

Free meal program to be extended through August 6

Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) will continue to provide free meals to local children through August 6.

The free meals were scheduled to end on Thursday, July 23, but the federal government has granted a waiver to districts that want to extend their summer meal programs, including ACPS. That means the district's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Department will continue to provide free breakfasts and lunches to students age 0-18 at the current 70 sites, including several bus stops in high needs neighborhoods.



Families will be able to pick up enough meals Mondays through Thursdays. On Thursday, they'll receive enough meals to get them through the weekend as well. The distribution schedule is available on the FNS website at yourchoicefresh.com.

Since the end of March, the district has provided nearly 2.2 million meals for local children. FNS staff have remained on duty during the summer to prepare and distribute those meals, and bus drivers have continued to deliver them.

"We had an overwhelming response from staff who said they wanted to stay at work for the next few weeks to get this done," said FNS director Maria Eunice. "It's been heartwarming to me that so many people have been willing to step up."

Following the last day of the summer program on August 6, which will include the distribution of meals for the following weekend, FNS staff will begin the work of preparing for the upcoming school year, which starts for students on August 24. That will include staff training and additional preparation of kitchens and lunchrooms to promote the safety of students and staff in light of COVID-19.

"We have a lot of work to do, but since this crisis began, our staff have proven that they are committed to our children and schools," said Eunice.

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