


 40 Years: 1969-2009

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1. What is the Summer Food Service Program?

Just as learning does not end when school lets out, neither does a child's need for good nutrition. 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 learn, play, and grow, throughout the summer months when they are out of school.

2. Why is SFSP important to your community?

You know that children who miss school breakfast and lunch are more likely to be sick, absent or tardy, disruptive¹ in class, and inattentive. They also score lower on achievement² tests. Good nutrition is essential for learning in school. SFSP provides an opportunity to continue a child's physical and social development while providing nutritious meals during long vacation periods from school. It helps children return to school ready to learn.

3. How does the program operate?

The Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, administers SFSP at the Federal level. State education agencies administer the program in most States. In some areas, the State health or social service department or an FNS regional office may be designated. Locally, SFSP is run by approved sponsors, including school districts, local government agencies, camps, or private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide free meals to a group of children at a central site, such as a school or a community center. They receive payments from USDA, through their State agencies, for the meals they serve.

4. Where does the program operate?

States approve SFSP meal sites as open, enrolled, or camp sites. Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty level, making them eligible for free and reduced-price school

meals. Meals are served free to any child at the open site. Enrolled 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. Camps may also participate in SFSP. They receive payments only for the meals served to children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

5. Who can sponsor SFSP?

Units of local government, camps, schools, and private nonprofit organizations can **sponsor** the SFSP. If your organization already provides services to the community, and has capable staff and good management practices to run a food service, you can sponsor the SFSP. As a sponsor, you will attend the State agency's training, locate eligible sites, hire, train and supervise staff, arrange for meals to be prepared and delivered, monitor sites and prepare claims for reimbursement.

6. We're a small organization, what can we do?

Many organizations, particularly smaller ones, may want to consider operating a feeding site, such as a recreational or enrichment program. Many sponsors would welcome such an arrangement. If you supervise a site, you will attend your sponsor's training, supervise activities and the meal service, keep daily records of meals served, store food appropriately, and keep the site clean and sanitary. You should contact the State agency indicating your interest as a site, or find a local sponsor and make your own arrangements.

7. Who is eligible to get meals?

Children 18 and younger may receive free meals and snacks through SFSP. Meals and snacks are also available to persons with disabilities, over age 18, who participate in school programs for people who are mentally or physically disabled.

8. How many meals do participants receive each day?

At most sites, children receive either one or two reimbursable meals each day. Camps and sites that primarily serve migrant children may be approved to serve up to three meals to each child, each day.

9. How much reimbursement does the government provide?

SFSP reimbursements are now based on the number of reimbursable meals served multiplied by the combined operating and administrative rate for that meal. For summer 2010, the maximum reimbursement rate per meal in most States is:

Self Preparation-Rural Sites

Breakfast: \$1.8475

Lunch/Supper: \$3.2475

Snack: \$.7625

Other Types of Sites (Vended-Urban)

Breakfast: \$1.8125

Lunch/Supper: \$3.1950

Snack: \$.7450

Payment rates are higher in Alaska and Hawaii to reflect the higher cost of providing meals in those States.

10. How long has the SFSP been in existence?

SFSP was first created as part of a larger pilot program in 1968. It became a separate program in 1975. By 1980, 1.9 million children were participating. Participation dropped to 1.5 million in 1985, and grew to 1.7 million again by 1990. Almost 2 million children participated at almost 31,000 sites in the summer of 2005.

11. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$357.9 million for SFSP in FY 2009 and \$312.2 million for the Program in FY 2008. By comparison, the program cost \$110.1 million in 1980; \$163.3 million in 1990; \$267.2 million in 2000; and \$327.4 million in 2008.

12. What can parents do?

First, locate a feeding site in your community where your children can receive summer meals. To find a feeding site, contact those organizations in your community that are offering an activities program. Organizations offering activity programs are often local schools, community centers, recreation centers, and faith-based organizations. If you are unable to find a feeding site in your area, please contact your State agency and ask them for the location to a feeding site in your community.

If there are no feeding sites in your community, you can mobilize your community to sponsor the program. In order for a feeding site to exist in your community, a school, nonprofit organization or local government agency must be the program sponsor and be responsible for the administration of the program. To begin mobilizing your community, contact the following people and groups, and tell them there is an interest in the community to feed children in the summer. Contact:

- The school principal
- Teachers
- The Parent Teachers Association
- The school food service manager
- School officials such as the school board or superintendent of schools
- The Mayor's office Recreation and Parks Office County officials
- Elected officials

13. How can I find a feeding site in my area?

To find a feeding site in your area, contact those organizations in your community that are offering an activities program. Organizations offering activity programs are often local schools, community centers, recreation centers and faith based organizations. If you are unable to find a feeding site in your area, please contact your **State agency** and ask them for the location of the nearest feeding site.

