CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM STATE WAIVER REQUEST
Waiver Request for Alaska Family Child Care Association

1. **State agency submitting waiver request and responsible State agency staff contact information:**

   Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
   Gavin Northey, Child Nutrition Programs Manager
   gavin.northey@alaska.gov
   PO Box 110500
   Juneau, AK 99811-0500
   907-465-8708

2. **Region:** Western Region

3. **Eligible service providers participating in waiver and affirmation that they are in good standing:**

   This waiver request impacts one Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsoring organization, Alaska Family Child Care Association, a sponsor in good standing

4. **Description of the challenge the State agency is seeking to solve, the goal of the waiver to improve services under the Program, and the expected outcomes if the waiver is granted. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(iii) and 12(l)(2)(A)(iv) of the NSLA]:**

   This request seeks to allow sponsoring organizations to conduct up to two offsite monitoring visits of Day Care Homes (DCH) participating in the CACFP to reduce administrative burden while ensuring all review elements are met within the timeframes set forth in regulation. This wavier would address challenges related to staff travel due to distance and duration of travel as well as to support retention of CACFP facilities.

   Alaska currently has only one at-large sponsor of day care homes that is based in Anchorage. Approximately 50 homes that currently participate in CACFP are either two or more hours from the sponsors location by road or require travel by a combination of air or sea. About a dozen of the sites are located in a location where weather-outs or delays are common.

   This waiver will permit the eligible sponsoring organization to more flexibly schedule travel for reviews when travel conditions are more predictable to prevent inefficient use of administrative time and other cost inefficiencies such as cancellation fees while still ensuring sufficient program integrity through a combination of in-person and virtual monitoring efforts.

   Approving this waver supports reduced administrative costs ensure the sponsoring organization is able to effectively manage its resources and support more day care

homes. By approving the waiver for up to two visits to be performed virtually, the sponsor has greater ability to manage its resources and time, make staff available to support the program objectives, and still requires the sponsor to visit each home at least one time to perform the full range of monitoring activities required to ensure the home meets program requirement and expectations.

5. **Specific Program requirements to be waived (include statutory and regulatory citations). [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(i) of the NSLA]:**

   7 CFR 226.16(d)(4)(iii). Requiring three monitoring reviews be performed in person

6. **Detailed description of alternative procedures and anticipated impact on Program operations, including technology, State systems, and monitoring:**

   DEED will accept electronic waiver requests from sponsoring organizations (SO). The SO's waiver request will include:
   - Location(s) where waiver will be implemented and number of monitoring visits that will be performed virtually
   - Identify the specific technology platform(s) to be used for monitoring and how the(se) platforms will:
     - Provide real-time video
     - Capture documentation such as menus, enrollment forms, attendance logs, and meal counts
   - Monitoring procedures including:
     - How an unannounced virtual monitoring will be initiated
     - Method for observing meal service
     - Method for reviewing documentation
     - What backup procedures are in place if the monitor cannot each the provider
     - What procedures are in place if the provider does not respond to monitor's primary or backup communication methods
     - Procedures for unexpected loss of internet connection
   - Reporting requirements sufficient for the State Agency to meet its requirements in question #12

7. **Description of any steps the State has taken to address regulatory barriers at the State level. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:**

   No barriers exist at the state level.

8. **Anticipated challenges State or eligible service providers may face with the waiver implementation:**

   DEED does not anticipate this waiver will present any challenges.

9. **Description of how the waiver will not increase the overall cost of the Program to the Federal Government. If there are anticipated increases, confirm that the costs will be paid from non-Federal funds. [Section 12(l)(1)(A)(iii) of the NSLA]:**

DEED does not anticipate this waiver will increase the overall cost of the program to the federal government; given the unusual situation, this waiver seeks to maintain program accountability without creating additional administrative cost at the state or federal level.

10. **Anticipated waiver implementation date and time period:**

DEED requests this waiver to be effective immediately and through 30 September 2026.

11. **Proposed monitoring and review procedures:**

Alaska DEED met with the sponsoring organization to discuss the monitoring and review procedures of day care homes under the sponsorship for a similar waiver requested in FY2025. Alaska DEED will inquire of any updates to these procedures and will provide updated technical assistance as needed by email or meeting, whichever is appropriate. The content of the technical assistance will cover conducting virtual reviews via video conferencing and photographs, and use of electronic monitoring such as use of software with built-in integrity features or other means of providing timestamped documentation. If the sponsor is found to have compliance issues as related to this waiver will work with the Alaska DEED to develop and implement corrective action plan. Documentation of waiver activities will be maintained in the state system.

12. **Proposed reporting requirements (include type of data and due date(s) to FNS);**

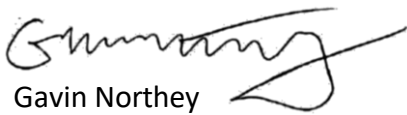DEED will require the sponsoring organization to report details including:
- A description of how this waiver allowed the Program(s) to provide nutritional meals and/or snacks to Program participants;
- A description of how this waiver improved services for the Program(s) participants;
- A description of how the waiver reduced the administrative burden necessary to operate the Program(s);
- A description of how the waiver has facilitated sponsoring organizations' oversight abilities and responsibilities;
- A summary of how many sponsoring organizations utilized this waiver and how many were recruited or retained as a result of the waiver approval;
- A summary of how many DCHs were monitored offsite during the waiver period;
- A summary of the State-approved sponsor specifications for conducting virtual monitoring reviews, and procedures for video/photographic reviews, addressing missed unannounced reviews, and serious deficiency determinations;
- A summary comparison of common findings for onsite and offsite monitoring reviews, including serious deficiencies;
- A summary of program integrity measures taken to identify any misuse of Federal funds and identify fraudulent activities, and, if anything was identified, any actions taken; and

- A summary of any technical assistance measures that were provided by the State agency to sponsoring organizations and to DCH providers by the sponsoring organizations.

13. **Link to or copy of the public notice informing the public about the proposed waiver [Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:**

   https://education.alaska.gov/cnp

14. **Signature and Title of requesting official:**

   Gavin Northey
   Child Nutrition Programs Manager

TO BE COMPLETED BY FNS REGIONAL OFFICE:

FNS Regional Offices are requested to ensure the questions have been adequately addressed by the State agency and formulate an opinion and justification for a response to the waiver request based on their knowledge, experience and work with the State.

Date request was received at Regional Office: 08/17/2023

☐ **Check this box to confirm that the State agency has provided public notice in accordance with Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA**

Regional Office Analysis and Recommendations: