
Becoming COVID Capable:

PREPARING FOR A NEW KIND OF SUMMER

As the school year ends unceremoniously at empty campuses, school district leaders are grappling with how to keep their students moving forward after a stressful extended absence. Many school districts, cities, counties, and community based agencies are still unsure of reopen dates and risk mitigation plans. Yet one certainty remains: there is a long road ahead back to economic stability for many families, where the most vulnerable have been hit the hardest. Affordable housing communities will emerge as an even stronger beacon in the days and months ahead to provide support for families. Many school districts have offered emergency meals during the COVID-19 crisis but it remains uncertain whether many will continue meal service past the end of the school year.

Affordable housing communities can provide continuity for families by offering free meals through the federally funded summer meal programs to children and teens once the school year officially ends.

Advantages to running a summer meal program:

- Provide a safe, consistent food access point for children and youth to access free meals. The absence of paperwork or application makes meals easily accessible to families. In addition, the lifting of shelter-in-place restrictions may still leave residual uncertainty for families around the risk of exposure, making on-site meals a reassuring option.
- Opportunities to partner with school districts or local libraries to support summer learning. Libraries across the nation are implementing a wide range of learning supports, from virtual storytime, Grab and Go activity kits, book giveaways, and even pop-up libraries at meal sites. Committed to serving the community, libraries appreciate new partners and opportunities to introduce more community members to the vast resources and programs, including online options, offered by the library.
- Temporary policy flexibilities make it easier to feed kids during the COVID-19 pandemic. Opt-in USDA waivers provide a number of temporary flexibilities including:
 - No requirements to eat meals in a group setting
 - Flexible meal times
 - Meals for several days can be offered at once
 - Parents/caregivers can pick up meals for their children
 - Possibility for home delivery of meals

These temporary flexibilities are slated to end on August 31, 2020 or until further guidance is issued by USDA. [Check to see if your state elected to take advantage of these flexibilities.](#)

- Additional resources are available to support family nutrition. Many states have been approved to provide Pandemic EBT benefits (P-EBT) for children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Families will receive money on a new or existing EBT card to help fill the school meals gap. [See if your state offers P-EBT](#). States may also be approved to provide [supplemental emergency SNAP benefits](#) to households. Additional [temporary flexibilities exist in the Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\) program](#), including remote issuance of benefits, proving up to four months of benefits at one time, and allowing food substitutions. Contact your local food bank to determine the feasibility of food bags or produce from the food bank for families or seniors at housing sites.

Additional Resources

- [State Child Nutrition Agencies](#) can help connect affordable housing communities to the nutrition programs and existing sponsors.
- [Guide to Ensuring Children Have Access to Nutrition \(COVID-19\)](#)

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Linda Lu, Director of Strategy and Learning | linda@partnerforchildren.org



Partnership for Children & Youth's HousED initiative increases the accessibility and quality of educational supports in public and affordable housing communities, creating pathways out of poverty. Learn more at www.partnerforchildren.org/housing-and-education