

Background

In the event of an unanticipated school closure, extreme weather event, natural disaster, or other similar situation, School Food Authorities (SFAs) or other Child Nutrition Program (CNP) sponsors can serve free meals to children in the affected areas.

It is highly recommended that SFAs and sponsors develop an [Emergency Readiness Plan](#) to ensure a rapid and efficient response if an emergency situation does arise.

Which programs are available?

Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

- Only SFAs can operate the SSO
- Available during the school year during an unanticipated school closure
- May serve children ages 0-18 years

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- Organizations with current agreements to operate SFSP may be approved to open emergency feeding sites
- Available outside of the school year in a disaster situation
- May serve children ages 0-18 years

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- Available at emergency shelters providing temporary housing to displaced families
- May serve meals and snacks during unanticipated school closures
- May serve children 0-18 years and disabled adult participants

Program Flexibilities

- There are certain meal service, accountability and verification, and site eligibility flexibilities that may be allowed with State agency approval. Contact the applicable State agency for information.

State agency Contacts

SSO and SFSP

- [McKenna Pullen](#),
CO Dept. of Education,
School Nutrition Unit

CACFP

- [Naomi Steenson](#),
CO Dept. of Public Health
and Environment

USDA Foods Distribution

- [Nichelle Harris](#),
CO Dept. of Human Services

Eligibility

- Children homeless from a disaster are categorically eligible for free meal benefits under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Children in households receiving D-SNAP are categorically eligible for free meal benefits.
- All children 0-18 years can get up to 3 free meals each day through CACFP at designated emergency shelters.
- Eligibility remains for the entire school year and up to 30 days into the next school year.
- Through CACFP, children are eligible for free meal benefits 12 months after a disaster.

USDA Foods Distribution

- The State Distribution Agency (SDA), the Colorado Dept. of Human Services (CDHS), Food Distribution Programs (FDP) will notify SFAs when a disaster strikes. Only the SDA has authority to approve the use of USDA Foods for disaster response.
- Rapid Food Response State-The state of Colorado has a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with USDA-FNS to make USDA Foods inventory available at the state warehouse during a presidentially declared disaster or emergency to the extent they determine feasible.

Additional Resources

- [CDE Emergency Feeding webpage](#)
- [CDPHS CACFP webpage](#)
- [CDHS USDA Foods webpage](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness Resource Guide](#)
- [Disaster Feeding Guidance for SFAs](#)
- [CDHS Food Distribution Programs](#)

USDA Memos

- [Disaster Response](#)
- [Meal Service During Unanticipated School and Day Care Closures](#)
- [Providing Child Nutrition Program Benefits to Disaster Survivor Evacuees](#)