



## COVID 19 Viral Pandemic Response School Closures Standard Operating Procedure



**PURPOSE:** To prepare for pandemic incidents involving child nutrition program staff and child nutrition program services.

**SCOPE:** This procedure should be implemented to safely and properly respond to pandemic incidents involving school closures.

**KEY WORDS:** Pandemic, virus, infectious, school closures.

### **INFORMATION:**

In the interest of public health, agencies could make decisions that affect normal program operations. During a pandemic, local, county or state health officials may order school closures. Since many children rely on school meals for proper nutrition, USDA has issued waivers allowing flexibilities in the provision of meals to children, including non-congregate meals and meal service times; the Nebraska Department of Education Office of Nutrition Services (NDE) has opted in to these waivers which makes their flexibilities available to all sponsors.

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Defer to local, count, state and federal agency protocol and guidance during pandemic situations. Local, county, state and federal agencies are able to assist when conditions disrupt the day-to-day routine on a large scale. Local, county, state and federal agencies can work with Sponsors in collaborative efforts to maintain a safe food supply and keep program staff safe.
2. Sponsors are not required to provide meal service during school closures, but willingness to continue meal service operations ensures children receive nutritious meals during a public health crisis. The available meal service waivers issued by USDA may help support meal service.
3. Plan meal service during emergency period.
  - a. Determine service methods that best suits the situation, such as grab and go, curbside pick-up, and/or meal delivery systems.
  - b. Plan service locations. Meals service is allowed in unconventional places, such as parking lots, bus routes, community centers, libraries, parks, post offices, rural fire stations, etc.
  - c. Determine meal accountability procedures. Separate meal counts, production records, HACCP logs and other records must be maintained for meals served under a USDA waiver.
  - d. Identify ways to communicate meal availability: school website, social media, school email alerts, text messaging blasts, etc.
  - e. As part of social distancing measures, the number of people arriving at one time to pick up a meal should be staggered and social interactions limited. Examples: set times for pick up, mark line so there is 6 feet between students picking up.
  - f. Strongly reinforce that staff should avoid touching their face (mouth, nose, eyes) during preparation and service of meals.



- g. Plan for proper hand hygiene for the type of service planned. Train/retrain staff and volunteers.
  - h. For remote sites with no working sink, provide hand hygiene capabilities using a portable handwashing station. A portable handwashing station can be set up using a thermal container, soap, paper towels, and a discard bucket.
4. The type of meal offered will depend on the resources and capacity of the site. Those sites, that are able to prepare ready-to-eat meals and have the capacity to deliver meals daily in a way that meets state or local food safety requirements, may do so. Home-delivered meals still have to meet all meal pattern requirements for the designated program. If emergency conditions prevent a sponsor from obtaining a certain food product, such as milk, the state agency (NDE Nutrition Services) may approve the service of meals without the required menu item during the emergency period.
5. Meals served during a viral pandemic must be prepared in advance and must be ready to eat off-site. Schools may offer meals in a variety of innovative ways, such as “Grab n’ Go,” “Drive-thru,” or “Curbside” meal service.
6. Meals served must still comply with relevant civil rights requirements, including documented requests to accommodate children with special dietary needs. Communicate with families in need of special dietary accommodations to make plans for when and where they can obtain special meals.
7. Purchase and keep on hand, sufficient quantities of...
- a. Chemicals used to make a sanitizing solution
  - b. Disinfectant approved for use in a foodservice facility; local, county or state health departments can provide assistance if needed.
  - c. Single-use food gloves in several sizes
  - d. Disposable service ware suitable for unconventional delivery systems
  - e. Shelf-stable foods
8. Communicate food safety rules as they apply to the planned meal service style.
- a. Meals provided to children must be ready-to-eat. Cooked potentially hazardous hot foods must be cooked to proper internal temperatures before service. For example, a sponsor could not send home portions of frozen raw chicken nuggets with instructions for preparing the food at home. A sponsor could properly cook the chicken nuggets, making them a ready-to-eat food. The chicken nuggets could be delivered hot, or the chicken nuggets could be cooled within standards and sent to the household to reheat, if reheating is desired.  
**DO NOT ASSUME HOUSEHOLDS HAVE THE MEANS TO PROPERLY COOK OR COOL FOODS.**
  - b. Potentially hazardous foods must be held at proper temperatures or have time controls applied when serving reimbursable meals in unconventional ways.
  - c. If Time as a Public Health Control is used for a cold potentially hazardous food, the food shall have an initial temperature of 41°F or less when removed from cold holding. The food must be served to the customer or discarded within 4 hours.
  - d. If Time as a Public Health Control is used for a hot potentially hazardous food, the food shall be cooked to a proper internal temperature, and have an internal temperature of



135°F or greater when removed from hot holding. The food must be served to the customer or discarded within 4 hours.

DO NOT ASSUME HOUSEHOLDS HAVE THE MEANS TO PROPERLY COOL FOOD.

e. Refer to SOP - Using Time as a Public Health Control to Limit Bacteria Growth in Potentially Hazardous Foods for more information on using time as the control measure instead of temperature.

f. Label items packaged on site and made available for self-service with appropriate ingredient information to protect the health and safety of children who experience allergic reactions to specific foods.

g. Communicate appropriate food safety actions for customer handling of menu items. For example, chicken nuggets cooked and cooled are served as part of a reimbursable meal should be held cold until time of service or delivery and include instructions for consuming the chicken nuggets within 2 hours. Cold items designated for another day should include instructions for storing the cold items under refrigeration in the household.

9. Sponsors may send meals for Same-Day Service and Multi-Day Service.

10. Production records must be completed for each meal.

11. Provide food safety training to newly hired staff and volunteers. Reinforce food safe practices for all program personnel and volunteers. Proper handwashing is critical.

**MONITORING:**

Food Service Director/Manager or assigned employee will ensure that at least one on-duty employee is designated to implement this SOP during a viral pandemic incident.

Food Service Director/Manager or assigned employee will exclude nutrition program employees in accordance with State health directives.

**CORRECTIVE ACTION:**

Food Service Director/Manager or assigned employee will retrain and/or provide proper direction to staff and volunteers in application of this SOP during a viral pandemic incident.

**VERIFICATION and RECORD KEEPING:**

The supervisor or other designated employee will review this SOP annually and include it as part of the site's Emergency Preparedness Plan. Records will be kept for one year plus the current year.

**Date Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_ **By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Reviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Revised:** \_\_\_\_\_ **By:** \_\_\_\_\_