



## DECAL Disaster Preparedness Guidance

### Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to remind CACFP/SFSP organizations of various flexibilities when preparing for or experiencing a disaster. Pursuant to DECAL policy memoranda, Disaster Response, June 9, 2014 and Program Flexibilities in the CACFP and SFSP During Disaster Situations, September 9, 2017, both DECAL and USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) have processes in place to assist organizations with continuing or restoring meal service for participating children and adults experiencing disasters. Further, this memorandum assists participating organizations in determining when assistance requires further approval from FNS. DECAL strongly encourages organizations to become familiar with this guidance so that it may be utilized as a tool when navigating through Program operations in preparation for or during a disaster. This memorandum has been revised to incorporate flavored milk requirements as advised in USDA Policy Memorandum CACFP 17-2016 and Question and [Answer Guidance on the Final Rule Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Effective July 1, 2022](#), which allows for flavored low-fat milk (1%) be served to participants ages six and older and adults.

### Cross Reference/see also

DECAL CACFP Policy No./02-18

### Program Requirements

The guidance provided below is outlined in the following numerical parts:

- I. **Definitions**
- II. **Program Policy: Homelessness, Emergency Shelters, and the Utilization of the CACFP and SFSP in Disaster Situations**
- III. **Destruction of Records/Loss of Function of Normal Accountability Systems**
- IV. **Flexibilities Requiring DECAL and/or FNS Approval: USDA's Waiver Process**

- V. **DECAL Disaster Action Steps**
- VI. **Disaster Menu Templates (CACFP and SFSP)**
- VII. **Food Safety Guidance During Disasters**
- VIII. **Additional Disaster Relief Resources**

**Note:** DECAL state-level flexibility will only be granted to those impacted organizations, sites, or individuals located in a state in which a "State of Emergency" has been declared. In determining whether a "State of Emergency" exists in Georgia, the definition of "State of Emergency" provided in Part I of this document shall be applied. Additionally, FNS waiver approval may only be granted when a Federal Major Disaster Declaration has been made. Therefore, please contact DECAL to inquire about various accommodations for disaster situations that do not rise to the level of a state of emergency or Federal declaration.

## I. Definitions

**"Appropriate facility"** may include a school or institution which, although is not providing actual shelter, is nevertheless providing meals to displaced families who are temporarily housed elsewhere, in locations that may not have the meals to provide meal services to these temporary residents.

**"Disaster"** includes hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods, and other natural and man-made events which cause power outages, extensive property damage, and displacement, making normal Program operations difficult.

**"Federal Major Disaster Declaration"** (MDD) refers to a formal statement made by the President of the United States that a major disaster exists. (Such a declaration is requested by the Governor of the affected state and is based on a finding that the disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments and that Federal assistance is necessary. Based on the request from the State's Governor, the President may declare that a major disaster or emergency exists.)

**"State of Emergency"** as defined by Georgia law, means a condition declared by the Governor when, in his or her judgment, the threat or actual occurrence of a disaster, emergency, or energy emergency in any part of the State is of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant extraordinary assistance by the State to supplement the efforts and available resources of the several localities and relief organizations in preventing or alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering threatened or caused thereby.

## II. Program Policy: Homelessness, Emergency Shelters, and the Utilization of the CACFP and SFSP in Disaster Situations

This part includes State-level flexibilities that are useful in disaster situations. Such flexibilities do not require a MDD or approval from FNS. DECAL flexibilities will be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

### Homelessness in Disaster Situations

- Children determined to be homeless are categorically (automatically) eligible for free meals in the CACFP. Children who have evacuated and adults determined to be homeless are

categorically eligible for free meals and snacks at a "free" rate in child and adult day care centers.

- In cases where a household from a designated disaster area moves in with another household (homeless liaison), the homeless liaison may determine the displaced individuals "homeless."
- CACFP/SFSP participants may claim meals served to children certified as eligible for meals at the free rate for (12) months after the eligibility determination is made.
- Organizations that require eligibility information can receive certification of the participant's homeless status from the agency that assisted with the evacuation or that is providing shelter. If the child is not residing in an emergency shelter, the institution should have an adult living with the child to complete an income eligibility form indicating that the child is homeless. No further information is required to certify the child's eligibility.
- For family day care homes (FDCHs), meals and snacks served to children determined to be homeless may be claimed at the Tier 1 rate.

