

# STARTING WELL 2020

*Guidebook to Serve School Meals During the COVID-19 Pandemic*



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## Introduction

This guide is designed to assist South Dakota schools in planning food service operation for the 2020-21 school year. Plans for operating the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs should be flexible and able to adapt to changing local conditions.

Flexibilities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), published as of the date of this document, are outlined, along with several options and suggestions to consider in your planning. Additional guidance and waiver flexibility may be granted by the USDA FNS. Notice of additional flexibilities will be communicated through our typical methods of emails, conference calls, or nutrition bulletins. Please stay in touch to make sure you have the most up to date information. Thank you for working hard to provide a consistent source of healthy meals to your students!



August 5, 2020

# Your Voice Matters!



**Get on the team!** Most schools have a team of school administration and staff members working on how your district will return to school. Find out who is on the team and how they are making sure the school meal program is not left out of the planning. Children need a stable source of nutritious meals and the stability and normalcy that your Nutrition Program provides is very important to the families you serve.

You know the complex meal program rules, so you may need to become that voice on the team!

**So where do you begin?** Start with simple, direct communication. Identify your allies and invite them into the conversation. This may be your business manager, supervisor, superintendent, CANS staff, school nurse, supportive teachers and support staff, school board, PTA, or other vocal parents.

Request to be a part of the planning team or express a desire to know the outcome to allow for proper planning. Keep the planning team updated with any program decisions or concerns along the way.

**Know your budget.** This is often handled by the business manager or other administrative staff, but invite yourself into the conversation. Be sure they realize the different costs involved with the various meal service options that will now need to be considered. Will you need grab-and-go or other disposable items that previously were not being purchased? How will the additional cost of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning/sanitizing chemicals impact the budget? Does your vendor have these items in stock? Have you considered how you can safely sell a la carte or seconds if your program relies on that source of revenue?

Will new equipment, such as meal service carts, need to be purchased? These are all important aspects of the food service operation that maybe only you are aware of.



**7,517,327**

Meals/snacks were served in South Dakota during unanticipated closures!

## ... Meal Service Models .....



- A meal service model describes how meals will be provided during the school year. Your meal service model must be properly documented in iCAN; be sure to describe your model accurately. See the 'Waivers' section for more details.

- Based on the potential risk factors associated in an emergency situation, there are unique meal service models that may fit your needs. Keep in mind that nearly all program requirements are in effect. There are very specific waivers from the USDA that allow for some program flexibilities. A current list of available waivers are listed on our website [doe.sd.gov/cans](http://doe.sd.gov/cans) under the tab "Announcements Regarding Coronavirus/COVID-19," in the "Approved Waivers" section. It is essential to communicate with our CANS office all waiver flexibilities that your school would like to use. These must be added to your school's iCAN application. As a reminder, proper recordkeeping must be maintained.

- Below are some examples of meal service models. Keep communication open between sites within the district as different meal service models and resources may be needed. Be aware of any additional time or staffing considerations that may be needed to carry out each model:

### 1 Traditional Meal Service

- If the potential threat of disease is minimal, some schools may opt to provide meal service as during a traditional school year.

### 2 Cafeteria Dining with Staggered Meal Service Times

- This type of meal service is similar to a traditional meal service model only with staggered/longer meal service times. Under this model fewer students will be congregated in the cafeteria at any given time.

- Sanitizing of tables should occur between each group of students.

### 3 Cafeteria Service & Classroom Dining

- This model has students coming to the cafeteria to go thru the line and choose their meal, then taking their tray to their classroom to eat.
- At the end of the meal service, students may then return to the cafeteria with their tray, disposing of any items and returning the tray to the dish cleaning area much like they would during normal meal service.
- Sanitizing of classroom desks/tables to occur before and after each meal service.



### 4 Classroom Delivery & Classroom Dining

- Meals are pre-portioned and delivered to each classroom.
- Meal items should be easy to transport, handle, and consume. (Think pizza, burritos, sandwiches instead of spaghetti, rice, peas.)
- Items needed: meal-service carts, proper food packaging, disposable bags or containers with lids, totes or crates for transporting meals, items to accommodate for increased trash disposal.
- Staff must be available for delivery of the meal and for pick-up after the meal. Will this be foodservice staff or a teacher/aide? Plan for prep time prior to both delivery and pick-up.



