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April 30, 2008

CACFP 08-05

To: Institutions Participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
Summer Food Service Program Sponsors

From: Arnette Cowan, Head
Special Nutrition Programs

Subject: Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during a Pandemic

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has received questions regarding the Child Nutrition Program's operation during an outbreak of pandemic disease. The Child Nutrition Programs are designed to support institutional feeding operations. The authorizing statutes assume that programs will operate in a congregate setting, whether in schools or child care facilities. During the outbreak of pandemic disease, public health officials anticipate the need for "social distancing" as a means of minimizing the spread of illness by limiting person-to-person contact. Thus, when social distancing measures are in effect, schools and other facilities may be closed and operation of the Child Nutrition Programs will probably not be possible.

School facilities and equipment normally used in the operation of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) maybe used for other activities during a pandemic outbreak. In addition, in a Presidentially-declared disaster, Program commodities and other foods would be available for distribution to community groups or public agencies. However, although school facilities or commodities could be used, their use would not be related to the NSLP or SBP.

Finally, depending on the nature and scope of the outbreak, some requirements in areas adjacent to, but not directly affected by, a pandemic outbreak may be waived. Provisions relating to operational procedures, review requirements, or meal patterns have been waived, either on a short-term or longer-term basis, in previous disasters. The usefulness and applicability of such waivers during a pandemic would be dependent on the scope of the outbreak and the limitations on person-to-person contact in any given area.

If you have questions, please contact your regional consultant.

cc: SNP Staff
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