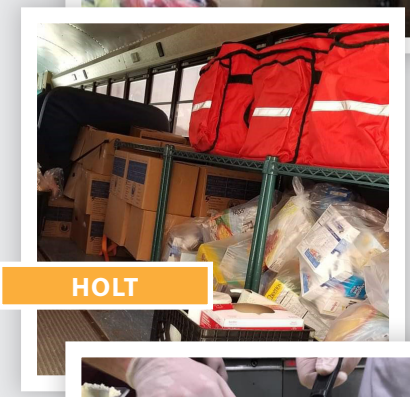
FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Last Updated 4-23-20



FOOD DISTRIBUTION DURING THE SUSPENSION OF FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION

Food service can and should continue by school districts and community sponsors under the Unanticipated School Closure (USC) provision of the Summer Food Service Program. Over 2,000 locations across Michigan are providing free meals to children ages 0-18 (0-26 if special education). Roughly a third of these sites are mobile sites, with meals loaded on buses by food service staff, educators, coaches, and parent volunteers for direct delivery to homes. Other sites feature curbside pickup, with safe methods for pick-up of multiple days of meals. While the method of food distribution is local choice based on capacity for storage, assembly, and distribution, providing meals in this manner is expected until the end of the scheduled school year. Find the nearest participating site using the Meet Up and Eat Up site locator tool found online at www.michigan.gov/meetupeatup.

PANDEMIC ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (P-EBT)

The Families First Coronavirus Act authorized the creation of a new food benefit program, P-EBT, for all children who were receiving free or reduced-price meals prior to the pandemic. Beginning in late April, students who were receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits on a Bridge card will see benefits added to their card. For families with children who were not receiving SNAP benefits, a Bridge card will arrive in the mail with instructions for use. This includes every child in a building that participated in the Community Eligibility Provision. P-EBT benefits are not designed to replace the Unanticipated School Closure meals, as the benefits may not reach all families facing unemployment, especially as they become newly eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS

Local community agencies and Michigan's food bank network have teamed up to fight hunger with flexible delivery and pick-up methods allowed under the state's plan for administering The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Some agencies have reported up to four times their normal monthly distributions. Emergency food programs are not expected to replace the provision of meals under the Unanticipated School Closure program.

MEALS-TO-YOU FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Meals-To-You (MTY) Demonstration Project provides 20 shelf-stable meals (10 breakfasts and 10 lunches/suppers) via the mail to children in rural settings. This is a limited, invitation-only program for 26 school districts in northern lower Michigan and Michigan's upper peninsula.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

At the end of the scheduled school year, schools and community sponsors can serve free meals to all children ages 0-18 in areas where over 50% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Schools in areas that may not be over 50% should collect free and reduced-price meal applications in April and May 2020 and contact MDE for more guidance.

As always, the WIC and SNAP programs safeguard against hunger. Michigan's 2-1-1 service continues to connect families with these services.

For more information, please contact the School Nutrition Programs unit at MDE-SchoolNutrition@michigan.gov