

Meal Counting & Claiming

Communications, Considerations and Solutions for Back to School Planning

Communications

What to communicate to families:

- How meals will be served (grab-n-go, lunch in the classroom, cafeteria service, etc.).
- How students not eligible for free or reduced-price school meals will pay for meals? For example, accepting cash payment or online payments only.
- Make sure contact information is widely available on the district and/or school website and on district communication methods in order to answer questions
- The online or in person office hours for questions.
- Ways to collect funds for school meals (check, cash, or online payments).
- Encourage families to apply for free and reduced-price meals.

What to communicate to kitchen and school staff:

- Provide training for teachers overseeing meals in the classroom:
 - How meals will be tracked.
 - How you will ensure compliance (e.g. reimbursable meals, accurate tracking).
- Provide training for kitchen staff overseeing POS or meal tracking:
 - How meals will be tracked for in-person, grab-n-go's, parent pick-up, or multiple meals.
 - What documentation will be maintained for meal counting and claiming.



Resources:

- [School Nutrition Back to School webpage](#)
- [No Kid Hungry – Back to School Meal Service Toolkit](#)
- [No Kid Hungry – Meal Service Options for School Year 2020-2021](#)

Considerations

Planning Considerations:

- Ensure the meal service model planned has an associated counting and claiming plan:
 - How will student information be collected?
 - Pre-order model to ensure meals are going to enrolled students.
 - Meal delivery options.
 - Grab-n-go models: track meals using a roster.
 - How will meals served be entered into the POS if students are not going through the line:
 - Entered daily or weekly.
 - Track use a roster or an electronic POS.
 - How will student accounts be reconciled for paying students.

Claiming Considerations:

- All meals served must be counted and claimed under NSLP/SBP regulations no matter which learning model a school/district chooses to operate. All sponsors must:
 - Count and claim students by eligibility, and to the extent possible, claim meals at the site in which the student is enrolled.
 - Accurately claiming meals at the school site in which students are enrolled vs. where they may receive the meal is important as claim data affects:
 - Provision program eligibility criteria.
 - Breakfast after the bell participation.
 - Severe need reimbursement rate qualification.
 - Operation targets – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as Meals per Labor Hour (MPLH), Meal Equivalents (MEQ), Average Daily Participation (ADP).
 - Charge students for meals unless the student is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals; *Not applicable for sponsors operating a provisional program or offering all meals at no cost.*
 - Meals pre-ordered and not picked up for students eligible for paid meals cannot be claimed. It is the sponsor's discretion whether the meal is charged to the student.
 - When a sponsor provides meals for future days the intent is the student will be learning/in attendance remotely. It is allowable to claim these meals once they're provided at the point of service.
 - Claim meals for reimbursement within the [Colorado Nutrition Portal](#).

Solutions

- When multiple meals are provided consider:
 - Daily, enter meals served on each day they are intended to be consumed.
 - Daily, track the meals served and the intended day of consumption and enter these totals at the end of the serving week.
 - Work with vendor on solutions to track multiple meals provided and how to claim them on the correct intended serving day.
- For grab-n-go meals consider:
 - Purchasing wireless tracking mechanisms such as a tablet, i-pads or using a manual roster.
 - Purchasing updates student IDs with a scannable barcode to track meals served by student.
- For meals in the classroom consider:
 - Using standardized class rosters that can be provided daily and easily track students and meals.
 - Creating procedures for roster collection and entering meals served into the POS.