



Summer Food Service Program

WHY THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT

- When school lets out, millions of low-income children lose access to the school breakfasts, lunches and afterschool snacks they receive during the regular school year. The Summer Food Service Program for Children fills in this gap and provides free meals and snacks to children who might otherwise go hungry.
- Recent USDA research shows that 93% of Summer Food Service Program sites provide educational, developmental, or recreational activities in addition to nutritious meals and snacks.
- The Summer Food Service Program contributes to the healthy growth and development of low-income children so that they are better able to continue learning when they return to school.

ELIGIBILITY

- The Summer Food Service Program provides free meals and snacks to low-income children through age 18 when school is not in session. (People over age 18 who are enrolled in school programs for persons with disabilities may also participate in the Summer Food Service Program.)
- Local governments, school districts and non-profits can sponsor Summer Food Service Program sites, which may include schools, parks, recreation centers, housing projects, migrant centers, Indian reservations, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, houses of worship, summer camps, and others.
- Most Summer Food Service Program sites are open to all the children in the community. These "open sites" are eligible for federal funds if the site is located in an area in which at least 50 percent of the children are from households that would be eligible for free or reduced price school meals. The two primary sources of data that may be used to determine whether the area meets this percentage are school data or census data.
- Other Summer Food Service Program sites serve free meals and snacks only to those children enrolled in their programs. These "enrolled sites" are eligible for federal funds to serve all the children enrolled in the program if at least 50 percent of the children enrolled can be documented to qualify for free or reduced price school meals.

PARTICIPATION

- In the summer of 2004, the Summer Food Service Program served over 1.6 million children at almost 30,000 sites operated by over 3,500 sponsoring organizations, and another 1.3 million children received school lunch through summer school.
- Although approximately 15 million children depend on free or reduced price school meals during the school year, only 2.9 million children are receiving summer meals. This represents less than one in five of the children served during the school year.

CHILD NUTRITION FACT SHEET

Summer Food Service Program

BENEFITS

- The Summer Food Service Program feeds hungry children in the summer, gives a boost to public and private non-profit summer programs, and helps give low-income children the best start on the new school year.
- Many of the children served are at nutritional risk when they do not have access to school meals. Most Summer Food Service Program sites can provide up to two meals (breakfast and lunch or breakfast and dinner) or one meal and a snack. Sites that serve migrant children and certain types of summer camps can serve up to three meals per day, but operate under different eligibility rules.
- Reimbursable meals must meet federal nutrition standards.
- Many Summer Food Service Program sites provide not just meals, but educational enrichment and recreational activities that help children continue to learn and stay safe when school is not in session. The meals provided through the Summer Food Service Program act as a "magnet" to draw children to these activities.

REIMBURSEMENT AND FUNDING

- The reimbursements from the Summer Food Service Program provide essential financial support to programs that serve low-income children when school is not in session. The federal expenditures for FY 2004 for the Summer Food Service Program were \$263.1 million.
- For summer 2005, the maximum reimbursement rate for operating costs per meal in most states is \$1.42 for breakfast, \$2.48 for lunch or supper, and \$0.58 for snacks. Sponsors also receive Federal funds for administrative costs: depending on the type of site, sponsors can receive up to 14 cents for breakfast, 26 cents for lunch or supper, and 7 cents for snacks. Payment rates are higher in Alaska and Hawaii to reflect their higher cost of providing meals.
- The Simplified Summer Food Program (formerly the "Lugar Pilot Program") streamlines reimbursement and paperwork for Summer Food Service Program sponsors in nineteen states (Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Wyoming) and Puerto Rico. The pilot eliminates traditional Summer Food Service Program cost-based accounting, so sponsors are no longer required to keep records and accounts separately for administrative and operating costs. Instead, sponsors simply earn "meals times rates," which allows them to claim the maximum reimbursement.
- The Seamless Summer Food Option reduces paperwork and administrative burdens that are normally associated with operating both the National School Lunch Program and the Summer Food Service Program. The option helps the Summer Food Service Program in schools reach more children and operate more efficiently.