14. I want to help, what else can I do?

Volunteer! Our best SFSP sites have organized, well-run activities that keep the interest of the children and teens coming back to the site day after day. Some of these activities include arts and crafts, tutoring, mentoring, drama, sports, computer training, music, gardening, reading programs, cooking or any other creative ideas you may have. Many sites have enlisted local fire and police departments, local celebrities, local businesses and local political figures to make presentations to their SFSP sites. The only limitation is your imagination.

15. How do I get started?

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, or don't know of a sponsor in your area, contact your **State Agency**.

For more information:

To learn more about SFSP in your State, contact your administering agency (the education department in most States).

You may also contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 640, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

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How to Become a Sponsor

Thank you for your interest in helping to feed children in your community as a sponsor in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)! Here is information about how the program works and the role of sponsors and feeding sites—as well as the steps to apply to become a sponsor.

How SFSP Works:

SFSP is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FNS decides overall program policy and publishes regulations and payment rates. State education agencies administer SFSP in most States. Other State agencies may also be assigned to run the program.

The State agency approves sponsor applications, conducts training of sponsors, monitors SFSP operations, and processes program payments. Sponsors sign agreements with their State agencies to run the program.

SFSP reimburses approved sponsors for serving meals that meet Federal nutritional guidelines. Sponsors receive payments from USDA, through their State agencies, based on the number of meals they serve. All meals are served free to eligible children.

Role of a Sponsor:

Sponsors are organizations that manage SFSP feeding sites. As a sponsor, you will:

- Attend your State agency's training
- Locate and recruit eligible sites
- Hire, train, and supervise staff and volunteers
- Arrange for meals to be prepared or delivered
- Monitor your sites
- Prepare claims for reimbursement
- Ensure that your Summer Food project and sites are sustainable through community partnerships, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment.

Who Can Be a Sponsor:

Sponsors must be organizations that are fully capable of managing a food service program. To be a sponsor, you must follow regulations and be responsible, financially and administratively, for running your program.

The following types of organizations can be sponsors:

- 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

What is a Site:

A site is the physical location, approved by the State agency, where you serve SFSP meals during a supervised time period. States classify and approve SFSP meal sites as open, closed enrolled, camp, migrant, or NYSP:

- Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least 50 percent of children residing in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, based on local school or census data. The meals are served free to any child at the site on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Closed enrolled sites are established for a specific group of children who enroll in an organized activity program or who do not reside in an eligible low income area. The site becomes eligible for SFSP if at least half of the enrolled children qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Because the site is not open to the community, meals are served free only to enrolled children.
- Camps are sites that offer regularly scheduled food service along with organized activities for enrolled residential or day campers. The camp receives reimbursement only for meals served to enrolled children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals.
- Migrant sites primarily serve children of migrant workers. The site qualifies by providing appropriate certification from a migrant organization.
- NYSP College or university participating in the National Youth Sports Program (NYSP). Children must be enrolled in NYSP to participate.

Who Can Become a Site

Meal service sites may be located in a variety of settings, including schools, recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, churches, community centers, day camps, residential summer camps, housing projects, and migrant centers, or on Indian reservations.

Some organizations do not have the financial or administrative ability to run the program, but they can supervise a food service for children, along with recreational or enrichment activities, at a site.

If you supervise a site, you will:

- Attend your sponsor's training
- Supervise activities and meal service at your site
- Manage volunteers
- Distribute meals by following SFSP guidelines
- Keep daily records of meals served
- Store food appropriately
- Keep the site clean and sanitary
- Help your sponsor promote the program in the community

How to Prepare Meals

A sponsor may prepare its own meals, purchase meals through an agreement with an area school, or contract for meals with a food service management company (vendor).

If your site has its own kitchen, you may want to prepare meals yourself. If your kitchen is not on the premises, you may still want to prepare your own meals, and then transport them to the site. Meals that you prepare yourself 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.

Many government and private nonprofit sponsors lack the kitchen facilities to prepare meals themselves. In that case, you may arrange to purchase meals from a school or another public or private food supplier with approved meal preparation facilities.

How to Apply

To apply, contact the SFSP agency in your State. Each State has its own application and training process. Click here for a list of [State contact information and deadlines](#).