

Unanticipated School Building Closures

To support continued access to nutritious meals, non-congregate feeding opportunities are available for school food authorities when school buildings close unexpectedly due to natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders related to building safety or other issues, or for similar unanticipated causes.

Providing meals during unanticipated school building closures is optional. If considering this option, school leadership must engage in advanced planning and carefully consider a variety of factors.

This guidance provides information on feeding options, key considerations, and instructions on how to apply for a waiver.

Program Feeding Options

Understanding feeding options begins with identifying which child nutrition program can be used. The appropriate program depends on whether the school is operating under Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) or is fully closed (no instruction), as each scenario requires a different child nutrition program to be implemented if meals are to be provided.

Type of Building Closure	Required Child Nutrition Program	Eligible Feeding Population	Rate
NTI	National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	Enrolled Students	NSLP/SBP Rates
Closure/No Instruction	Summer Food Service Program/ Seamless Summer Option	All children aged 18 and younger (including weekends)	SFSP Rate or SSO (NSLP/SBP Rate)

If interested, the child nutrition director must complete a request form each building closure period.

Request Forms

- [NTI: Non-Congregate Feeding Request](#)
- [School Closure \(No Instruction\): Non-Congregate Feeding Request](#)

Requirements for Application

Application requirements vary by child nutrition program. Each child nutrition director must submit the following with the request:

For NSLP:

- Date(s) of use
- Estimated number of meals to be served (breakfast and lunch)
- Estimated meal service times (breakfast and lunch)

If serving non-congregate meals, the following additional information is required:

- Meal counting and claiming procedures for meal pick-up
 - Procedures must include parent/guardian pick-up protocols (if allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals)
 - Procedures must also include measures to prevent duplication of meals

For SSO or SFSP:

- Date(s) of use

In addition to completion of the request form, sponsors must also complete the SFSP or SSO CNIPS application. If serving non-congregate meals, the following additional information is required to be uploaded with the application packet:

- Meal counting and claiming procedures for meal pick-up
 - Procedures must include parent/guardian pick-up protocols (if allowing parents/guardians to pick up meals)
 - Procedures must also include measures to prevent duplication of meals

Post-Meal Service Requirements

SCN is required to report usage to USDA. Following meal service operations for NSLP only, SCN staff will send a follow-up inquiry requesting the program operator to provide:

- The exact days meals were served
- The exact number of meals served per day, by meal service

Meal service days and counts for SSO and SFSP operations will be collected via claim data.

Considerations

Guidance on each program and considerations for various situations can be found in [SCN's Guidance on Unanticipated School Building Closures](#).

Other Considerations

- Is feeding required during building closures?
No. Non-congregate feeding is always optional. Several factors must be considered when deciding whether to provide meals.
- Is there a community need?
If food insecurity is a concern and students are at risk of going without nutrition—even for a single day—then providing meals becomes a higher priority.
- Are roads and travel safe?
Safety and travel conditions must be considered. Food service staff, parents/guardians, and/or students should not be put at risk when traveling to a feeding site.
- Is inventory available?
Adequate food and supplies must be available to produce enough reimbursable meals. Food safety and sanitation requirements must also be met to ensure all meals comply with health and safety standards.
- Can I provide multiple meals for multiple days?
Yes, this is allowable. However, the duration of the school building closure must be known in advance to provide multiple meals. Meal service cannot be duplicated.

Example: If it is certain that buildings will be closed on Monday and Tuesday but uncertain about Wednesday, it is recommended to send meals home for just Monday and Tuesday. An updated request can be submitted for Wednesday if needed.
- What if a decision to utilize NTI changes to a closure/no instruction day at the last minute after a feeding request has been submitted?
Since NTI and closure/no instruction days require different child nutrition programs, food service directors must contact SCN staff immediately to ensure the appropriate program application process is completed. SCN recognizes this as a potential barrier and will assist as much as possible to ensure all application requirements are met.
- Can meals be retroactively claimed?



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E D U C A T I O N

No. All program operations must receive prior approval from SCN. Meals provided without approval are not eligible for reimbursement. Existing food service program funds cannot be used to cover the cost of these meals, as that would be considered an unallowable cost.