

# A Guide To Starting The Summer Food Service Program In Your Community



*Food That's In  
When School Is Out!*

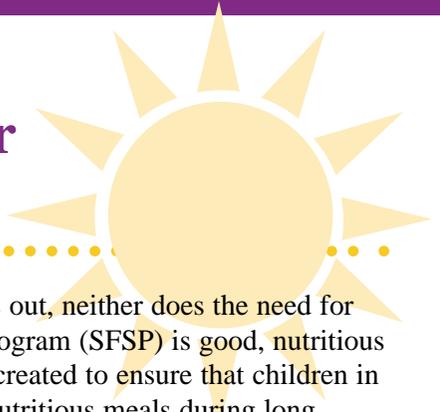




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# Welcome to the Summer Food Service Program!



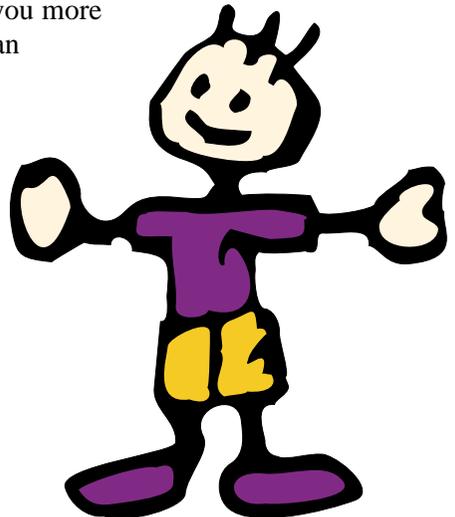
While learning does not end when school lets out, neither does the need for good nutrition. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is good, nutritious food that's "in" when school is "out." It was created to ensure that children in low-income areas could continue to receive nutritious meals during long school vacations, when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast.

Nearly 14 million children depend on free and reduced-price school meals for 9 months out of the year. We know that many of them are at nutritional risk during the months when their schools are closed for vacation. Unfortunately, only about 2.3 million children participate in SFSP each day.

Clearly, the nutrition needs of a large number of children who depend on free and reduced-price meals during school are not being met in the summer. Good nutrition is essential for learning. Without your help, these children may not return to school ready to learn.

SFSP is the single largest Federal resource available for local sponsors who want to combine a feeding program with a summer activity program. Why not take advantage of this valuable resource to provide nutritious meals to the children in your community?

Please join us in supporting children by becoming a partner in SFSP. This booklet will give you more information on SFSP and on how you can participate.



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## How Does SFSP Work?

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 and their documented costs of running the program. All meals are served free to eligible children.

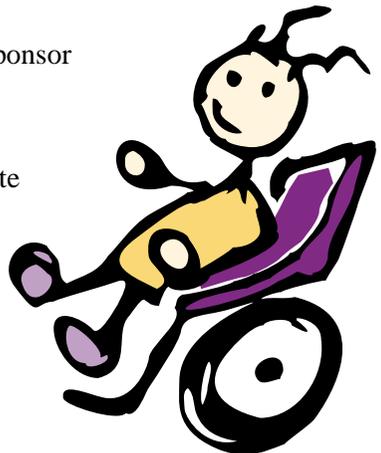
## Who Can Sponsor SFSP?

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.

Which types of organizations are eligible to sponsor SFSP?

- 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. There are five types of sites:

<b>Your site is</b>	<b>if</b>	<b>based on</b>
open	at least half the children in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals	area eligibility data from the local school or census block group
enrolled	at least half the children enrolled in the program are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals	income eligibility statements describing the family's size and income
camp	it offers a regularly scheduled food service as part of a residential or day camp program	an individual child's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals
migrant	it primarily serves children of migrant workers	appropriate certification from a migrant organization
NYSP	it is a college or university participating in the National Youth Sports Program	a child's enrollment in NYSP

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.



## Who Is Eligible To Get Free Meals?

All children 18 years of age or younger who come to an approved open site or to an eligible enrolled site may receive meals.

At camps, only the children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals may receive SFSP meals.

People over age 18 who are enrolled in school programs for persons with disabilities may also receive meals.

## How Many Reimbursable Meals Can Be Served?

Most sponsors may be approved to receive reimbursement for serving lunch and one other meal service. A small number of sponsors serve breakfast only, or breakfast and snack. Snacks are called supplements in SFSP.

If your site primarily serves migrant children, or you run a residential or day camp, you may be eligible to serve up to three reimbursable meals each day. If you run a camp, you may claim reimbursement only for the meals that are served to a child who qualifies for free and reduced-price meals.

Ask your State agency which types of meals may be served for reimbursement at your proposed sites.