### **Emergency Shelters in the CACFP**

- Emergency shelters providing temporary housing to displaced families are eligible to participate in the CACFP.
- In communities where a significant number of displaced persons are temporarily housed, DECAL may designate any "appropriate facility" as an emergency shelter and may waive the facility's CACFP application requirements in these situations. All children up to and including 18 years of age, may receive up to three free meals each day (breakfast, lunch, and supper).

### **Using the CACFP and SFSP in Disaster Situations**

- SFSP sponsors who have operated in either of the (2) prior years may be approved to open emergency feeding sites.
- During unanticipated school closures, **SFSP** organizations:
  - a. Are exempt from submitting new applications to participate if the sponsor participated in SFSP at any time during the current year or in either of the prior two calendar years;
  - b. Are exempt from the application submission deadline;
  - c. Receive meal reimbursement at the appropriate "free" rate; and
  - d. Must still apply area eligibility requirements.
- During unanticipated school closures, **CACFP** organizations:
  - a. Operating At-Risk afterschool centers normally offering a snack and supper after school may instead choose to offer either lunch and a snack, or breakfast and a snack.
  - b. Serving At-Risk meals and snacks are reimbursed through the CACFP at the "free" rate.
- Under circumstances where water is unsafe to drink, purchasing water exclusively for Program participant children may be considered a reasonable and allowable cost.

### III. Destruction of Records/Loss of Function of Normal Accountability Systems

- When there is loss of normal systems and data regarding recording, counting, claiming meals and monitoring, organizations must contact DECAL on how to proceed. In these situations, waiver requests must be submitted to FNS for approval.
- When DECAL required records are either partially or fully destroyed, organizations must notify DECAL of the circumstances that led to the loss; the dates of the losses and types; and the approximate age of the records that were destroyed.<sup>1</sup> To document this information, organizations must complete and submit to DECAL the Loss and Destruction Form that can be found on Nutrition Services' website and [here](#) for CACFP/[here](#) for SFSP.
- Organizations must also provide DECAL with an official written record of the disaster or official documentation of the loss. Acceptable documentation may include, but is not limited to, a valid insurance claim or police report.
- DECAL's Audits and Compliance Division will document the losses for future review purposes.
- For additional information on DECAL required recordkeeping practices, see DECAL Policies Nos. [CACFP/02-18](#) and [SFSP/03-5](#)

### IV. Flexibilities Requiring DECAL and/or FNS Approval

Some flexibilities may be granted at the State agency level. Others, however, may only be permitted when there has been a Federal Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) issued by FEMA. Federal law allows FNS to provide waivers that would otherwise be unallowable. The Chart provided in this Part, specifies whether the flexibility sought requires DECAL approval, FNS approval, and/or both.

Flexibility	Level of Approval
Changes in the time of meal service.	DECAL
Services without milk or an alternate form of milk (e.g., canned or dry).	DECAL
Special variations in menu planning and meal pattern (excluding services without milk or an alternate form of milk).	FNS
Claims submitted outside the (30/60) day requirement resulting from a disaster. Such claims are allowed and <b>not</b> subject to the one-time exception for late claim submission. <sup>2</sup>	FNS
Reconstruction of submitted claims due to loss of current records.	DECAL and/or FNS
Destruction of records/loss of function of normal accountability systems and data.	FNS
Relocation of eligible sites located in an area damaged by a disaster to an area that would normally be ineligible based on school or census data.	FNS

#### Making a Request

Organizations seeking state-level flexibilities or FNS waivers must contact DECAL immediately upon

recognition of the need. Once contacted, DECAL will confirm the required level of approval. DECAL will then record all requests received and respond appropriately. If FNS approval is required, DECAL will submit a completed waiver request on behalf of the organization to FNS. FNS will then review the request and may grant waivers based on the need to modify Federal requirements due to the disaster situation. Every disaster is different, and FNS' response to each disaster will vary depending on the severity and magnitude of the disaster. Disaster waivers are granted on a case-by-case basis. Once FNS has made a decision on whether to approve an organization's waiver(s), DECAL will then notify the organization of the decision.

