

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2020

Pennsylvania Receives Federal Waiver to Allow Schools to Continue School Meal Programs During COVID-19 Closures

Harrisburg, PA - The Pennsylvania Department of Education announced today that it received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow eligible schools to serve meals to low income students in a non-congregate setting, such as a drive-through or grab and go, during a COVID-19 outbreak-related closure.

The waiver is intended to allow schools closed due to COVID-19 to continue to provide students with nutritious food during the closure. To be eligible, meal sites must be in the attendance area of a closed building where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free/reduced meals or a census area where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced meals. Meals may be served at qualifying school or non-school sites. Limited staff may continue to provide essential services related to food preparation and distribution.

If eligible students live in a school attendance area that does not provide free and reduced meals, parents should check with their school district to see what food options are currently available to students, such as backpack programs, or students may receive free meals from a site that offers them.

USDA had announced the availability of the waiver on March 6. Pennsylvania received waiver approval on March 11.