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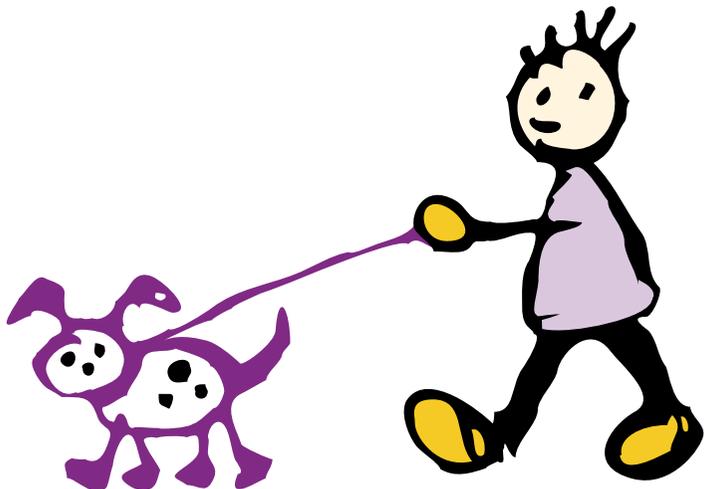
## How Are SFSP Meals Prepared?

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.



# Four Ways You Can Participate in the Summer Food Service Program

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## 1 Become a Sponsor

Make an investment in the children in your community. If your organization already provides services to the community, and has capable staff and good management practices to run a food service, you can administer SFSP. 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 claims for reimbursement

## 2 Run a Site

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
- distribute meals by following SFSP guidelines
- keep daily records of meals served
- store food appropriately
- keep the site clean and sanitary





### 3 Be a Vendor

Organizations with kitchens and food service staff, including schools, commercial companies, or public or nonprofit institutions, can participate in SFSP as vendors. Instead of administering or supervising a meal service site, a vendor sells prepared meals under an agreement or a contract with an approved SFSP sponsor. As a vendor, you will:

- register with the State agency, if required
- meet appropriate health and sanitation standards
- prepare meals meeting Federal nutritional guidelines
- deliver meals on schedule
- keep delivery records
- fulfill the terms of the agreement or contract

### 4 Volunteer

Even if your organization cannot take on the responsibilities of a sponsor or a site, you can team up with a sponsor to provide:

Arts and Crafts  
Mentoring  
Dramatics  
Computers  
Music  
Reading  
Coaching  
Life Skills  
Entertainment

Tutoring  
Kite Flying  
Athletics  
Games  
Gardening  
Cooking  
Swimming

Or any other activity that makes **summer fun!**

# Becoming a Sponsor

## Learn About SFSP in Your State and in Your Community

Talk with the SFSP coordinator at your State agency to learn more about the program. Find out if your community already participates in SFSP. Let your State agency know that you are interested in participating in the program.

Talk with current or former sponsors to learn about the benefits and challenges of running the program. Seek out an experienced sponsor who may be willing to be a mentor to you as you become a sponsor.

Talk with people in your community to help you identify potential sites and partners. Talk to people in the business community and in your local:

- schools
- parks and recreation departments
- camps
- community action agencies
- cooperative extension offices
- youth programs
- parent and teacher associations
- housing authorities
- churches
- community pools
- civic organizations

## Attend the State Agency's Training

Each year, the State agency conducts training for the supervisors of all organizations that are interested in serving as SFSP sponsors. Training will help you decide whether sponsoring SFSP is for you. It provides an opportunity for you to meet other sponsors in your State, ask your questions about SFSP, and begin to develop a strategy for launching your program.



The training covers all necessary areas of running the program for experienced sponsors and for organizations that are new to the program. It will also provide you with important information to help you train your administrative team and the staff and volunteers who will work at your sites.

### Determine the Location of Sites

With the support of community organizations, pick out potential areas where you could run a successful food service program for children. Work closely with your State agency to determine if your potential sites are located in eligible areas.

The most effective sites will be located in areas where you can offer a supervised food service with recreational or enrichment activities.

Before you choose a site location, consider these questions:

- Is there a high concentration of low-income children in the area?
- Are there educational, recreational, or social activities already established or planned in the area?
- How easily and safely can children get to the site?
- How will you determine eligibility, that is, will you use school data, census data, or income eligibility statements?
- Will you prepare meals yourself at the site or at a central kitchen, or will you purchase meals?
- If you purchase meals, will you need to advertise and follow formal contracting procedures?



## Complete an Application

Once you have selected appropriate sites, you should obtain a sponsor application form from your State agency. You must describe the sites you propose to serve. Your application must also include a proposed budget and information about your organization's ability to run a food service for children. Many State agencies devote a portion of their training to helping sponsors to properly fill out their applications.

Check with your State agency for the dates that applications are due. It is wise to submit your application as early as possible to ensure that it will be processed and approved in time to open your sites.

Once you are approved as a sponsor, the State agency will sign an SFSP agreement with you. The agreement tells you your rights and responsibilities. It also gives you approval for your initial administrative budget and confirms the approved sites, types of meals, and meal times for your program.

## Coordinate Support and Participation

Starting a new program is always challenging. It may seem overwhelming if you are working single-handedly. That is why reaching out to community leaders, organizations, and residents is so important.