Additionally, disaster waiver requests to FNS must:

- Identify the type of disaster and the location(s) to be included in the waiver;
- Identify the Program(s) the waiver(s) will apply to;
- Explain which Program operators are included under the waiver request;
- Identify the Program requirement(s) to be waived;
- List the date(s) the waiver(s) is required through;
- Include the estimated number of Program participants impacted; and
- Indicate which (if any) state-level flexibilities DECAL has previously approved.

## V. DECAL Disaster Action Steps

1. CACFP/SFSP organizations seeking a state-level flexibility or FNS waiver in response to a disaster must immediately contact DECAL's Administrative Assistant, **Leslie Truman** at (404) 657-1779 or via e-mail at [Leslie.Truman@decalfga.gov](mailto:Leslie.Truman@decalfga.gov)
2. Based on the criteria below, DECAL's Administrative Assistant will forward the organization's request to the appropriate DECAL staff member for review, eligibility determination, and response:
  - a. Homeless Children and Adults due to Evacuation
  - b. Emergency Shelter Conversion
  - c. Approval to Operate the SFSP as a Sponsor (existing SFSP sponsor/CACFP institution)
  - d. Approval to Operate the SFSP as a site (existing sponsor)
  - e. Adjustment to an existing CACFP At-Risk after school meal service
  - f. Adjustment to menu planning and meal pattern
  - g. Destruction of Records/Loss of Function of Normal Accountability Systems
  - h. Request to Waive a USDA Requirement per FNS approval
3. If it is determined that an FNS waiver is needed, DECAL will acquire additional information (as stated in Part IV) from the organization in order to complete an accurate and acceptable written waiver request. Once complete, DECAL will forward the organization's waiver request to FNS for approval.
4. DECAL will notify the organization of FNS's waiver determination (approval/denial) once

received.

## VI. Disaster Menu Templates (CACFP and SFSP)

The CACFP and SFSP disaster menu templates provided below, have been specially designed to aid organizations with disaster preparation as well as with adhering to the required meal pattern requirements following the disaster's aftermath. These menus are **examples** of what a creditable meal may look like during a disaster situation. Although not required, DECAL strongly encourages the frequent utilization of these templates as reference tools in helping to ensure Program compliance.

### CACFP Disaster Menu Template<sup>3</sup>

		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
<b>Breakfast</b>  (Serve Milk, Grains <sup>3</sup> , and Vegetables, or Fruit)	Milk <sup>4</sup>	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)
	Vegetable, Fruit or Both	Orange Juice	Frozen Berries	Dried Fruit
	Grain <sup>5</sup> / Meat <sup>6</sup>	Whole Grain Cereal	Whole Grain Pancake	Oatmeal
<b>Lunch / Supper</b>  (Serve all 5 components)	Milk <sup>7</sup>	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)	Unflavored Whole Milk (age 1), Unflavored Low/Fat Free Milk (2-5), Unflavored Low/Fat-Free Milk or Flavored Low/Fat-Free Milk (6+)
	Fruit <sup>8</sup>	Canned Green Beans	Canned Peaches	Fruit Cup
	Vegetable	Canned Tomato Sauce	Frozen Peas	Canned Corn
	Grain	Spaghetti	Brown Rice	Brown Rice
	Meat / Meat Alternate	Frozen Ground Turkey or Summer Sausage <sup>9</sup>	Canned or Frozen Chicken	Black Beans
<b>Snack</b>  (Serve 2 of the 5 components)	Milk <sup>10</sup>	---	---	---
	Fruit	---	Applesauce	---
	Vegetable	---	---	---
	Grain	Whole Grain Toast	Crackers	Whole Grain Tortilla
	Meat /	Peanut Butter	---	Peanut Butter

