



## PRESS RELEASE

Tracey H. Lewis, Ed.D.  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
P.O. Box 364  
209 N. Crutchfield Street  
Dobson, North Carolina 27017  
336/386-8211 Cell: 336/401-1873  
Fax: 336/386-4756  
E-Mail: lewistesurry.k12.nc.us

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Surry County School Nutrition Maintains Nutritious Impact on Education as USDA Extends Free Meals for All Kids**

**Dobson, NC** — Surry County School Nutrition is happy to report the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has again extended free meals. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary, Sonny Perdue recently announced the continuation of free school meals for all children throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year. This means students in the Surry County Schools will continue to benefit from free breakfasts and free lunches throughout the remainder of this school year.

In other news, President Donald Trump proclaimed this week National School Lunch Week 2020. During the week of October 12 through 16, School Nutrition professionals across the country celebrate National School Lunch Week. School meal programs serve nearly 30 million children each day. Healthy school meals make a positive impact on education inside and outside the classroom.

“This is great news for families struggling to make ends meet and great news for school nutrition professionals working so hard to support families throughout the pandemic. We are extremely proud of our school nutrition staff and their determination to feed children throughout the pandemic. They have worked tirelessly to provide hot meals and options children enjoy,” stated Mrs. Sherri Parks, School Nutrition Director. “The Surry County School Nutrition Department is made up of 95 professionals that work in 19 schools and the central office. Since the pandemic began in March, we have served over 876,000 meals to children throughout Surry County. We value each child we serve, and we are proud to be an important part of Surry County Schools!”

If you have questions, please call your child’s school or the Surry County School Nutrition Department at 336-386-8866. Please read the following news release from the USDA for more information.



United States Department of Agriculture

# News Release

## ICYMI: USDA Extends Free Meals for All Kids

*Department Thanks School Nutrition Partners for Dedication to Service*

**Washington, DC, October 16, 2020** – President Donald Trump proclaimed this week [National School Lunch Week 2020](#), highlighting the vital role of school nutrition professionals in ensuring that children in all communities nationwide continue to get nutritious meals, despite the challenges posed by the current public health emergency. To keep this work going, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue recently announced the [continued extension of nationwide flexibilities](#) that allow free school meals for all children throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year.

“As our nation recovers and reopens, we want to ensure that children continue to receive the nutritious breakfasts and lunches they count on during the school year wherever they are, and however they are learning,” said Secretary Perdue. “We are grateful for the heroic efforts by our school food service professionals who are consistently serving healthy meals to kids during these trying times, and we know they need maximum flexibility right now. I appreciate President Trump for his unwavering commitment to ensuring kids receive the food they need during this pandemic and for supporting USDA in continuing to provide these unprecedented flexibilities.”

“Children can’t focus on learning if they are hungry,” said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Brandon Lipps. “And despite the unprecedented circumstances, Americans can count on USDA’s child nutrition programs and our hard working partners in communities across America to ensure our nation’s school children get the food they need to grow and thrive.”

In announcing the flexibilities, USDA leaders thanked President Trump for signing into law continuing appropriations that extended funding allowing USDA to make this unprecedented move. Since then, many partners have joined in to express their gratitude. Here is what they are saying:

“These waivers allow our district to reach so many more students in need of healthy meals,” said **Beth Wallace, SNS, Executive Director of Food and Nutrition Services for Jeffco Public Schools in Lakewood, CO**. “Our large school district has encountered unique challenges at each of our schools during the pandemic. Extending these waivers eliminates numerous regulatory hurdles for our hardworking school nutrition staff and allows them to customize meal service to suit the specific needs of their school communities.”

