Navigating Supply Chain Issues
SY 2022-23

The Targeted Meal Pattern Flexibility Waiver for CACFP ended June 30, 2022.

USDA is not authorized to renew the waiver for meal pattern components. CEs unable to meet the meal pattern requirements for serving reimbursable meals after June 30, 2022 can try the following in order to meet meal patterns:

**Tips for Navigating Supply Chain Disruptions**

**Communicate early and often**

Regularly inform and advise your food service staff so that they have accurate information for their schools. As needed inform administrators, teachers, families, and students about supply chain disruptions through updated menus, letters, emails, and/or social media.

**Talk with your colleagues**

Talk to fellow school nutrition directors to hear how they are managing supply chain disruptions. Try posting your question on a forum to illicit advice, a referral or emergency product swap.

**Inform your state agency**

Communicate with your state agency early and often so that they are aware of the supply chain challenges you are dealing with.

Vendor communications should be saved as documentation.

Click here and here for a resource of sample materials that you can use to communicate supply chain disruptions affecting school meals.
Modify your menus and services

Limit Menu Options
Limiting menu options can help in extreme cases of supply chain disruptions but that doesn’t mean the item can’t be served differently. Work with your supplier to identify available products that meet requirements. Visit the Institute of Child Nutrition for ideas.

Efficiently Utilize Staffing
If staffing is in short supply, limit the number of lines that are open or cross train so that staff members can step into a needed role at a moment’s notice. Consider creating a daily and/or weekly list for all to see so that everyone can see what needs to be done and allows for different stations to work together to complete tasks and save time cleaning and prepping. Ex: One employee can slice and distribute all the tomatoes needed for the sandwich and salad station.

Utilize the student body
Select student ambassadors to spread awareness to their peers about what is going on. Give this group voting power, if you are reducing the menu options, what is a must have item? Can you use the group to taste test different products and recipes before launching? Can they provide feedback on efficiency in the cafeteria?

Work with your vendor
Work with your vendor to identify the available products that still meet requirements. Limit yourself to a smaller number of SKUs. Consider plant-based options such as pulses and legumes, which are abundant in supply. Can you look locally to purchase an item that is out of stock?
Easy swaps for vegetable sub-groups:

Red/Orange:
- Serve vegetable juices such as tomato juice within the 50% weekly limit

Dark Green:
- Try these cold items: broccoli, leafy green salads, including romaine, spinach, and kale
- Serve pre-packaged salad entrees

Starchy Vegetables
- Try these cold items: corn salad, potato salad
- Serve baked potato as an entrée

Beans and Peas:
- Use beans in entrees such as tacos or burritos
- Make pre-packaged meals with hummus

Other Vegetables
- Try these cold items: celery, cauliflower, cucumbers, fresh green beans
- Utilize the Texas Department of Agriculture’s Farm Fresh Network and Seasonality Wheel

Utilize products on hand in new ways:
Use different seasonings to make a meat or meat alternative “new” on the menu:
- Ranch flavor with a side salad
- Lemon pepper flavor with chili fries
- Southwest flavors with a side of beans

Try different themes for salad by varying the toppings and the dressing:
- Southern style with BBQ ranch dressing, corn kernels and tortilla strips
- Asian inspired with sesame ginger dressing and edamame
- Southwest style with chipotle ranch dressing and tortilla strips and beans