- Utilize a classroom meal-count method to verify students served: A paper roster could be used that teachers fill out and return to the kitchen at end of meal service.
- Consider how trash disposal/collection will be handled: Custodial staff? In the classroom? In the hallway?

## 5 Take Home/Delivery of Meals

- This type of model would be put into use if your school is not offering an in-school learning environment. Meals are offered at a Grab 'N Go curbside pick-up, and may utilize bus routes or home deliveries.
- Meals may be distributed just for the day of pick-up/delivery, or you may distribute multiple meals at one pick-up/delivery time. For example, handing out up to a week's worth of meals at one time. Meal counts and record-keeping must be properly maintained.
- Meals may be offered as individual meals, as meal kits, or in bulk to accommodate more than one student in a household.



- Items needed: proper food packaging using disposable bags or containers, coolers or heat units to maintain proper temperatures, totes or crates for transporting of meals, staff for distribution of the meals and possible delivery, mode of transportation for delivery of meals.

- Be sure to clarify if meal pick-up/delivery requires a student/family to sign-up or pre-order their meals for a particular date and time.

## 6 Combination Take Home/Delivery of Meals + On-Site Meal Service

- This option may be used if your school is alternating days of in-school and distance learning.
- Refer to previous models for more information.
- Remember to update the annual iCAN Application!



## ...Meal Service Considerations .....

**Water!** How will your school continue to offer free, potable water with every meal service? Your school may decide to shut down your water fountain to prevent cross-contamination. Free bottles or cups of water will need to be made available upon request.



**Site monitoring/program oversight must still occur.** Consider minimizing visiting multiple sites in one day or on consecutive days. You may want to use virtual/camera-assisted on-site monitoring.

**Special Diets must still be accommodated.**



**Things to think about with your meal service line:**

- It is recommended that you limit multiple people from handling food offerings, service utensils, PIN Pads, etc.
  - Consider limiting the use of self-service condiment stations.
  - Think about alternate ways for meal counting to occur so PINS can be entered safely.
- Cashiers/meal counters – is a barrier needed to separate them from students?

## ...Menus .....

• Just as your school likely has more than one learning model ready to be utilized, you also should plan for different meal service models that can be utilized with short notice.

**A few tips:**

• Start your school year simple! Go back to the basics, with tried and true menu items that you know the students like and that staff know how to easily prepare. You can always expand on this as the students and staff adjust to a new 'normal.'



- Choose foods that are widely available (in-stock), and are easy to eat in the classroom or that can be packed to-go.
- Avoid labor intensive and scratch cooking for a short time at beginning of school year until things settle down.

### **Offer Versus Serve - Can it be done?**

- Are there staff and resources available to continue utilizing Offer Versus Serve (OVS)?
- If students are having meals delivered to the classroom or have grab-and-go, can your school allow students to pre-order from a list of choices?
  - If pre-ordering, a time should be set for orders to be in by – such as daily by 8am.
  - Orders could be taken via Google Forms, Point Of Service (POS) system, paper orders, Email, etc.
  - A designated person must be available to collect these orders. Will this be foodservice staff, teachers/aides?
  - Will this method also be used for a la carte purchases?

### **Offer Versus Serve - Should it be done?**

- A common method for offering food choices is by the use of a food bar. There are risks involved with cross-contamination at food bars. Consider using individually wrapped foods to help prevent this. Keep in mind that these items may become short in supply as demand increases.
- Manufacturer/processor shortages - What is in short supply nationally? What is in inventory with USDA foods? You may want to plan for alternatives to items such as individually wrapped foods, which may be out of stock. Check into creating your own single-serve foods using packaging or a bag sealer/taper.
- Do you want to allow a la carte purchases or second entrée purchases?



