

# Nutrition Note



TENNESSEE JUSTICE CENTER

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The Coronavirus has disrupted life across the state. Schools and afterschool programs that are an important source of healthy meals to children have closed. Tennesseans have lost work and their incomes leading to increased hunger. The nutrition safety net programs have adapted to social distancing required to keep people safe and curb the spread of the virus. The nutrition programs are also working to meet the increased need. Please read on to learn more about these changes. Stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy.

## COVID-19 Updates

SNAP, WIC and the Child Nutrition Programs are changing to respond to the increased need and have been adapted to operate in the confines of social distancing. Learn more about those changes below and about legislation that has passed and been proposed in response to COVID-19. And learn more about the food resources available at the TJC COVID-19 webpage.

<https://www.tnjustice.org/find-assistance/>

### COVID-19 Legislation

**March 6 – Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act:** The bill provides \$8.3 billion in emergency funding for

federal agencies to respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

March 18 - **Families First Coronavirus Response Act:** Strengthened nutrition initiatives including SNAP, WIC and School Meals.

March 27 - **Coronavirus Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act:** While this bill provides additional support, it fell short of providing additional supports to SNAP which will help keep families fed during the pandemic.

April 2020 - The next Economic Stimulus Package is pending:

- **ACT NOW:** [Ask Congress to support SNAP](#) in the next stimulus bill by increasing the minimum benefit (from \$16-\$30) and adding a 15% increase to maximum allotments.
- Thank you to Congressmen Steve Cohen and Jim Cooper [who have signed](#) a letter in support of provisions to strengthen SNAP in the upcoming stimulus package.

## School Meals Legislation

TJC signs-on in support of the Suspend School Meals Debt Act:

<https://omar.house.gov/media/press-releases/ reps-ilhan-omar-and-deb-haaland-introduce-bill-suspend-school-meal-debt-during>

## SNAP

Please share the following information with people currently on SNAP and with those who may be newly eligible due to job loss or cutback on work hours.

- In April and May, all SNAP recipients (both current and new applicants) will receive the maximum SNAP benefit (\$509 for a 3-person household) automatically onto their EBT card.
- On April 1 the 3-month SNAP time limit was suspended - Tennesseans who are between the ages of 18-49 and have lost SNAP as a result of not meeting work requirements may now be eligible. [Read more here.](#)
- DHS offices are closed (except for appointments) but individuals can [apply online](#) for SNAP or call local Family Assistance Offices which can be found [here.](#)

## WIC

In response to CDC guidelines recommending social distancing, most WIC appointments in Tennessee are now by phone. Participants are encouraged to call 1-800-DIAL-WIC or go to [www.tn.gov/wic](http://www.tn.gov/wic) to contact their local WIC clinic for details.

If you or someone you know is having trouble reaching your local WIC clinic due to limited phone access, limited internet access, or other barriers, please contact Kelli Klein at [kklein@tnjustice.org](mailto:kklein@tnjustice.org) for assistance.

Effective through May 31, 2020, the Tennessee WIC Program has implemented four statewide waivers that ease program operations and have been granted by USDA under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act:

1. **Physical Presence Waiver:** waives the requirements that certain appointments be done in-person and bloodwork performed.
2. **Remote Benefit Issuance Waiver:** allows benefits to be issued without fulfillment of the second nutrition education requirement.
3. **Food Package Substitution Waiver:** in response to grocery store inventory limitations, allows for substitutions in the following aspects of the WIC food package.
  - a. [See WIC food package additions here.](#)
4. **Minimum Stock Waiver:** waives minimum stocking requirements for fruit, vegetables, and whole grain cereals for vendor assessment and monitoring.

Waiver details can be found on [USDA's COVID-19 Waivers & Flexibilities website for Tennessee.](#)

## Child Nutrition Programs

### The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The SFSP provides healthy meals during the summer so that children who normally eat free or reduced-price school breakfast and lunch do not go hungry when school is not in session.

SFSP also operates during the school year during unanticipated school closures and is currently filling a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools shut down to promote social distancing.

- If you are a summer meal sponsor you can provide meals to children during the pandemic. Learn more - contact DHS:
  - Email: [TNSFSP.DHS@tn.gov](mailto:TNSFSP.DHS@tn.gov)
  - Phone: (615) 313-4749

SFSP sponsors in good standing are currently allowed to operate under the following United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) waivers:

1. **Non-Congregate Feeding:** Effective through June 30, 2020, sponsors can serve to-go meals or provide meal delivery to participants. Sponsors are encouraged to utilize these options and avoid large gatherings for food distribution.
  - [Click here for USDA guidance on implementing meal delivery under SFSP](#)
2. **Meal Service Time Waiver:** Effective through June 30, 2020, waives the requirement for sponsors to serve meals a certain time apart from each other. Sponsors may now serve a week's worth of meals at one time.
3. **Meal Pattern Waiver:** Effective through April 30, 2020, sponsors may serve meals under SFSP that do not meet minimum meal component requirements if there is limited food availability as a

result of COVID-19.

4. **Parent Pick-Up:** Effective through June 30, 2020, parents and/or guardians may pick-up meals without the eligible child present.

Waiver details can be found on [USDA's COVID-19 Waivers & Flexibilities website for Tennessee](#).

If you have questions about what these waivers mean for your community or want to get involved, please email Kelli Klein at [kklein@tnjustice.org](mailto:kklein@tnjustice.org).

### School Meals and CACFP

School meal pick-up locations can be found at the Tennessee Department of Education's [Schools are providing meals for parents to pick-up and in some cases, schools are delivering meals while schools remain closed during the pandemic. Learn more about a meal site near you: School Meal Finder](#).

