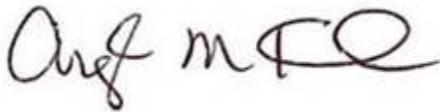
State plan, but that are not located in “*Areas in which poor economic conditions exist*” as defined at section 13(a)(1)(A) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) and as referenced in regulation at 7 CFR 225.2, 225.6(c)(2)(i)(G), 225.6(c)(3)(i)(B), 225.6(d)(1)(i), 225.14(c)(3), and 225.16(b)(4). This waiver remains in effect until June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. FNS recognizes that there may be a continued need for this waiver, and will carefully assess the situation on an ongoing basis.

As required by this waiver approval, IDOE must submit a report to the Secretary not later than 1 year after the date such State received the waiver. The report must include:

- A summary of the use of this waiver by the State agency and local Program operators,
- A summary of how new meal sites were targeted to benefits for children who were previously eligible or newly eligibly for program benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, and
- A description of whether and how this waiver resulted in improved services to Program participants.

FNS appreciates IDOE’s commitment to work with sponsors to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Midwest Regional Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Kline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Angela Kline
Director
Policy and Program Development Division

CC: Christine Vineyard, Midwest Regional Office