



Answers for Parents

What do you know about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Meal Programs? With so much information out there, sometimes things can get confusing. Let's clear up some of the common misconceptions families have about Summer Meals!

1. **Myth:** Summer Meal Programs are only for young children.

Fact: Anyone 18 and under can receive meals through USDA's Summer Meal Programs, so make sure your teens are taking advantage of free Summer Meals too.

2. **Myth:** To get a meal, I have to sign my children up at the site ahead of time.

Fact: Residential and day camps typically require that you sign up for their program in advance in order to receive free meals. However, most Summer Meal sites are "open sites," which means they are open to the community and do not require that children sign up in advance or check in at the site. Children and teens may simply show up at the site to eat their meal. Remember, the meal must be eaten at the site.

3. **Myth:** I already receive benefits from SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), so my children cannot receive Summer Meals.

Fact: USDA's Summer Meal Programs provide nutritious food, like the meals that your children receive during the school year. Regardless of what other assistance your family may receive, open Summer Meal sites will provide meals for your children.

4. **Myth:** I should not send my children to a Summer Meal site because we are doing better than some other families, and I don't want to take a meal away from someone who needs it more.

Fact: Sponsors prepare and distribute meals based on the number of children and teens that come to their sites. They are reimbursed by USDA for these meals, so if there is an increase in attendance at the site, the sponsors can plan to provide more meals the next day.



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5. **Myth:** I have to submit income information, legal status, or other personal information about my family, in order for my child to be welcomed to a Summer Meal site.

Fact: “Open summer meal sites” are open to the community. Parents are not required to give any personal information about their children to site operators in order for the child to receive a free meal.

For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. The Summer Meals Toolkit has even more creative ideas and resources at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>

Do you have more questions? Sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for answers. State agencies should contact their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>

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