COVID-19 NUTRITION WAIVERS

SNAP through the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration:

COVID Options

- Pandemic EBT – providing nutrition support benefits to SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic related school closures. The child’s school or district will be (or has been) closed for at least five consecutive days during a public health emergency designation.

- Emergency allotments to address temporary food needs to households by bringing all households up to the maximum benefit due to pandemic related economic conditions while an emergency exists.
  - STATUS: FSSA-DFR issuing emergency allotments for the months of April, May, and June 2020.

Other Approved SNAP Waivers

- Waiver to extend all certification periods by 12 months for all recertifications that are due during the national state of emergency. Extended to June 30

- Waiver to suspend all reporting requirements during the certification period including submission of the interim report during the national state of emergency. Extended to June 30

- Waiver to suspend the requirement that states must offer clients the option to have their SNAP certification and recertification interviews in-person.
  - STATUS: approved as part of a blanket waiver approval from USDA through May 31. Extended to June 30
  - FEDERAL BLANKET WAIVER also includes: waiver of the interview on applications if identity and mandatory verifications are obtained; waiver of the interview on expedited applications if identity is verified and the state has made an attempt to contact the applicant via phone. DFR opted-in to all waivers offered.

- Waiver on closures and benefit reduction adverse actions for 90 days or until the month following the month the state of emergency ends.
  - STATUS: This waiver was denied on April 10, 2020, by USDA.

- Waiver of student eligibility requirements for those who were meeting the student requirements through employment and lost the employment due to COVID-19.
  - STATUS: Blanket denial from USDA on April 10, 2020, to all states who have applied.
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- Waiver to allow DFR to suppress all data matches received through the Income and Eligibility Verification System while under the public health emergency. **Extended to June 30**

- Waiver to allow an additional 30 days in the conducting of a fair hearing, reaching a decision and notification of the decision. **Extended to June 30**

- Waiver to allow states (at state option) to suspend any claims activity and claims collections through May 2020. **Extended to June 30**

- Waiver to exclude Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) income for SNAP applicants and recipients.

- SNAP On-Line Purchasing: Option that allows authorized food stores (currently Amazon and Wal-Mart) to accept SNAP benefits via on-line transactions.

SNAP Policy:

Pending further direction, Indiana is exempting able-bodied adults without dependents so that SNAP benefits will continue. Please note that employment and training staff with the IMPACT program will be reaching out to clients via phone in order to offer services. Participation in the call and offer of services is strictly voluntary with no risk to SNAP benefits.

On April 11, 2020, USDA-FNS release a Q & A document to address provisions related to COVID-19. In this document, FNS notes that stimulus payments authorized under Section 2201(a) of the CARES Act are excluded as income. Pandemic unemployment assistance payments, pandemic unemployment compensation and pandemic emergency unemployment compensation authorized under the CARES Act are considered as unearned income for SNAP eligibility.
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Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) through the Indiana State Department of Health:

All WIC waivers extended through June 30, 2020

Clinic Related Waivers

WIC local agencies have been given the flexibility to complete WIC appointments over the telephone. These appointments include enrollment, recertification, nutrition education/issuing benefits, breastfeeding support and referrals to other services. Waivers approved include:

- Physical Presence requirement waived (includes labwork)
- Remote Benefit Issuance requirement waived
- Separation of Duties requirement waived
- Local Agency Monitoring

Vendor Requirements

- Minimum variety and quantity of supplemental foods requirements for retailers accepting WIC waived

Food Package Substitution Waiver

Food-related waivers allow the temporary expansion of select WIC food items to assist clients with their purchases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Whole Grain/Whole Wheat Benefits: All sizes of approved whole wheat or whole grain products (up to 24 oz., includes bread and buns)
- Egg Benefits: All sizes of approved white, brown, cage-free, and organic eggs (one dozen medium to jumbo)
- Cereal Benefits: All sizes of approved cereals (up to 36 oz.)
- Milk Benefits:
  - Clients issued 1%/skim milk will have 2% milk available to purchase.
  - Clients issued 2% milk will have 1% and skim milk available to purchase.
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Child Nutrition through the Indiana Department of Education:

All Child Nutrition waivers approved through June 30, 2020 unless specified

Indiana received approval from USDA to waive the congregate feeding requirement in the National School Lunch Program’s Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during unanticipated school closures due to the novel coronavirus.