As a sponsor, you will want to reach into your community to attract a winning team of staff and volunteers. You will need capable people who can provide overall coordination, supervise sites, monitor sites, conduct training, conduct community outreach, prepare or deliver meals, and handle program bookkeeping.

To have a successful program, families must be aware that SFSP is available to children in their community. Planning your outreach strategy is as important as launching it. If you conduct an aggressive outreach effort, your program will benefit, and more children will receive the nutritious meal benefits of SFSP.

# Obtaining Reimbursement for SFSP Meals

The State agency reimburses SFSP sponsors on a per-meal basis for the meals they serve to eligible participants that meet program requirements. To receive your reimbursement, you must prepare a claim each month and submit it to your State agency.

Total reimbursement is limited by per-meal reimbursement rates. Without careful planning, you might not cover all of your costs.

Your costs will depend on many factors including the number of meals you serve; the price you pay for food or meals, if purchased from a vendor; and the amount of wages you pay your staff.

Reimbursement is made for both operating costs and administrative costs, and the payment rates are different. These categories are separate, and cannot be mixed together.

## What Are Operating Costs?

Operating costs are the costs of running your food service. These are the expenses you have for preparing, obtaining, delivering, and serving meals.

Operating costs include what you pay for:

- processing, transporting, storing, and handling food
- salaries of cooks, site personnel, and other food service workers
- utensils, plates, and other nonfood supplies
- maintenance and rented items, such as kitchen equipment or trucks
- kitchen utilities
- supervision of children
- site clean-up
- transporting children to and from rural sites
- meals that may be served to SFSP workers and volunteers

Your State agency makes two calculations to compute payments of operating costs. The State agency will compare the two amounts and pay you the smaller value, which will be either:

your actual documented food service costs	or	$\frac{\text{the number of meals served to eligible children}}{\text{the operating payment rate}}$
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### What Are Administrative Costs?

Administrative costs are the costs you have for activities related to planning, organizing, and administering the program. These expenses should be included in your approved budget. They are completely separate from the costs of food production and service.

Administrative costs include your program’s share of:

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● salaries of supervisory staff, monitors, trainers, and office employees</li> <li>● rental of offices, office equipment, and cars</li> <li>● office supplies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● building utilities</li> <li>● insurance costs</li> <li>● postage</li> <li>● audits</li> <li>● travel costs</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Your State agency makes three calculations to compute your administrative payments. The State agency will make a comparison, and pay you the lowest of those three values, which will be either:

your actual documented administrative costs	or	$\frac{\text{the number of meals served to eligible children}}{\text{the administrative payment rate}}$	or	the approved budget in your sponsor agreement
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Remember, SFSP is a nonprofit food service program for children. You will not be able to receive more than your actual program costs. In fact, payments to some sponsors are less than actual costs.

Sponsors must be prepared to manage their food service programs carefully, and add other resources to their programs, if necessary.

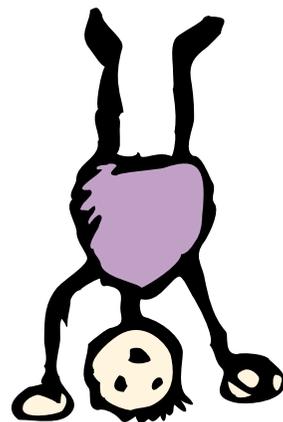
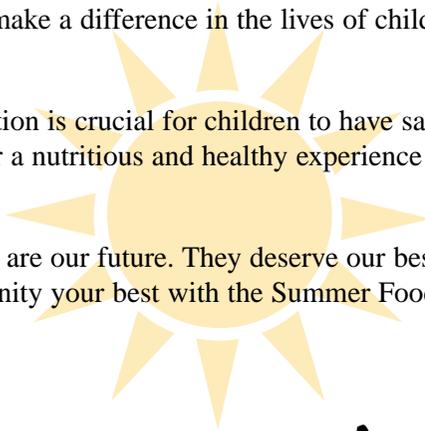
Closely monitor all of your costs to ensure that you do not spend more than your reimbursement. You are responsible for the over costs, if your expenses are more than your reimbursement.

### In Closing...

...So, are you ready to make a difference in the lives of children in your community?

The need for good nutrition is crucial for children to have safe and productive summers. Make summer a nutritious and healthy experience for the children in your community.

Remember, our children are our future. They deserve our best. Give the children in your community your best with the Summer Food Service Program.



# Everyone Wins With Summer Food!

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**Children** have nutritious meals that they might not otherwise receive.

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**Parents** stretch food dollars and know that their children are receiving healthy meals in a supportive environment.

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**Food service workers** have summer employment.

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**Organizations** receive funds to provide meals to complement already scheduled programs, such as day camps, sports activities, and tutoring sessions.

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**Communities** provide safe places for children to go to be with other children and with supportive adults.