

# Child Nutrition

## Maine DOE

Points to consider when planning meals for unanticipated school day closure

USDA has provided several waivers of federal regulations for School Year 2022. Because of these waivers, there is an opportunity to offer meals to students during an emergency closure, such as a storm, if that day is counted as an educational “school” day. This document provides guidelines on meal provision during an unanticipated school day closure days.

- Meals can be sent home in preparation of an unanticipated school day closure no more than five days in advance
  - This is to ensure that meals are of good, nutritious, quality.
  - This is currently acceptable under USDA SY 2022 waivers.
- Parents/guardians must request meals for an unanticipated school day closure
  - By parents requesting a meal, it is understood that the meal is wanted and can be accountable. Schools can allow parents to make choices, such as milk or no milk, because of the “Offer vs Serve” option under the Child Nutrition Program.
- Proper accountability is needed
  - Meals sent home can be reimbursed the educational day of the event as specified by the school and meeting Federal regulations.
- If it is determined the unanticipated school day closure was not needed but meals were requested and distributed, meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement. The SAU and Charter school absorbs the cost because it is an unallowable expense for Food Service Department.
  - This could be because storm never materialized, or the SAU and Charter school declared it a non-educational day.
  - Federal requirements only allow reimbursable meals to be served on educational days, therefore meals costs are not an allowable expense to the Food Service Department.
- Meals must be planned to meet USDA meal pattern guidelines. Offer vs. Serve may be used, but would need to be included in the parent/guardian request for meals.
  - Complete meals must be offered, but if using Offer vs. Serve, the parent/guardian or child can decline one or two items as allowed by guidelines.
- Due to USDA SY 2022 waivers, parents/guardians can pick up meals for their children to bring home.

In summary, the primary questions to consider are:

- 1) Is it an educational day?
- 2) How can the SAU and Charter school provide the best meal option to their students?
- 3) Does Food Service Department have a proper accountability system in place that allows households to sign up for meals?