“Schools face tremendous uncertainty during the pandemic. Our meal programs could change abruptly in a month, a week or a matter of days and our school nutrition team needs to be able to quickly adapt meal service. These waivers enable us to support our

school community in any situation and be ready to manage unexpected supply chain disruptions,” said **Sally Spero, SNS, Child Nutrition Director for Lakeside Union School District in Lakeside, CA.**

“Despite significant need in our community this fall, it was very difficult to collect free and reduced-price meal applications, especially with students learning remotely. These waivers allow us to serve all students in need for free and provide families of remote learners with multiple days worth of meals at one time, which is especially important when so many struggle with transportation,” said **Sharon Glosson, MS, RDN, LD, SNS, Executive Director of School Nutrition for North East I.S.D. in San Antonio, TX.**

“This is an important victory for children,” said **Lisa Davis, Share Our Strength Senior Vice President.** “We commend the USDA for extending these essential waivers through the academic year.”

“FRAC commends the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for its decision to extend the Summer Nutrition waivers through June 30, 2021. This extension will ensure schools and private nonprofit organizations have the consistency and time needed in order to effectively plan and implement meal service for millions of children across the country who rely on free and reduced-price school meals,” said **Luis Guardia, President, Food Research & Action Center.**

“With continued school disruptions, our network of member food banks were eager to see the United States Department of Agriculture take action to extend critical child nutrition waivers until the end of the academic year. School meals are the only reliable source of nutrition each day for millions of children in this country, and this announcement will ensure that families are not turned away or forced to go to another location to access meals,” said **Kate Leone, Chief Government Relations Officer, Feeding America.**

“Today’s [Fri., Oct. 9] action from USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue will provide families with flexibility and peace of mind that students in need will have access to nutritious meals through the end of the school year,” said **U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC).** “Federal programs that help feed students during these unprecedented times must remain easy to operate for families who are already burdened by the pandemic. Secretary Perdue and President Trump understood the need for quick action and acted accordingly. Thanks to their leadership, American families and students will continue to have access to free school meals.”

“I commend Secretary Perdue for agreeing to extend these child nutrition program waivers through the end of the school year,” said **U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV).** “It will bring peace of mind to West Virginia students, families, and schools, and I am proud to have helped ensure their voices were heard. Many families and students rely on these programs to help make ends meet, even more so during these uncertain times. I am proud that our schools were able to quickly adjust to provide their students with meals and pleased the USDA understands the importance of continuing these waivers through the end of the school year to support these programs.”

“USDA’s extension of these flexibilities through the end of the school year will help ensure that children will continue to have access to healthy, nutritious food,” said **U.S. Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND)**. “We appreciate USDA for providing these flexibilities and all the school nutrition professionals in North Dakota, who work tirelessly to provide students with these meals.”

Last month, Lipps, along with USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Administrator Pam Miller, recognized the importance of school food service workers on National Food Service Workers Day, thanking them for their critical work and tireless dedication throughout the pandemic.

### **Background:**

On Friday, Oct. 9, 2020, USDA extended flexibilities in its Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) through June 30, 2021, to allow schools and other sites to continue to provide meals at no cost to all children. The department previously extended free meals through December 2020, based on funding available at the time, but was now able to extend throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year thanks to language in the continuing resolution signed into law by President Trump on Oct. 1, 2020.

The extended waivers:

- Allow SFSP and SSO meals to be served in all areas and at no cost;
- Permit meals to be served outside of the typically required group settings and meal times;
- Waive meal pattern requirements, as necessary; and
- Allow parents and guardians to pick-up meals for their children.

This week marked National School Lunch Week, when USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and its partners celebrate the hard work and dedication of all our nation’s school nutrition professionals. This year, more than ever, their efforts have been vital to ensuring children get the nutrition they need. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, school nutrition professionals and FNS have partnered to feed kids – no matter what the situation looks like on the ground. For more information, visit [FNS’ COVID Response: Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and follow us on Twitter at [@USDANutrition](#).

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) works to reduce food insecurity and promote nutritious diets among the American people. The agency administers [15 nutrition assistance programs](#) that leverage American’s agricultural abundance to ensure children and low-income individuals and families have nutritious food to eat. FNS also co-develops the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), which provide science-based nutrition recommendations and serve as the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy.

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