### **Create and Share Menus**

- Reach out to other schools and see what items they are serving. At the StartWell Workshop we introduced you to Padlet! Padlet is an online bulletin board that can be used in a variety of ways. Users can post documents, videos and images from a mobile device or a desktop. We have created a Padlet for our sponsors to use to network with each other and share ideas. Click here: <https://padlet.com/mikaylahardy/zdcrqh6fo0yy4n>.
- NutriStudents K-12 has some great resources on their website, including “COVID-19 Emergency Menu for Child Nutrition Programs” <https://nutrifestudentsk-12.com/covid-19-mda/>.

# ...Waivers.....

## Non-Congregate Feeding Waiver

- Waives the requirement to serve meals in a congregate setting and to be consumed by participants on site.
  - Example: School may provide meals via delivery, pick up, etc.
- How to use:
  - a. Site Application in iCAN:
    - i. A2 & B2 (if applicable): Indicate additional meal service time in text box and note that it is pick-up/delivery.
    - ii. A5 & B5 (if applicable): Indicate number of Points of Service. Include both congregate and non-congregate service.
      1. To-Go Meals: One point of service for each location where the meal can be picked up. If offering both congregate and non-congregate meals, the meal pick-up is considered an additional POS, even if it is at the same location where congregate meals are also being served.
      2. Bus/Delivery Route to a drop-off location: One point of service for each drop-off location
      3. Home-Delivery: One point of service covers the whole route (do not list a separate POS for each home)
    - iii. A6 & B6 (if applicable): Answer 'Yes' to alternate Point of Service, and describe the service in the textbox.
  - b. Meal Count Method Form:
    - i. In #2, add specifics about the non-congregate meal service, explaining the method used for meal counts, where meals will be picked up, how meals will be delivered, etc.
  - c. Tracking Spreadsheet (emailed by CANS):
    - i. Select school district and answer each question for all sites. This must be completed for all sites, even those that are not utilizing waivers.



## ...Waivers Continued.....

### Meal Service Time Flexibility Waiver

- Waives the requirement for serving breakfast at the beginning of the day, and lunch between 10am and 2pm.
  - Applies to congregate and non-congregate meals.
- This waiver will also be needed if multiple meals are provided.
  - Example: Providing meals outside of required serving time; multiple meal pick-up (breakfast & lunch; Tuesday & Wednesday meals picked up on Monday).
- How to use:
  - a. Site Application in iCAN:
    - i. A2 & B2 (if applicable): Indicate additional meal service time in text box and note that it is traditional/pick-up/delivery.
    - ii. Remember, Non-Congregate services must be listed in A6/B6 and indicated on the Meal Count Method Form.
  - b. Tracking Spreadsheet (emailed by CANS):
    - i. Select school district and answer each question for all sites. This must be completed for all sites, even those that are not utilizing waivers.

### Meal Pattern Flexibility Waiver

- Waives the meal pattern requirement on a case-by-case basis.
  - Example: Cannot meet the component/quantity meal pattern requirements due to COVID-19 impact.
- How to use:
  - a. Complete the Meal Pattern Waiver Form, found on the CANS web page under 'Announcements Regarding Coronavirus/COVID-19' and submit to DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us.
  - b. Complete waiver for each instance where meal pattern requirements cannot be met.



## ...Waivers Continued.....

### Parent/Guardian Meal Pick Up Waiver

- Waives the requirement of a student being present when meals are provided.
- If using this waiver, Non-Congregate Feeding Waiver must also be used.
  - Example: Parent/guardian picks up meals from school to bring home.
- How to use:
  - a. Complete the Child Not Present Waiver Form, found on the CANS web page under 'Announcements Regarding Coronavirus/COVID-19' and submit to [DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us](mailto:DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us).
  - b. Provide explanation on the Meal Count Method Checklist Item and complete A2/B2, A5/B5, and A6/B6 as recognized in the Non-Congregate Waiver instructions.
  - c. Tracking Spreadsheet (emailed by CANS):
    - i. Select school district and answer each question for all sites. This must be completed for all sites, even those that are not utilizing waivers.



### Offer Versus Serve (OVS) Flexibility for High School Lunch Waiver

- Waives the OVS requirement for high school lunch.
  - Example: High schools choose to provide the full daily meal pattern requirements.
- How to use:
  - a. In the applicable high school Site Application, select "No" for A3, and leave A4 blank.
  - b. Tracking Spreadsheet (emailed by CANS):
    - i. Select school district and answer each question for all sites. This must be completed for all sites, even those that are not utilizing waivers.