There are currently six waivers in effect for Tennessee's National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program:

1. **Non-Congregate Feeding:** Effective through June 30, 2020, schools and CACFP providers can serve to-go meals or provide meal delivery to participants.
2. **Meal Service Time Waiver:** Effective through June 30, 2020, waives the requirement for schools and CACFP providers to serve meals a certain time apart from each other.
3. **Afterschool Activity Waiver:** Allows providers to serve afterschool snacks without an enrichment activity.
4. **Meal Pattern Waiver:** Effective through April 30, 2020, schools and CACFP providers may serve meals under SFSP that do not meet minimum meal component requirements if there is limited food availability.
5. **Parent Pick-Up:** Effective through June 30, 2020, parents and/or guardians may pick-up meals without the eligible child present.
6. **Area Eligibility:** Allows all schools to operate open sites under SFSP/SSO regardless of status under CEP.

If you have questions about what these waivers mean for your community or want to get involved, please email Kelli Klein at [kklein@tnjustice.org](mailto:kklein@tnjustice.org).

### TJC COVID-19 Webinars

The Nutrition Team hosted two webinars on COVID-19 and the federal nutrition programs. We covered how SNAP, WIC, and Child Nutrition Programs are responding to the pandemic; shared updates on implementation of the Families First Act and the CARES Act recently passed by Congress; and looked at additional opportunities for federal nutrition programs to aid individuals affected by the crisis. Access the recordings here:

### COVID-19 & the Nutrition Safety Net

Recorded March 24, 2020

[View recording here](#)

## COVID-19 & the Nutrition Safety Net: Part 2

Recorded April 2, 2020

[View recording here](#)

### [UPCOMING] College Hunger and COVID-19

Partners are invited to learn about and discuss how TN students and campuses have been impacted by COVID-19, food resources for students, how college hunger is impacted by COVID-19 Bills in Congress.

April 15, 2020 at 1:30pm CT/12:30pm ET

[Click here to register.](#)

# SNAP

TJC hosted the **Successful Reentry Requires Food Security** webinar on March 30, 2020

[Click here to access the recording](#)

TJC Nutrition Team's Sarah Henson, cohosted the webinar with Reentry Attorney of Legal Aid, Deven Wilson, to discuss how food security can prevent recidivism with help from federal nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC. This webinar also includes how COVID-19 is currently impacting the carceral system.

## SNAP Legislation

The Making Essentials Affordable and Lawful (MEAL) Act (2020) was introduced by Congressman Steve Cohen. The MEAL Act would lift restrictions to SNAP and TANF for people with prior felony convictions. <https://cohen.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-cohen-introduces-meal-act>

## Tornado Update

Middle Tennessee was hit by a tornado on March 3, before Covid-19 cases began spreading in Tennessee, but we haven't forgotten them. If you or someone you know was impacted by the tornado and applied for D-SNAP, we want to know about your experience. Please share! Email [shenson@tnjustice.org](mailto:shenson@tnjustice.org).

# The WIC Program

## WIC Champions

TJC hosted our first WIC Champions Call on March 19, 2020.

[Click here to access the recording.](#)

WIC Champions is a statewide group of engaged Tennesseans dedicated to disseminating information and taking advocacy actions on The WIC Program. Members receive emails with news related to WIC policy and practices in Tennessee and the nation. We will also send you opportunities to engage with your elected representatives when critical decisions are being made in Washington D.C. and Nashville.

Together we leverage our voices for women and children experiencing hunger. If you are interested in joining this exciting WIC advocacy group, [please complete this short interest form.](#)

# Child Nutrition

## Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

### Applying to Serve Summer Meals to Children this summer:

TN DHS canceled their last SFSP training because of COVID 19 and social distancing. If you missed it, they will provide a make-up training opportunity.

- Applications for SFSP are due on May 1:  
<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/children/dhs-nutrition-programs/learn-about-the-summer-food-service-program/summer-food-service-program-application.html>
- Consider being a Summer Meal Sponsor – The need will be great following the pandemic.

TJC webinar “Gearing Up for the Summer Food Service Program” is now available to view on demand. Hosted on March 26, 2020, the webinar included changes to the program in response to COVID-19, how to become a sponsor, and how community partners can support sponsors with advocacy and outreach.

[Access the recording here.](#)

The Nutrition Team is also fielding preliminary interest in an SFSP sponsor network. If you are a current or potential SFSP sponsor and would be interested in a support network to share best practices and information, please email Kelli Klein at [kklein@tnjustice.org](mailto:kklein@tnjustice.org).

## Census 2020

Census 2020 is here and it's important for you and your community to be counted. Work with us to share information about why the census is important and urge your network and clients to be counted. The census impacts funding for programs and services that affect our daily lives and is crucial to federal programs like WIC, TennCare, and many other programs that support low-income communities.

### Census Jobs and SNAP

Tennessee Department of Human Services applied for a USDA waiver that allows this temporary work to be waived from income when applying for SNAP. That means working for the census won't cut anyone's SNAP benefits in Tennessee!

[Check out TJC's Census Website!](#)

## Social Media

As you see posts about hunger whether you're volunteering, sharing an article or resource – use **#FeedTN** and tag us!

**WFH? Be an advocate from your couch!**

Follow us on social media & share our posts – it's easy!

Facebook: [Tennessee Justice Center](#)

Twitter: [@TNJusticeCenter](#)

Instagram: [@tnjustice](#)

Collaborate with us and share your story – why you care, what you do, how you (or your neighbors) are fighting hunger in your community. Stay up to date by tuning into our webinars listed above!

## Partner Highlight

Did you know West Tennessee Legal Services has a Facebook Page with resources specifically for SNAP and West Tennessee? [Check it out!](#)

[DONATE](#)

### Stay connected:



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