

# NO KID HUNGRY RESPONDS: CORONAVIRUS

## ACTION NEEDED: Extending the Nationwide Child Nutrition Waivers

*To reach hungry children with the food they need this summer, the USDA must extend all nationwide child nutrition waivers through September 30, 2020.*



The coronavirus has caused a catastrophic health crisis around the globe. It also is creating an economic crisis that will push millions of families with children into poverty and hunger here in the United States.

Summer meals programs run by school districts and local organizations help feed children when schools are closed, but this year, they face massive challenges. By law, summer programs operate as “congregate feeding models,” meaning kids must gather together and eat in a group. This poses multiple safety and health concerns for children, families, and the staff and volunteers who work these programs, and necessary social distancing and safety recommendations will make this service model challenging, if not impossible.

Even as states begin loosening shelter-in-place requirements, it won't be business-as-usual for schools and community organizations trying to reach hungry children. Many of the usual places to reach children – summer school, day camps, library programs – won't be operating as usual.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) the authority to issue nationwide child nutrition waivers, allowing school districts and community providers necessary flexibility to operate meals service during a pandemic.

These waivers made it possible to adapt programs so communities could still feed children during these uncertain times, but **that's about to change**.

These nationwide waivers are set to expire at the end of June, at the height of summer meal service. Without them, many schools and community organizations in our state will not be able to reach children during the summer months.

*Nationwide Child Nutrition Waivers will help schools and local organizations feed kids this summer, but they must be extended past June 30. If they are not, many communities will not be able to reach hungry kids with the food they need this summer.*



## How Nationwide Nutrition Waivers Help Feed Kids

It's challenging in the best of times to operate a summer feeding program. The nationwide child nutrition waivers allow programs to shift the way they serve food in the summer months, giving schools and community organizations the tools they need to continue to operate their programs in the ways that work best during the pandemic and its aftermath.

For example:

- The nationwide waivers allow for families and children to pick up meals through a grab-and-go model;
- They allow for meals to be dropped off at a child's home;
- They ensure less frequent contact and exposure for kids and families, which is important to help keep kids and the workers and volunteers distributing meals safe.

### Action Needed Now

In May 2020 providers are already trying to establish sites, place food orders, coordinate and train their staff, and alert families in need about how and where to find programs.

If the nationwide waivers expire, the rules would change mid-summer, making summer meals twice as hard to run at a time when need has skyrocketed; this will lead to many of the schools and organizations who are feeding kids now having to shut down their programs.

**Acting now gives school districts and local organizations the tools and time they need to make plans to ensure kids are consistently getting the food they need.**

## Notes From The Frontlines

"The USDA waivers are vital to feeding our children in the Katy, west Houston community as well as across the nation.

Without these waivers many of our children would go hungry during this pandemic. School systems need the waivers approved as soon as possible so meal planning and staffing can occur to meet the needs of the community during this stressful time.

We have already seen an increase in households qualifying for free and reduced benefits as jobs are lost and the future is uncertain. The decision to expand the waivers needs to take place now to avoid children going hungry and households experiencing more stress and uncertainty."

**-- Donna Pittenger, Executive Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Katy ISD**

#### For More Information:

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And read [this letter](#) to Congress signed by organizations from around the nation which asks Members to urge the USDA to extend nationwide child nutrition waivers.

#### About No Kid Hungry

No child should go hungry in America, but in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, 1 in 4 kids could face hunger this year. No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger through effective programs that provide kids with the food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of Share Our Strength, an organization working to end hunger and poverty. Join us at [NoKidHungry.org](http://NoKidHungry.org)