



Using USDA Food During a Human Pandemic Outbreak Options for Schools and Communities

Inventories of USDA Food stored at schools may be an option to meet feeding needs in the event of a serious human pandemic outbreak in your community. Before using USDA Food for other purposes you should check with appropriate State officials to ensure that your efforts are coordinated, and to confirm that you can be reimbursed for the USDA Food you use.

Schools and childcare centers in your community may close to minimize exposure to a human pandemic. When this happens, those in need may be able to obtain meals through local food banks, food pantries, or emergency kitchens. Disaster feeding organizations may set up emergency kitchens at schools, churches, and other sites. Because of the need for “social distancing,” the meals prepared at these sites may be delivered to those in need, or individuals may be asked to pick the meals up for consumption at home instead of eating them in a congregate setting. Communities that choose to prepare meals for delivery or pick-up should check with local health authorities to make sure their feeding efforts comply with appropriate requirements.

Using School Inventories of USDA Food

In certain circumstances, disaster feeding organizations may be able to use local inventories of USDA Food intended for the National School Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program to meet emergency feeding needs resulting from a serious outbreak. When a Presidential disaster or emergency is declared, money is available to provide reimbursement or replacement for USDA Food used. Absent a Presidential declaration, USDA or the State has the authority to declare a situation of distress. In such circumstances, reimbursement or replacement of USDA Food used for emergency feeding can be made to the extent that disaster funds are available. Before using USDA Food for emergency feeding, you should check with your State Distributing Agency or State Education Agency to make sure your efforts are coordinated, and to confirm that you can be reimbursed for the USDA Food you use.



The school may also be eligible to receive reimbursement from the State for the cost of non-USDA Food used during Presidentially declared disasters or emergencies if the State has received reimbursement for such costs from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It is important to check with your State authorities before using school food inventories to make sure you understand what the reimbursement rules are, and to determine what recordkeeping and other requirements must be followed.

Schools and community organizations may provide reimbursable meals to low-income children during school closures through the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option in the National School Lunch Program. While these Programs typically require meals to be eaten on site, the congregate meal requirement can be waived by FNS during Presidentially declared disasters allowing off-site consumption. More information about the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option pandemic response is available in the Child Nutrition Programs disaster guidance at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/child-nutrition-programs-during-disaster>. USDA Food may be used in the preparation of these meals. For more information, contact your State Distributing Agency or State educational agency or visit the FNS Human Pandemic website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic>.

Who to Contact

For more information on using USDA Food for emergency feeding in your State, you may contact your State Distributing Agency and State Child Nutrition Director by going to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f%5B0%5D=program%3A35>.

You may also contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office that serves your State by going to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.