



# WEST VIRGINIA EMERGENCY SCHOOL FOOD ACT

## SCHOOL/LOCAL-LEVEL TOOLKIT

### PURPOSE

This is a suggested resource for schools and local-level providers in developing plans to address student nutrition and hunger needs when access to school meals is disrupted in an emergency. The target audience for this resource is principals and school-level leadership teams.

**In 2022, the West Virginia Emergency School Food Act (WVESFA) was passed into law. It allows county boards of education and local level schools to develop plans and strategies to feed children when access to school meals is disrupted. Specifically, schools may:**

*“Create a crisis management and prevention plan that includes an assessment and plan to feed students during noninstructional or nontraditional remote learning days and public virtual school students that includes emergency situations that may require innovative ways to deliver food to student homes. Community support and resources should be utilized when creating this plan.”*

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Review this information and consider using it as a guide to create emergency feeding plans – or augment your existing plans. The information contained within this toolkit is not intended to be a mandate from the state government – but rather a guide or road map for designing a plan or strategy that best meets the needs of your students.

The best time to plan is before an emergency occurs. While this is not always possible, to the best of your ability – planning for disasters or unforeseen events before they occur is optimal when making decisions and delegating tasks.

This resource is not intended to serve as the only resource available or for use by local level teams. Other resources can be utilized. Consulting with your leadership teams, legal resources, and governing boards of directors is advisable. In the event of an emergency – you are encouraged to adhere to all local, state, and/or federal executive orders and public safety information.



## SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS AND CHILD NUTRITION RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

When developing plans and strategies, it is important to assess current and potential child nutrition programs and assets available within your school community. The following are examples of common federal and state child nutrition programs that may be operating or available in your school. Contact your county child nutrition director to learn more.

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM



### NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM



### BACKPACK AND SCHOOL-BASED FOOD PANTRIES



### SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM



### AT-RISK SNACK AND SUPPER PROGRAM



### NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH SNACK PROGRAM




### FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROGRAM



### NUTRITION EDUCATION & WELLNESS



## **SUGGESTED STEPS TO DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY FEEDING STRATEGY**

- STEP 1: ESTABLISH/IDENTIFY INTERNAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**
  - STEP 2: IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS**
  - STEP 3: ASSESS RESOURCES, DATA, AND INFORMATION**
  - STEP 4: DEVELOP AND DOCUMENT EMERGENCY SCHOOL FOOD ACTION PLAN**
  - STEP 5: COMMUNICATE THE PLAN**
  - STEP 6: IMPLEMENT/ACTIVATE THE PLAN**
  - STEP 7: EVALUATE THE PLAN**
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### **Step 1: Establish/Identify Internal Planning Committee**

- Identifying your local level leadership and available staff and volunteers for support is important in the planning process. In some cases, recruitment will need to begin to make the planning process successful.
  - » Examples of avenues of support could include but not be limited to – LSIC, PTA, and Wellness Team.


### **Step 2: Identify Stakeholders**

- Any student in your school could potentially benefit from access to meals when schools are not operating. Parents and guardians may have ideas and be willing to communicate on what their needs are when schools are not in session.
- Your stakeholders may also include (but not be limited to) community members, business owners, elected officials, family members, and faith-based leaders.

### **Step 3: Assess Resources, Data, and Information**

- Assess your available resources and what is needed (supplies, stockpiles of emergency food, emergency menu items, etc.)
- Understand your school's needy percentage and position in terms of serving children in impoverished or disadvantaged communities.
- Understand and evaluate what barriers exist in implementing a plan successfully. Talk through strategies to help mitigate or overcome barriers to the extent practicable. Some barriers include – but may not be limited to:
  - » Transportation
  - » Staffing
  - » Financial resources
  - » Storage
  - » Supply chain challenges
  - » Packaging and materials to the extent needed
  - » Hours of operation

### **Step 4: Develop and Document Emergency School Food Action Plan**

- After you have completed Steps 1-3, you are ready to assemble and draft out your plan.
  - Reference your county and/or school's existing crisis management plan and look for opportunities to incorporate emergency or supplemental feeding into existing frameworks.
  - Obtain and document key personnel and contacts that will be reachable in emergencies. Understand and document chains of command and make sure all relevant contact information is updated and current.
  - Consult with county leadership and any other existing administrative support you have available – such as human resources or legal services that may need to be considered before activation of a broad-based plan or strategy.
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## **Step 5: Communicate the Plan**

- Reaching out to families in your school community about the plan will be important. For example, if your school community is informed before there is a closure or school calendar break, on what to expect and general protocols – the activation of your school’s emergency feeding plan may be a more streamlined process. School registration and back-to-school events are a great opportunity to inform your school community about the resources available to them in a potential emergency, closure, or calendar break. Requesting food assistance may be difficult for some families. By incorporating this feature into your regularly scheduled communication strategies can help break down barriers and streamline access to all students when a need or emergency arises.
- If there are any changes to the plan after you have communicated it publicly – you need to let your school community know. Some common changes might be the days, times, or even locations of meal pick up sites. Keeping information current will help ensure a streamlined approach at communicating resources with families.
- Partnerships with local media can support your distribution of information so that it is broadcast in a clear and consistent manner to reach the most students and their families.

## **Step 6: Implement/Activate the Plan**

- Activate your plan when needed and deploy your strategies to support students in your school community.
- Work collaboratively with your team members.
- Reach out to your county and state leadership for advice and guidance.
- Be prepared to pivot and adjust your strategies when needed.

## **Step 7: Evaluate the Plan**

- Take time to debrief with your staff and volunteers. Receive their feedback and make notations of recommendations for what worked and what could be improved in the future.
  - Consider the feedback received from your partners and student families.
  - Celebrate what you were able to accomplish and work toward solutions to improve and strengthen plans in the future.
  - Staying in communication with your team will help you make decisions to plan for future events, emergencies, or opportunities to reach children with food outside the school day.
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