

Instruction for Area Eligibility Waiver
April 3, 2020

The area eligibility waiver has been approved by USDA. This approval has specific language to carry out the intent of the waiver.

Purpose of the Waiver:

The waiver is to allow dismissed schools with less than 50% free or reduced price enrollment the ability to be area eligible or act as though they have a free and reduced level of 50% or higher even though the school does not. **This ability is only for the period of the public health emergency.** The approval does not extend into the summer months or at any other time once the emergency is over. If, after the emergency is over, any school would like to offer either Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Extended School Year Food Service (ESY) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in the summer when school is not in session, please contact either Marty Davis (marty.davis@doe.nh.gov) for SSO/ESY or Patty Carignan (patricia.carignan@doe.nh.gov) for SFSP or Cheri White for any of them (cheri.white@doe.nh.gov).

Requirements of the Waiver:

The waiver requires a State-wide plan be created by the State agency for these newly eligible meal sites. The plan must contain information about targeting benefits to children in need who were previously eligible (in other words, were already on the free and reduced list) and/or to children who are newly eligible for benefits due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 (those who may complete a free and reduced application due to job loss at this time).

State Plan to Meet the Intent of the Waiver:

According to the waiver, SAUs that were not previously area eligible must demonstrate the increase in need for meals in their community. This increased need must be documented. We know there are a great many people who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19. In the NH State plan, the school sites that are considered newly "area eligible due to COVID-19" must be sensitive to the need for providing meals to existing low-income children as well as, to newly eligible children due to the economic impact of COVID-19. The SAU office may consider which schools are deemed newly area eligible and document this information. Therefore, to document the increase in need, two actions must be done. 1. Make the free and reduced price application accessible to the school community households and 2. Demonstrate the need for area eligibility via a statement. Please note: this documentation does not need to be submitted to the NH DOE at this time. It will, however be requested at a later date. Once the need has been documented, the SAU may begin serving free meals to students at the sites that have a documented need. The claim for free meals can begin March 18, 2020, which is the day the Governor declared schools closed.

Actions to take for documentation:

1. Free and Reduced Price meal applications must be made accessible to the school community. Documentation of the date of when the school community was notified is needed.
2. Demonstrate there was a clear need in the community.

Feel free to use the below example for your SAUs documentation - changing it as needed:

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“On April 2, 2020 the school community was notified via a robo-call that a free and reduced price application was available on the SAU website if needed during this COVID-19 public health emergency. If the SAU received any, the application was determined through its normal procedures.

The SAU is experiencing a clear need in the school community due to job loss/layoffs. State-wide, the unemployment rate has skyrocketed by more than 3000%. Our school community, itself has experienced a very high rate of job loss and layoffs during this time. Therefore, the schools listed below are newly area eligible until the end of the public health emergency or the end of the school year, whichever comes first. The listed schools began serving free meals on March 18, 2020, the day school buildings were ordered closed by the Governor.” (Note: the date March 18, 2020 cannot be changed to an earlier date. If meal service began later than March 18th, please feel free to change the date.)

As was already stated, the above documentation is not required to be submitted to the State Agency at this time. We will reach out in the future for the documentation to be submitted on SAU letterhead. Once the SAU has chosen the previously non-area eligible schools where there is a clear need for area eligibility and has documented the need, the sites are area eligible and can claim free meals served from March 18, 2020. It is possible the SAU does not want to make any changes or declare area eligibility for a previously non - area eligible site, however this waiver provides the option to do so.

If there are further questions on this waiver, please contact cheri.white@doe.nh.gov .