## ... Protecting Students & Staff .....

- Before reopening, deep-clean and sanitize facilities, with a focus on high-contact areas.



- If the cafeteria will be used to pick up meals or a traditional meal service, sanitize the serving line and contact areas between classes/students.



- Clean and sanitize periodically (ex: every 30 minutes), before and after deliveries, and during food service.

- Change out sanitizer and TEST STRENGTH to ensure proper sanitizing occurs.

- Implement and train on the new Standard Operating Procedure for the pandemic (found on the CANS webpage under the COVID-19 header).

- Review the difference between typical cleaning and disinfecting with employees.

- If meals are delivered to classrooms, remember to clean and sanitize transport equipment once returned to the kitchen area.

- Remember to wear gloves and other appropriate protective gear when cleaning and disinfecting. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be necessary.



- If outdoor eating areas are used, the CDC does not recommend disinfection. Follow typical cleaning routines, as needed.

- Depending on the food service method used, be mindful of Point of Service/meal count procedures. If students are entering PIN numbers, be sure to disinfect touch pads.

Create a culture that focuses on handwashing and good hygiene by implementing periodic reminders for handwashing, glove changes, and sanitizing your workstations throughout the day.

- Consider using disinfectant products that can be effective against COVID-19 on contact areas, as found in the compiled list from the Environmental Protection Agency (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>).

- If EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, the CDC recommends using alternative disinfectants. 1/3 cup bleach added to 1 gallon of water can be effective on contact areas.

- Include custodial staff in the cleaning/sanitizing discussion.

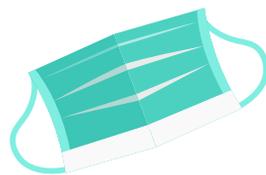


## ... Social Distancing .....

- Consider applying social distancing tactics to the specific model used to provide meal service.

- Depending on the food service model, a physical partition or barrier may be helpful within the kitchen or at cashier/Point of Service stations.

- If social distancing potentially increases injury risk, such as one person tasked with storage and inventory of heavy products and equipment, consider having employees utilize PPE when accomplishing a task together.



- Allow employees to be decision makers; consider asking employees to think about unique ways to promote social distancing, and put it into practice!

- Be aware of the break rooms and storage areas. Consider setting a standard number allowed in at any time.

- Consider adjusting work/prep areas to promote social distancing wherever possible.

- Use additional signage to help promote and educate on social distancing. Vinyl tape and small cones can be used to ensure direction on proper spacing within food service lines.



- Work times may be staggered or adjusted to accommodate social distancing for employees within a kitchen.

- If distancing is not possible, try to shorten the amount of time employees are in a shared space.

- Consider unused spaces as temporary prep areas; transport carts can also provide assistance in transporting materials and ingredients. Use the cafeteria as an additional prep area when not in use.

## ... Procurement Considerations .....



- Communicate early and often with vendors – potential school closures, delivery times if applicable, changes to plans, menu changes, share contact information if appropriate. Consider less expensive food options for meeting meal program requirements

- Changes to the menu and school schedule may affect forecasting for procurement. Will shelf-stable items be necessary to stock? Is there a sufficient quantity of 'to go' products available?

- Keep in mind that meal participation will most likely not be typical – it could be higher due to increased need, or lower due to parent/guardian safety concerns or recommendations from the district's return to school plan; ordering fresh items may be a challenge. Monitor changes in participation.



### Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Contracts

- Communicate early and often with the FSMC on potential changes in fluctuating meal participation, serving times and serving locations.
- As a fixed price contract, FSMCs are not allowed to increase prices or purchase items and bill the SFA for unexpected needed items – however an SFA may purchase items for the FSMC to use, such as paper products for 'to go' usage.

### Contract Renewal Flexibility

- If an SFA would like to extend an expiring contract, Federal regulations allow Program operators to use a non-competitive proposal in 2 CFR 200.320(f)(2) to negotiate one-year contracts given the public health emergency. Reminder – this flexibility will affect SY20-21 only and if related to the current state of emergency. Remember to document the circumstances requiring a non-competitive agreement or contract.



