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California Department of Education News Release

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California Department of Education Receives Special Federal Approval That Enables Districts to Feed Students During Coronavirus-Related Closure

SACRAMENTO—The California Department of Education (CDE) has received a special waiver called CA COVID19 from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will enable a school district that had previously been approved to operate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) to provide meals to students during a coronavirus-related closure.

SFSP and SSO are both federally funded and state-administered programs that serve free meals to children eighteen and younger when school is not in session and in communities where 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free and reduced-priced meals.

“When a school or district closes, our first concern is the safety and care of our students,” said Thurmond. “Our Nutrition Services Division was proactive in reaching out to the USDA to request the necessary approval in anticipation of local educational agencies potentially having to close due to the coronavirus. That advanced planning, combined with the rapid response from the USDA, will allow districts to continue to provide their most vulnerable students with nutritious meals in the event of a closure.”

Under the waiver, meals can be served at school and non-school sites. Students will not be required to remain on-site to consume the meal and can take the meal and go, which is not the usual federal guideline. This exception was made to enable students to continue to be fed without increasing the risk of spreading germs.

The CDE will administer the waiver and approve waiver requests from local districts so that meals can be claimed for reimbursement. The waiver is valid until June 30, 2020.

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