



March 16, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Urgent Concerns – COVID-19 Impact on California’s Child and Adult Care Food Program

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) Roundtable, I am writing to express our grave and urgent concerns about California’s Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CCFP Roundtable works with CACFP sponsors across California who collectively serve more than 664,000 children in child care centers, licensed family child care sites, and afterschool programs, and about 24,000 adults at adult day care sites. The CACFP reimburses these sites for the meals and snacks they serve, of which 97% of the nearly 222 million meals served each year are going to individuals living in low-income households.

In light of the current state of emergency, the CACFP is seriously struggling to meet the needs of the children and adults they serve who rely on these meals and snacks every day. **We are seeking your leadership and action, just as you have done with schools, so that CACFP sites can continue to meet the nutritional needs of the individuals they serve.**

The California Department of Education (CDE) has expressed their intent to obtain waivers from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow CACFP sites to continue to operate with certain flexibilities during this time of crisis. According to federal regulations for CACFP ([7 CFR § 226.20 \(h\)](#)):

FNS may approve variations in the food components of the meals on an experimental or continuing basis in any institution or facility where there is evidence that such variations are nutritionally sound and are necessary to meet ethnic, religious, economic, or physical needs.

CCFP Roundtable

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There is a clear case for “economic need,” but USDA has not yet approved any waivers for CACFP, nor has CDE issued additional guidance for CACFP sponsors and participants.

Congress is working on the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), which would “allow all child and adult care centers to operate as non-congregate (i.e. they can serve outside the school or in individual settings) and waive all meal pattern requirements if there is a disruption to the food supply as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.” We hear this bill is expected to get passed in the next day or two, *maybe*.

But frankly, we can’t wait. Things are getting more urgent by the hour and panic has spread across the CACFP community. We are seeing several scenarios play out throughout the state:

- **CACFP sites are struggling to meet meal component requirements, because staples like bread, milk, and canned goods are scarce.** Without guidance or flexibility from the government, sites, who would like to continue to offer meals and snacks, are unable to because they don’t know if there will be a reimbursement to cover the costs.
- **Child care and afterschool sites are closing in order to follow social distancing orders and kids are left without normal access to meals.** This is particularly challenging for our state’s youngest children (0-4 years old) who may not have access to the take-home school meals that are being made available to school-age children.
- **Children who rely on afterschool programs for supper are going without.** Schools are not able to offer supper (or a third meal) because CACFP is not included in the current non-congregate strategy to get food to kids. Furthermore, parents are being denied meals if the child is not present for meal pick up.
- **As K-12 public schools close and parents still have to go to work, the child care sites that have remained open are seeing an influx of children at their facilities.** These sites are struggling to increase production and afford the overnight surge in need for meal and snacks.
- **Just like with schools, many CACFP sites want to continue to offer much-needed meals and snacks during this time of crisis without the congregate requirement.**
- **Sponsors of the CACFP are furloughing and laying off staff because without federal reimbursement their programs are not sustainable.** These largely nonprofit organizations who oversee CACFP sites that directly serve children and adults are at risk of closing because without the guarantee of federal reimbursement they are unable to pay salaries and rent. Without sponsors, hundreds of thousands of kids and adults lose access to meals and snacks.



In light of this increasingly dire situation we are seeking your leadership and action that immediately results in CACFP sites being allowed to continue to operate and serve meals and snacks during this time of national and state emergency:

- (1) Without the congregate requirement;
- (2) With a guarantee of reimbursement, regardless of meeting meal component requirements; and
- (3) With the flexibility for CACFP sponsors to work remotely (i.e. suspending on-site visitations requirements) until it is deemed safe to have social interaction.

We appreciate your attention and forthcoming action to mitigate the harm that is occurring within the CACFP community. We know that ensuring individuals do not experience hunger and increased food insecurity during these trying times is of utmost importance to you and your administration. The Roundtable is immediately available to answer any questions you may have; please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



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Cc'd:

California Department of Education

Tony Thurmond, Superintendent – State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Director of Education
Sarah Neville-Morgan, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction
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California Department of Social Services

Kim Johnson, Director
Pamela Dickfoss, Deputy Director Community Care Licensing Division

California Health and Human Services Agency

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary
Kris Perry, Deputy Secretary and Senior Advisor to the Governor

Paula James, Chair CCFP Roundtable