	Meat Alternate			
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### SFSP Disaster Menu Template<sup>11</sup>

		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
<b>Breakfast</b> (Serve all 3 components)	1 Milk <sup>12</sup>	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)
	1 Fruit / Vegetable <sup>13</sup>	Orange Juice	Frozen Berries	Dried Fruit
	1 Grain <sup>14</sup>	Whole Grain Cereal	Whole Grain Toast	Oatmeal
<b>Lunch / Supper</b> (Serve all 4 components)	1 Milk <sup>15</sup>	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)	Fluid Milk (Whole, Low-Fat, or Fat-Free)
	2 Fruit / Vegetable <sup>16</sup>	Canned Green Beans and Canned Tomato Sauce	Canned Peaches and Frozen Peas	Fruit Cup and Canned Corn
	1 Grain <sup>17</sup>	Spaghetti	Brown Rice	Brown Rice
	1 Meat / Meat Alternate	Frozen Ground Turkey or Summer Sausage <sup>18</sup>	Canned or Frozen Chicken	Black Beans
<b>Snack</b> (Serve 2 of the 4 components)	1 Milk <sup>19</sup>	---	---	---
	1 Fruit / Vegetable <sup>20</sup>	---	Applesauce	---
	Grain <sup>21</sup>	Whole Grain Toast	Crackers	Whole Grain Tortilla
	Meat / Meat Alternate	Peanut Butter	---	Peanut Butter

For specific questions concerning these templates, please contact DECAL's Nutrition Health Educator directly at (404) 463-8288.

## VII. Food Safety Guidance During Disasters

### Basic Disaster Food Safety

- During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. Ensuring that you have functioning appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer will help you determine if the food is safe to consume.<sup>22</sup>
- Generally, refrigerators will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if unopened. A full freezer will generally hold its temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Shelf-stable food, boxed or canned milk, water, and canned goods should be part of a planned emergency food supply. Remember to use these items and replace them from time to time.

- Make sure you have ready to use baby formula for infants and a hand-held can opener readily available.
- Never taste food to determine its safety! Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.

### **Food Safety After a Flood**

- Discard any foods that may have encountered flood waters. Food containers that are **not** waterproof include those with screwcaps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps.
- Inspect canned foods and discard any food in damaged cans. An indication of damage to cans may be seen by swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener.
- **Steps for salvaging all-metal cans and retort pouches:**
  - Remove the labels, if they are the removable kind, since they can harbor dirt and bacteria.
  - Thoroughly wash the cans or retort pouches with soap and water, using hot water if it is available.
  - Brush or wipe away any dirt or silt.
  - Rinse the cans or retort pouches with water that is safe for drinking, if available, since dirt or residual soap will reduce the effectiveness of chlorine sanitation.
  - Then, sanitize them by immersion in a freshly made solution consisting of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water for 15 minutes. (Note: DECAL recommends testing the level of chlorine to ensure safety. This can be done by using chlorine test strips.)
  - Air-dry cans or retort pouches for a minimum of 1 hour before opening or storing.
  - If the labels were removable, then re-label your cans or retort pouches, including the expiration date (if available), with a marker.
  - Food in reconditioned cans or retort pouches should be used as soon as possible, thereafter.
  - Any concentrated baby formula in reconditioned, all-metal containers must be diluted with clean, drinking water.

### **Food Safety After a Fire**

- Discard food that has been near a fire. Food exposed to fire can be damaged by the heat of the fire, smoke fumes, and chemicals used to fight the fire. Food in cans or jars may appear to be okay, but the heat from a fire can activate food spoilage bacteria. If the heat is extreme, the cans or jars themselves can split or rupture, rendering the food unsafe to consume.
- One of the most dangerous elements of a fire is sometimes not the fire itself, but toxic fumes released from burning materials. Discard any raw food or food in permeable packaging—cardboard, plastic wrap, screw-topped jars, bottles, etc.—stored outside of the refrigerator.
- Food stored in refrigerators or freezers can also become contaminated by fumes. Check the refrigerator seal to determine if it is airtight, as fumes may have gotten inside.