**Micro-Purchasing Reminders**

- When a purchase invoice falls under the \$10,000 threshold the Micro-Purchase option may be used.
- Please remember to document emergency purchases as to how they impact the school nutrition program.
- Be sure to ‘spread the wealth’ by utilizing more than one vendor for purchasing like-items. Whenever possible, it is best practice to use a competitive method for better value in spending the school nutrition funds.



**Informal/Small Purchases (3 bids and a buy) Reminders**

- If a purchase can be negotiated via a small purchase solicitation (such as 3 bids and a buy), additional bids are not required if purchasing the same items at the same price.
- Consider using an online source as a potential vendor in your price comparison.



**Formal Purchasing Reminders**

- If additional items or quantities fall outside of the formal purchase contract, an additional contract may be used. Depending on the dollar amount, the contract may fall into the Small Purchase method.



**... Budget Concerns .....**

- Consider financial implications if staff are quarantined at home. Do contracts or negotiated agreements need to be tailored specifically for SY 2020-21?
- Purchases made in support of Child Nutrition Program operations, personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, face masks, cleaning supplies, etc., are allowable costs during the current public health emergency. Purchases must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the Child Nutrition Program.



Consider available grants, such as GenYouth, CANS Equipment Grants, and SD Community Foundation, to assist with budget concerns!



- Funds from the nonprofit school food service account may be used to cover meal delivery costs and supplies to support non-congregate meal service; please note that additional reimbursement is not available.

- As a reminder, the nonprofit school food service account can be used to purchase bottled water as an alternative to water fountains to meet the potable water requirement. Keep in mind that water cannot be promoted as an alternate selection to milk for a reimbursable meal.

- Staff salaries can be paid with the nonprofit food service account when employees are unable to work due to mandatory closures, but only when the employee absence is covered in established personnel policies. These costs may be charged retroactively to the food service account once policies have been updated.

- Keep in mind the loss of revenue if a la carte sales are not offered.

- Are local donations possible to assist with budget shortfalls?



- Be aware of potential rising food costs for items such as beef and fresh produce. Adjustments to the menu plan may be needed.



- If funds were expended for an allowable cost (such as travel, meeting registration, supplies) for an event or activity that was cancelled due to COVID-19 closures, and costs were not refunded by the vendor, the operator may charge the costs to the program. Keep record of the original expense, and the attempt to obtain refunds.

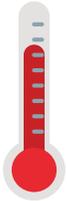
- Consider added costs based on the meal service model being used:

Kiosk? Soft-sided insulation bags? Paper goods? Mobile Point of Service? Durable equipment for packing? Printing costs for reheating instructions? Additional labor hours for bulk meal packing/distributing? Mileage for delivery? Will the school use disposable trays or use traditional trays while ensuring proper soaps and cleaning procedures are used? Keep safe handling procedures in mind.

## ... Staffing .....

- An SFA may pay additional personnel to serve students in this state of emergency situation – documentation of emergency expenditures is required.

- Further emphasize the importance of good hygiene, hand washing, and proper safety requirements.



- If staff members are required to take temperatures, think about how this should be done. Will staff be accountable to take their own temperature before arrival, or will this be done on site?

- Consider actions if an employee shows up to work with a fever, or becomes quarantined – how can workflow be adjusted? Substitute employees?

- Discuss processes with employees, including how to communicate with the school if a family member becomes ill, or if they have been exposed.

- Will face masks or other PPE become a requirement, or optional?

- Depending on the model used by the school, would fewer staff be needed to accommodate split-schedule attendance? One team preps meals, another team serves/delivers.



- If multiple food service models are used (such as allowing meal pick-up for some students and classroom dining for other students), consider employee scheduling that can accommodate the plan put in place by the school.



- How will payments be handled? Encourage non-contact payment, such as online and prepayments.



- Set up a process for communication (such as a phone tree) with your staff.



## Communication & Marketing



- Communicating the intended meal service model with parents and students is an essential part of meal service success.

