

Oregon Department of Education

Child Nutrition Program Best Practices: Serving Multiple Days' Worth of Meals

As part of the flexibilities provided by USDA, during the closures due to COVID-19, sponsors* are allowed to provide multiple days' worth of meals to participants, while still offering only the allowed number of meals per program per day. (COVID-19 Child Nutrition Response #1 & #2)



Considerations

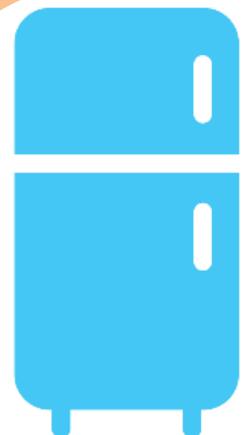
Before providing several days' worth of meals at one time, it is important to take the following into account:

- Capacity of kitchen space to prepare greater of number of meals at one time
- Staffing availability for meal preparation and distribution
- The population served and their ability to store/reheat meals
- Available food product and stock/capacity of distributor
- Available packaging (food boxes, bags, wrap, foil, etc.)
- Vehicle capacity if offering meals through bus routes or drop off
- A plan to ensure duplicative meals are not served – that children receive only one meal, per meal type, per day

Preparation

It is a good idea to take the following steps to prepare for service of multiple days' worth of meals:

- Write out a planned 1-2 week menu, using current food stores as much as possible
 - Plan a combination of shelf stable items and items needing refrigeration
- Match items planned with a service container (plastic cup w/lid, box, bag, etc.)
- Determine how meals will be packed for safe transport (if necessary)
- Create instructions for reheating and safe storage of meals





Communication

Letting families know that the option to pick up or receive multiple days' worth of meals is available will help the sponsor in planning the number of meals to make, the number of boxes to prepare, and the goods and labor required. It will also help families plan so they have enough room for refrigerated storage.

Here are some thoughts on communication:

- Communicate to families your intention to provide multiple days' worth of meals in advance – reach out through email, newsletters, website or social media. Provide translations to languages spoken in your area
- Ask families to sign up to pick up meals – allowing them to sign up give them an opportunity to tell you how many children will need meals and allows you to better plan
 - Include information about pick up location and times, rules of pick up, information about parent/guardian pick up, etc.

Evaluation

As with any program, continuous evaluation to improve processes is important when providing multiple days' worth of meals to families. Sponsors may determine that systems put in place during the initial phases of a process need adjustment as time goes on. Consider these options for evaluating your system:

- Provide families an opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback – maybe a general email address monitoring once a day
- Survey staff to determine areas of the process they feel are working well and opportunities for improvements
- Offer multiple opportunities and multiple methods of feedback from each of your stakeholders and let them know that you value their thoughts
- When making adjustments to the process, make sure to clearly communicate those changes to families and the community – let them know what the changes are and even the reason for the change