- Cookware exposed to fire-fighting chemicals can be decontaminated by washing in soap and hot water. Submerge after wash for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. (Note: DECAL recommends testing the level of chlorine to ensure safety. This can be done by using chlorine test strips.)

## VIII. Additional Disaster Relief Resources

- Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, Website: <http://www.gema.ga.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- FNS Disaster Resources Website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>
- DECAL Program Flexibilities in the CACFP and SFSP during Disaster Situations: <https://gadecal-nutrition.policystat.com/policy/10563711/latest/>
- DECAL Disaster Response: <http://www.decgal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/DisasterResponse060914.pdf>
- Meal Service during Unanticipated School and Day Care Closures, March 13, 2020, <https://gadecal-nutrition.policystat.com/policy/10563702/latest>
- SP 36-2017, CACFP 15-2017, SFSP 11-2017: Eligibility Manual for School Meals, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/eligibility-manual-school-meals>
- Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities, August 16, 2016, <http://www.decgal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/DisasterResponse060914.pdf>
- Providing Child Nutrition Program Benefits to Disaster Survivor Evacuees, March 15, 2018, <https://gadecal-nutrition.policystat.com/policy/10566912/latest>
- Updated Guidance for Homeless Children in the School Nutrition Programs, April 4, 2002, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/updated-guidance-homeless-children-school-nutrition-programs>
- National Center for Homeless Education: McKinney-Vento Toolkit, <https://nche.ed.gov/homeless-liaison-toolkit/>
- FEMA: Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, [https://rems.ed.gov/docs/School\\_Guide\\_508C.pdf](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/School_Guide_508C.pdf)

## Comments

For general questions concerning this memorandum please contact the Policy Administrator at (404) 6518193. For specific questions concerning the Disaster Menu Templates, please contact the Nutrition Health Educator at (404) 463-8288.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA strongly advises organizations to save their important data (e.g., enrollment data, meal counts, etc.) on a memory stick or jump drive. This could be particularly helpful in preventing data loss due to flooding or power outages.

<sup>2</sup> See DECAL Policy No. CACFP/00-2 and CACFP/01-15.

<sup>3</sup> This menu is subject to change based on each individual existing inventory and type of disaster. Exchanges may be necessary (e.g. canned pears instead of canned pineapple). If special variations in menu planning and meal patterns (excluding services without milk or an alternate form of milk) are necessary, contact FNS for approval.

<sup>4</sup> Services without milk or an alternate form of milk (e.g. canned or dry) requires notification to DECAL. A serving of milk is not required at supper meals for adults.

<sup>5</sup> Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

<sup>6</sup> Meat and meal alternates may be service in place of the entire grain component at breakfast and at a maximum of (3) times per week.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>8</sup> The fruit component at lunch may be substituted by an additional vegetable. However, the two choice of vegetables must be different (e.g., steamed broccoli may be served with roasted carrots but not roasted broccoli for a reimbursement meal).

<sup>9</sup> See also, DECAL Policy Memorandum, Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the CNPs for additional crediting guidance.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>11</sup> Menu items may change based on each individual existing inventory and type of disaster. Exchanges may be necessary (e.g., canned pears instead of canned pineapple). If special variations in menu planning and meal patterns (excluding services without milk or an alternate form of milk) are necessary, contact DECAL.

<sup>12</sup> Milk may be served as a beverage or on cereal or used in part for each purpose. Services without milk or an alternate form of milk (e.g., canned or dry) require notification to DECAL.

<sup>13</sup> Fruit or vegetable juice must be full strength. Full strength vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet no more than one-half of this requirement.

<sup>14</sup> Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 12.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 13.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 14.

<sup>18</sup> See also DECAL Policy Memorandum, Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the CNPs, for additional crediting guidance.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 12.

<sup>20</sup> Fruit or vegetable juice must be full strength. Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component.

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 14.

<sup>22</sup> DECAL recommends the use of a digital probe thermometer when taking the temperature of any raw or uncooked meats. As a reminder, sanitize the probe thermometer prior to temping any foods ready to be consumed.

