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TO: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Center-based Organizations

FROM: Robin Holz, CACFP Lead Consultant - Centers
Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services

SUBJECT: Disaster Response

This memorandum supersedes Memo 2012-8 *Disasters Response* and provides an overview of ways State agencies and organizations participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) can respond to situations resulting from damage or disruptions due to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods as well as other exceptional emergency situations or man-made disasters.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE MEALS AND DISASTER BENEFITS

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Children residing in or evacuated from disaster areas may be determined homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These children are categorically (automatically) eligible for free meals in the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs). A school district's homeless coordinator makes a determination of homelessness and provides a list of all children determined homeless due to a disaster situation. The center organization may obtain the list from the school. The list must include the children's first and last names, date(s) of determination, school district name, and contact person and phone number.

In cases where a household from a designated disaster area moves in with another household, the homeless liaison may determine the displaced individuals homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Displaced children and adult participants in CACFP are automatically eligible for free meals in centers even if they are temporarily residing with another family. The host family may include the displaced family members and any income provided to them when applying for free or reduced price meals.

Organizations that require eligibility information can receive certification of the participant's homeless status from the agency that assisted with the evacuation or that is providing shelter. If the child is not residing in an emergency shelter, the organization should have an adult living with the child complete an income eligibility form indicating that the child is homeless due to a disaster. No further information is required to certify the child's eligibility.

Disaster Benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Children in households receiving Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits are categorically eligible for free meals in the CNPs. Certification of these children may be accomplished through direct contact with the Department of Human Service (DHS) Food Assistance Program or by an application submitted by a household with a Food Assistance case number.

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Emergency Shelters in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Emergency shelters that provide temporary housing to displaced families are eligible to participate in CACFP. Where significant numbers of persons are being temporarily housed, State agencies may designate any appropriate facility as an emergency shelter, and may waive organization application requirements in these situations. When State agencies have designated a facility as an emergency shelter, all children through age 18 may receive up to three free meals (breakfast, lunch, and supper) each day.

An “appropriate facility” may include a school or an organization which, although it is not providing actual shelter, is nevertheless providing meals to displaced families who are being temporarily housed elsewhere, in locations that may not have the means to provide meal services to these temporary residents.

Duration of Eligibility

Children certified for free or reduced price meal benefits because of a disaster situation, including eligibility based on homeless status or receipt of D-SNAP benefits, remain eligible for free meal benefits for 13 months.

FLEXIBILITIES THAT REQUIRE STATE AGENCY OR FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE (FNS) APPROVAL

Child Nutrition Program (CNP) policies are designed to allow flexibility and support continuation of meal benefits to participants in disaster areas. There are existing flexibilities in meal service requirements and administrative procedures that make it easier for States and CACFP organizations to operate and respond to disaster situations. Contact the State agency in writing to request a waiver for the variations listed below. The State agency will respond to the request and forward it to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office (RO) if required.

Meal Component and Meal Service

Flexibility is allowed with regard to time of meal service and use of offer versus serve. These modifications may be made with State agency approval.

If emergency conditions exist that prevent organizations from obtaining fluid milk, the State agency may allow service of meals without milk or with an alternate form of milk, such as canned or dry milk (7 CFR 210.10(d)(2)(i); 7 CFR 225.16(f)(6); 7 CFR 226.20(e)).

If changes to other meal component requirements are needed, organizations should consult with their State agencies. 7 CFR 226.20 (i) allows special variations in the food components of meals, with FNS approval.

Accountability and Verification Procedures

In disaster situations, the FNS ROs are authorized to allow State agencies and organizations to submit claims beyond the 60/90-day requirement. Claims submitted outside of the 60/90-day requirement, as a result of a disaster, are not subject to the one-time exception for late submissions.

If organizations need to reconstruct unsubmitted claims due to loss of current records, they must consult with their State agencies. State agencies may approve such requests in consultation with their FNS RO.

When records required for review purposes, such as paid claims, approved income applications, menus, and food production records are destroyed, organizations must inform their State agencies of the circumstances and dates of the losses, and the types and approximate age of the records that were lost.

Organizations that are operational, but unable to maintain normal accountability systems, including counting, claiming, and monitoring, must contact their State agencies regarding how to proceed. In these situations, waiver requests must be submitted to FNS for approval.

At Risk Site Eligibility

Based on the significant needs of each community, FNS ROs may waive the requirements that sponsors document that each site is serving an area in which poor economic conditions exist (7 CFR 225.6(c)(2)). These requirements may be waived for existing eligible sites located in the area damaged by a natural disaster that must relocate to areas that are not eligible based on school data.

Other Exceptional Emergency Situations or Man-made Disasters

Other exceptional emergency situations or man-made disasters, such as human pandemic or chemical plant explosions, may impact the ability of organizations to continue normal program operations. In this circumstance, FNS may approve flexibilities to accommodate the needs of severely impacted areas. Flexibilities are provided on a case-by-case basis and will require justification from the requesting State agency. Changes to program operation or administration must be approved by FNS prior to implementation.

The Iowa State agency is seeking further clarification on several of these topics and additional information that will be shared as it becomes available.

If you have questions, contact robin.holz@iowa.gov. (515)281-3484.