

## **Multiple Meal Distribution – Guidance for National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program**

Due to USDA flexibilities via Nationwide waivers granted during the 2021 School Year, Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition is allowing School Food Authorities (SFAs) to provide more than 1 day's worth of school meals to students via a single meal pick-up/distribution (by the child or the child's parent or guardian) or delivery. For example, an SFA may distribute 2 days of meals on Monday morning, providing program participants with breakfast and lunch for both Monday and Tuesday. Meals may be provided for school days only. Weekend and other non-school days are not allowed.

*What should Program operators consider when deciding how many days of meals to provide at a time?*

- How long foods may be safely stored before eating.
- How long foods can be stored before food quality suffers.
- Participants' access to refrigerator and freezer space for the amounts of food and milk provided.
- Food storage space at the meal distribution site and on meal delivery vehicles (such as buses or food trucks).
- Whether fewer pick-up days and times will decrease access to meals for some children.

*Can we provide meals that include components requiring assembly or that extend beyond one meal?*

Yes, meals can include separate food items that require household assembly; for instance, a whole grain-rich wrap provided separately from a container of sunflower seed butter.

In addition, food packages can contain an amount of food that is more than what is required at a single meal under the SBP/NSLP meal pattern. This item may provide food to be eaten at more than one meal. For example, a quart of milk provides four 1-cup servings.

*What food items may be provided in a manner that requires households to assemble meals?*

- Foods that normally credit towards reimbursable meals under the NSLP/SBP.
- Foods that are recognizable as a meal component in a reimbursable meal.
- Foods that do not require much preparation or the addition of other ingredients (aside from water) before eating.

### *What are Unitized Meals?*

Meals are considered unitized when meal components are provided and packaged in amounts for a single meal. For example, a unitized grab 'n go bagged breakfast for Kindergarten (K) through 6th grade might include: 8 fl oz (1 cup) milk, 1 oz eq cereal, 1 oz eq cheese stick, and 1 cup fruit.

### *What are meal pattern considerations for SFAs?*

- How Menus will be planned to:
  - provide a variety of foods within the meal components to ensure meals meet the nutritional needs of children.
  - meet meal pattern requirements for vegetable subgroups over the course of the week.
  - provide no more than half of fruits or vegetables as 100% juice over the course of the week.
- How “extra” foods will contribute toward average weekly calorie, saturated fat, and sodium amounts.

### *Can frozen foods be provided?*

Yes. Frozen foods, which require minimal preparation other than heating, may be provided as part of meals if they meet meal pattern requirements. Providing foods in a frozen state may help to ensure food safety. For example, providing frozen juice in a bag lunch being sent home can help to keep all perishable foods cold.