### Why?

- Knowing WHY meal service has changed is very reassuring for students and families. This includes educating the public on the precautions and safety measures being taken. Let them know that decisions are being made with their best interest in mind. Be transparent about changes that pop up and let families know that things may continue to change as the pandemic evolves.

### How?

- Consider using Facebook, social media outlets, your school's webpage, email, or phone calls to get the word out. Also, be sure to include information in your school's Back to School information packets.
- Use a bulletin board for simple messaging being sure to keep things positive.
- Try using YouTube videos and pictures to offer variety and to make the communication fun and interesting.

- Use simple language and bullet points rather than long paragraphs.

- Keep communicating with your families and students all year!



## Staff Training

- If the food service were to hold an in-person training for employees, be sure to have a space large enough to allow for social distancing.



- Food Safety is critical – encourage refreshers on relevant food safety training (handwashing, hygiene, food handling, proper glove use, using cleaners, using sanitizers, etc.).



- Find and train additional staff, substitutes, and volunteers! Reach out to your community, local restaurants, parents, and beyond parents!



## ...Staff Training Continued.....

- Keep Professional Standards annual training requirements in mind.
- Avoid large in-service training sessions – consider smaller, distanced groups.
- Think about the employees that may be asked to handle food during a unique meal service setup. Will any training be provided? Gain administrative support for buy-in from unique groups of employees.
- Adapting on-the-job training processes for new hires may be needed.
- Start with the basics – focus on training topics that are necessary. Consider scaling back on training for items that may not need as much attention.



- Consider using more webinars to meet annual training requirements. Take a look at the CANS webpage, along with USDA, SNA, and Institute for Child Nutrition.

- Be sure to include all employees and substitutes that need the training. This may require specific step-by-step instructions for training through technology, a remote learning setup, or recording a training session for staff members to view. Ask the school's IT department for assistance and suggestions.

- Think about using virtual meetings, such as: Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangout, and more – many are free to use. Be sure to provide instructions on new technology to staff, or have a practice session.



- If high-tech training options are not available, consider utilizing YouTube videos, training in small groups with social distancing guidelines, or printed training packets.

- Cross-training employees will be a key component to success. Team members need to be able and willing to step in for co-workers, when needed.

- Teamwork – maintain team-building exercises during training, while considering employee safety.

## ... General Reminders .....

- Remain positive! Interact with classrooms and students, post bulletin boards, and try to find a level of normalcy in the day-to-day service, including promotions and holiday celebrations/décor.



- Be flexible!

- Brighten your students' (and staff's) day. These are scary and unknown times. Families may be dealing with financial concerns, job loss, food insecurity.

- Discuss new ways to promote school food service.

- You play an important role at your school! Protecting your students while serving them delicious, healthy food to fuel them to learn is something you should be very proud of.

- If the food service has regularly collaborated with classroom teachers in the past, discuss how this process can continue.

- Allow student handwashing before and after meal service.

- Find some fun. Use posters, marketing materials, bulletin boards, coordinated face masks, fun t-shirts to keep a positive message.

- During the SY19-20 school closures, mountains were moved. Schools created a to-go emergency feeding program in a matter of days or weeks that provided hundreds and thousands of meals!



Set a strong school reopening strategy at the district level that emphasizes reconnecting and re-establishing safety, routines, and relationships.

## ...Final Thoughts.....

This pandemic has the potential to have long-lasting effects on this generation of children. Taking these critical steps now will help ensure every school is adequately prepared to respond to the needs of students, educators, and families.

We are all in this together.  
 Lean on each other.  
 Lean on other Food Service Directors.  
 Lean on your vendors.  
 Lean on us.



Thank your team, students, parents, volunteers, teachers, and administration. Be thankful for your team. Just as CANS is thankful for all of you!

## .....Questions & Concerns.....

Thank you for choosing this guidebook. We hope you found it helpful for getting your school as back to normal as possible. If you have any questions on the information presented in this book or on a specific problem that was not addressed in this book, please feel free to reach out to the CANS (Child & Adult Nutrition Services) Office.

Email: [DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us](mailto:DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us)

Phone: 605-773-3413

Website: [doe.sd.gov/cans/index.aspx](http://doe.sd.gov/cans/index.aspx)



## Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online

at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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