



Food and
Nutrition
Service

March 27, 2020

Braddock
Metro
Center

Leanne Eko, RD, SNS
Director, Child Nutrition Services
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction – Washington State
P.O. Box 47200
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Dear Ms. Eko,

This letter is in response to the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) waiver request to maintain children's access to meals during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, submitted March 4, 2020. OSPI 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, OSPI 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, Washington requests to allow non-area eligible school food authorities, in good standing, to serve meals to students through SFSP and SSO during the emergency school closures associated with COVID-19.

In its request, OSPI asserts that Washington State is the unofficial "epicenter" of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, and that community leaders and school district personnel have expressed a need to continue to feed students during this challenging time. OSPI 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, OSPI 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,*" which are defined at 7 CFR 225.2.

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.

Ms. Leanne Eko

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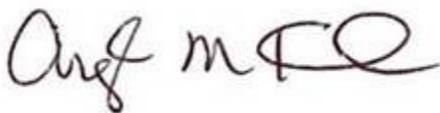
Therefore, effective as of March 18, 2020, this waiver allows SFSP and SSO sponsors in good standing to operate open sites in areas approved by OSPI and consistent with the State plan, but that are not located in “*Areas in which poor economic conditions exist*” as defined at section 13(a)(1)(A) of the 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. While OSPI requests this waiver through March 31, 2021, FNS limited the duration of the waiver to assess its impact and the need for continued flexibility. 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, OSPI 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 to children who were previously eligible or newly eligible 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 OSPI’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 Western 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: GeNam Chew, WRO