



The Summer Food Service Program

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day a child's need for consistent nutrition doesn't go on vacation. In response, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to help children in

low-income areas get the nutrition they need to have an active and productive summer. There are three different types of SFSP meal sites:

- **Open meal sites** operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, making them eligible for the Free and Reduced Price School Meal Program. Meals are served free to any child at the open site.
- **Enrolled meal sites** provide free meals to children enrolled in an activity program at the site where at least half of them are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
- **Camp meal sites** provide meals for all of the children who are enrolled in their camp programs, but they receive payments only for the meals served to children who are eligible for free and reduced price meals.

SFSP serves meals and snacks to children 18 and younger and to persons over 18 with disabilities who participate in school programs for people who are mentally or physically disabled. Most sites serve either one or two reimbursable meals each day. Some camps and sites that serve migrant children may be approved to serve three meals to each child each day.

Summer Food Service Program Wins

Low-income children who participate in the school breakfast and lunch program receive over one-half of their nutrients from the meals provided at school. Unfortunately, only one in five of those children participate in a feeding program during the summer. The remainder of the low-income families find it difficult to feed their children adequately. According to America's Second Harvest's 2001 study of hunger in the U.S., 46.2% of food pantries and 68.2% of soup kitchens have to serve "many more children in the summer." When children have access to free and nutritious meals available through SFSP, they not only

receive meals rich in fruits, vegetables, proteins and grains, they receive access to organized and productive activities, such as computer time, arts and crafts, stories, sports, etc. Children who are well-fed and actively engaged throughout the weeks of summer return to school better prepared to learn!



Frequently Asked Questions

How does SFSP work?

The Summer Food Service Program is administered on the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In most states, State Education agencies administer the program through approved sponsors, such as school districts, local government agencies, camps or private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide meals that meet federal nutritional guidelines to a group of children at a central site. In turn, the sponsor receives payment from the USDA—through their state agencies—for the meals they serve and for their documented operating costs.

What types of organizations are eligible to sponsor Summer Food Service Program?

- Public or private nonprofit schools
- Units of local, municipal, county, tribal or state government
- Private nonprofit organizations
- Public or private nonprofit camps
- Public or private nonprofit universities or colleges

In addition to being one of the preceding entities, SFSP sponsors must be capable of managing a food service program. You must follow regulations and be responsible, financially and administratively, for running the program.

How are SFSP meals prepared?

A sponsor can prepare its own meals, purchase meals through an agreement with an area school or contract for meals with a food service management company. Sites that prepare its own meals receive a slightly higher rate of reimbursement. You would receive "self-prep" rates, whether you prepare the meals from scratch or purchase the components and assemble the meals yourself.

How much reimbursement does the government provide?

Please visit the Summer Food Service Program website at www.summerfood.usda.gov/ReimbursementRates/ReimbRates.htm to view the maximum reimbursement rates.

If my organization sponsors a SFSP site, what are our responsibilities?

If your organization already provides services to the community and has a capable staff and good management practices to run a food service, you can administer a SFSP site. As a sponsor, you will:

- Attend your state agency's training.
- Locate eligible sites.
- Hire, train and supervise staff.
- Arrange for meals to be prepared or delivered.
- Monitor your sites.
- Prepare reimbursement claims.

My organization doesn't have the financial or administrative ability to sponsor a site, is there another way for us to participate in the SFSP?

Yes! Your organization can supervise food service for children, along with recreational or enrichment activities, at a site. As a site supervisor, your organization will:

- Attend your sponsor's training.
- Supervise activities & meal services at your site.
- Distribute meals by following SFSP guidelines.
- Keep daily records of meals served.
- Store food appropriately.
- Keep the site clean and sanitary.

My organization has a kitchen and food service staff. Can we participate in SFSP as a vendor?

Absolutely! A vendor sells prepared meals under an agreement or a contract with an approved SFSP. As a vendor, you will:

- Register with the state agency (if required).
- Meet appropriate health & sanitation standards.
- Prepare meals meeting federal nutrition guidelines.
- Deliver meals on schedule.
- Keep delivery records.
- Fulfill the terms of the agreement or contract.

Technically Speaking

There is a variety of educational and marketing materials available to help you establish and publicize your summer feeding program. The USDA website for the Summer Food Service Program offers brochures and handouts to help more children obtain the nutritious benefits of summer meals. Visit www.summerfood.usda.gov.

The site's **Outreach Materials** include:

- A Guide to Starting the Summer Food Service Program
- Site Supervisor's Pocket Reference Guide
- Helping Migrant Families

The site also offers **Tips for Success**, including:

- Building Partners for Summer Food
- Recruiting Children—Raising Community Awareness of the Summer Food Program
- Recruiting Sponsors and Sites
- Working with the News Media for the SFSP

In addition, the USDA recently developed a Media Toolkit to assist local agencies in promoting their SFSP. The toolkit has a draft press release, talking points and a video news release (a 30 second commercial).

Contact Information

For more information on the Summer Food Service Program, please contact:

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