Nationwide Waivers:

- Non-congregate Feeding allows states to waive the congregate feeding requirements for programs, enabling all child nutrition programs to serve meals in a non-congregate setting and at school sites during school closures related to the coronavirus. Extended nationwide to August 31, 2020.

- Afterschool Activity waiver removes the requirement that an educational or enrichment program be required in afterschool snacks through NSLP and at-risk afterschool meals and snacks through CACFP. In effect through June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

State Selected Options:

- Nationwide Meal Pattern Waiver waives the requirement to serve meals that meet meal pattern requirements to ensure flexibility; sponsors must receive state approval and show a disruption in food availability. Extended nationwide to August 31, 2020.

- Nationwide Meal Time Waiver waives the requirements to serve meals that meet meal pattern requirements to ensure flexibility. While the waiver is available to all states, program sponsors must submit requests to their state agency for approval that demonstrate disruptions to the availability of food products. Extended nationwide to August 31, 2020.

- Nationwide Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup Waiver allows parents and guardians to pick up and take-home meals for children without the child present. State agencies are required to create a plan that ensures accountability and program integrity. Extended nationwide to August 31, 2020.

- Nationwide Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Data Waiver extends the April 1 deadline to calculate the Identified Student Percentage to anytime between April 1 and June 30; the April 15 notification deadline from April 15 to June 15; the May 1 deadline for States to notify school districts that they are eligible or near-eligible to June 15; and the June 30 deadline for school districts to elect community

Updates marked in blue.
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eligibility to August 31. This will, importantly, allow the state to account for changes in SNAP caseloads.

- Nationwide Waivers of Child Nutrition Monitoring waives the requirements for certain onsite monitoring requirements to maintain program integrity and support social distancing while providing meals. **In effect through June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.**

- 60 Day Reporting Requirement Waiver extended the deadline for all state agencies, school food authorities and organizations by 60 days for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). **In effect through June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.**

State Waivers:

- Area Eligibility Waiver from the area eligibility requirements for SFSP and SSO meal sites, allowing all children to be served without further administrative burden in areas impacted by school closures due to COVID-19. Without this waiver, eligibility is limited for sites not operating in areas where at least 50 percent of participants are eligible for free or reduced-price meals – requiring added confirmation of participant eligibility, which is uniquely challenging while maintaining social distancing. **National waiver issued through August 31, 2020.**

- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Parent Pickup waive the requirement that Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) foods may only be provided to students during non-congregate meal services. **In effect through June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.**
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Commodity Programs through the Indiana State Department of Health:

Disaster Household Distribution (DHD)
DHD allows food banks to use USDA foods to provide food from their federal commodities (most often TEFAP) inventory to households impacted by a disaster without income eligibility restrictions AND the USDA foods that are distributed for disaster feeding can be replaced by FNS with proper documentation. This program permits food to be distributed to newly unemployed, residents lacking food access, seniors, immunocompromised, and others impacted by COVID-19.

- Distribution is occurring through mobile pantries operated by all 11 TEFAP food banks covering every county in Indiana.
- Product distributed is pre-packed, weighing approximately 25 pounds, with shelf-stable food. Perishable items can be distributed where appropriate storage is available.
- Initial approval extended through June 13, 2020.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
Indiana has provided guidance regarding modifications in food distribution strategies to food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens to safeguard their workforce and continue essential delivery of foods. No waivers have been necessary. These strategies include:

- Pre-packaging of foods
- Drive-thru options for pickup
- Proper sanitation practices such as handwashing and sterilization of high contact exchange points
- Social distancing
- Communication to participants regarding changes in distribution methods
- Amended signature requirements

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
CSFP provides boxes to eligible seniors once a month. No waivers were necessary. ISDH provided guidance to local agencies contracted for the program regarding modifications in distribution strategies, including:

- Allowing an increase in distribution of foods
- Proper sanitation practices such as handwashing and sterilization of high contact exchange points
- Social distancing
- Communication to participants regarding changes in distribution methods