



# Implementing the Afterschool Meal Program

The Afterschool Meal Program provides afterschool programs in ten states (Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Vermont) the opportunity to receive federal funding to serve a meal. State child nutrition agencies—those that are new to the Afterschool Meal Program and those that have been administering the program for years—can reduce administrative requirements and aggressively promote the program to potential new sponsors, which will help increase participation.

## Reducing Administrative Work

The Afterschool Meal Program, similar to the Afterschool Snack Program, was designed with afterschool programs in mind. The goal was to create an easier option within the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) so that more afterschool programs could participate. State agencies can implement a number of paperwork reduction options that will make participating in the Afterschool Meal Program more attractive to afterschool providers.

- USDA has developed guidance to make it easier for afterschool programs to participate in the Afterschool Snack and Meal Programs. The guidance clarifies that there is no requirement for production records, a management plan (unless sponsoring multiple sites), or enrollment forms. In addition, afterschool programs that are not required by state or local law to be licensed are only required to meet health and safety standards. States can give some latitude with their budget and are encouraged to establish permanent agreements and three year renewal cycles. By taking a little time to evaluate the current requirements, states can ease the administrative requirements for operating the Afterschool Meal Program. The memo is on-line at [www.fns.usda.gov/snd/care/Regs-Policy/policymemo/2007-2009/CACFP\\_11-2007.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snd/care/Regs-Policy/policymemo/2007-2009/CACFP_11-2007.pdf).
- State agencies also can make it easier for schools to participate. School food service departments are experts at operating the school nutrition programs, but many do not participate in CACFP. To encourage school participation, USDA developed guidance to ease some of the administrative requirements for schools. The guidance states that school food authorities do not have to prove administrative capacity and financial viability; are not required to develop a management plan; and can submit an addendum to their existing school lunch agreement. State agencies also can streamline the monitoring requirements. The memo is available online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/Regs-Policy/policymemo/2007-2009/CACFP-08-2008.pdf>.

- In addition, state agencies can make it a smooth, easy process for organizations that already operate the Afterschool Snack Program to be reimbursed for serving a meal. The programs already have applied to operate the snack program, shown that they are financially capable of running it, and set up a system for getting the food and serving it. Plus, the eligibility rules are the same for both the snack and supper programs. States should minimize the amount of paperwork required to add a meal service by having organizations sign an addendum to their existing CACFP contract.

## Conducting Outreach

State agencies can increase participation dramatically by actively promoting the program and providing information that counters common misperceptions about the program.

- There are many new opportunities for outreach to the afterschool community. For example, most states have statewide afterschool networks that have relationships with afterschool programs throughout the state and may be able to help with outreach. For a complete list, visit <http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net>.
- Summer Food sponsors are in an excellent position to sponsor the Afterschool Meal Program. They have experience operating a federal child nutrition program. They already have a vendor or are able to prepare the meals themselves. The program staff already is trained on handing out meals and keeping meal counts. Large sponsors have a relationship with summer programs, and, in many states, summer programs also operate during the school year after school, and on weekends, and school holidays. States can aggressively recruit Summer Food sponsors to operate the Afterschool Meal Program.
- Many afterschool programs already provide a snack (whether or not it is federally reimbursed), but are intimidated by the prospect of serving a supper. Common misperceptions include: the supper must be served hot, that a full kitchen is required in order to participate and that the length of the afterschool program does not provide adequate time to serve a supper. States can dismiss these myths in their outreach efforts. For example, FRAC has developed a fact sheet called *Moving from Afterschool Snack to a Meal: It is easier than you think!*, which is available online (<http://www.frac.org/afterschool/pubs.htm>) and can be modified for your state.
- States should actively recruit programs that operate on weekends and school holidays and encourage full participation (serving a meal and a snack) at these programs to ensure that children have access to nutritious food when school is not in session.