



Introduction to the Summer Food Service Program Administration Guide

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Welcome to the Summer Food Service Program!

No child should have to spend their summer hungry or without nutritious food. SFSP is a USDA Summer Nutrition Program that was established to ensure that children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. SFSP connects children with the nutrition they need to help them be healthy and ready to learn when they return to school. Free meals that meet Federal nutrition guidelines are provided to all eligible children at approved SFSP meal sites.

USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs now provide more ways to reach more kids than ever before. Group meal sites for children, to-go delivered meals in rural communities, and food benefits for purchasing groceries provide new opportunities fight child hunger.

Traditional in-person summer meal sites for kids provide nutritious food that is served and eaten onsite at community centers, schools, and other central locations. Group meal sites remain a vital part of the summer nutrition programs, providing a sense of community and enrichment opportunities for kids. Meal sites are dedicated to serving healthy, appetizing meals, often with recreation and enriching activities that ensure kids are productive when school is out of session.

In rural communities where in-person meal service may not be available, summer meals grab-and-go and home-delivered meals are options for ensuring that children have the nutrition they need throughout the summer. It is one more way to serve nutritious food to children through pickup or delivery or taken home as an alternative to eating them at a specific site. Rural communities may also consider offering non-congregate meal service along with their existing group meal service.

The newest Summer Nutrition Program option provides food benefits for purchasing groceries in the summer months. It is designed to work hand-in-hand with other USDA nutrition programs to connect every eligible child with nutritious food in the summer. Research shows that providing families with summer grocery benefits reduces child hunger and supports healthier diets.

This guide describes operating SFSP at traditional in-person summer meal sites and alternate meal service options for rural communities.

How to Use This Guide

The Summer Food Service Program Administrative Guide describes the policies and best practices for successful operation of in-person congregate meal sites and options for serving non-congregate meals in rural communities. It is tailored to anyone who is interested in learning Program policy including, but not limited to, how to participate, apply, administer, and operate SFSP at various levels. The information is organized into the following units and appendices:

- **Unit 1: Participating in SFSP** explains how SFSP works, identifies the types of organizations that may sponsor the Program and the requirements they have to meet, and describes the various types of sites that may provide congregate and non-congregate meals to children.
- **Unit 2: Applying to SFSP** describes the application process, including what is required for new and experienced sponsors, how sponsors document site eligibility, and what happens once a sponsor's application is approved.
- **Unit 3: Administering SFSP** focuses on what is required to operate SFSP at the State agency and sponsor levels. This includes staff responsibilities, reporting and recordkeeping requirements, monitoring expectations, and the management of Program finances.
- **Unit 4: Operating the Meal Service for SFSP** discusses the requirements that must be considered when planning the meal service, including possible meal preparation methods and procurement methods and procedures.
- **Appendix 1: SFSP Definitions and Basics** includes SFSP definitions and additional supporting information, such as diagrams and charts that reinforce the information provided in the guide.
- **Appendix 2: Prototype Forms** includes sample forms that may be used as guides for State agencies and sponsors that operate, or plan to operate, the Program.

The Guide and individual units are available on the FNS website. Readers may download the Guide in its entirety, or download a specific unit of interest. While each unit covers a specific topic, there are references to other units for additional details on the topic or to learn more information related to a topic. The table below includes definitions to commonly used acronyms in this Guide.

Acronyms Found Throughout the Guide

Abbreviation	Full Name
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CBG	Census Block Group
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CHIP	Children’s Health Insurance Program
CN	Child Nutrition
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSP	Coordinated Services Plan
DEIP	Deployment Extension Incentive Payment
DHHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
DOC	Department of Commerce
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Education
FBG	Food Buying Guide
FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FNSRO	Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office
FSMC	Food Service Management Company
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development

Abbreviation	Full Name
IEG	Income Eligibility Guidelines
IFB	Invitation for Bid
IRS	United States Internal Revenue Service
ISP	Identified Student Percentage
LEA	Local Education Agency
MAP	Management and Administrative Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSLA	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
NYSP	National Youth Sports Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OVS	Offer Versus Serve
PSA	Public Service Announcement
RCCI	Residential Child Care Institution
RD	Rural Development
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposals
SAT	Simplified Acquisition Threshold
SBA	Small Business Administration
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFA	School Food Authority
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SMP	Special Milk Program

Abbreviation	Full Name
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SNAP-Ed	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education
S-EBT	Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program
SSO	Seamless Summer Option
SY	School Year
TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
TRE	Department of Treasury
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children

General Overview of the Summer Food Service Program

SFSP operates during school vacations, primarily in the summer months, from May through September. It may also provide meals during vacation breaks in schools that operate on a year-round basis or a continuous school calendar, or during unanticipated school closures from October through April. All Summer Meals must meet Federal nutrition guidelines and are provided to children free of charge.

SFSP is a flexible Program that can operate at the times and places that work best to meet the needs of communities. Examples of sites include schools, parks, recreation centers, farmers markets, Friday night basketball games, and mobile meal sites. SFSP can also operate as a grab and go or meal distribution Program in approved rural areas. SFSP brings Federal dollars into communities in the form of combined reimbursements for meals and operational and administrative costs. SFSP can help keep school food service workers employed during the summer months and, through food purchases, support local farmers and businesses. Local government and community leaders can help by making SFSP a priority.

While USDA's FNS administers SFSP at the national and regional levels, the Program is administered in each State by the State department of education or an alternate state-designated agency. Locally, SFSP relies on innovative collaborations with valued non-profit, government, and faith-based institution partners to build cost effective and customer-focused summer sites. Public or private non-profit organizations that want to sponsor the Program apply and are approved by the State agency to operate the Program. These sponsoring organizations sign Program agreements with their respective State agencies and are responsible for overseeing Program operations.

Sponsors receive Federal reimbursement through the State agency to cover the costs of preparing and serving meals to eligible children at one or more meal sites. FNS can help with startup costs for new sponsors, while ongoing Federal reimbursement can help organizations already operating SFSP improve their current programming. SFSP regulations can be found at 7 CFR 225, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-225?toc=1>.