



Head Start

Children depend on the nutritious food provided by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to get through a full day of Head Start activities. This summer, Head Start centers can help older brothers and sisters, and other children in the community, get a nutritional boost by participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Head Start centers already have the expertise and facilities to prepare and serve healthy meals to children, making them great partners for Summer Meals!

Go to [Resources](#).

A Winning Combination!

Participation in SFSP allows Head Start centers to offer more meal services and enrichment activities to a larger number of children during the summer months.

- Summer Meals provide nutritious food for children – meals with milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, and bread that meet USDA’s nutritional standards. Head Start grantees already have the knowledge to prepare meals and menus that are culturally sensitive.
- Kids enrolled in Head Start, siblings, teenaged parents, children of staff members, volunteers – any child or youth, age 18 and younger, who comes to an approved meal service site is eligible for a Summer Meal! The food is free, and there are usually no papers for parents to fill out.
- Summer Meal Programs operate between May 15 and September 30 – during long periods of time when local public schools are normally closed for vacation.
- All sponsors receive training to learn how to plan, operate, and monitor a successful Summer Meal Program. The SFSP State agency provides training, resources, and technical assistance.
- Payments are provided from USDA, through the SFSP State agency, to reimburse the sponsor for the cost of serving meals to children in low-income areas, throughout the summer months.



10/01/20

Summer Meals Toolkit

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- SFSP makes it easy for Head Start grantees to participate – each Head Start program decides how to distribute meals, collaborate with community partners, and provide opportunities for sharing and learning among families, in the most culturally sensitive ways.
- Summer Meals support opportunities for socialization – they can enhance the planning of family-centered activities, parent engagement, and programs for siblings.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can Head Start programs participate?

There are two key ways for Head Start centers to connect more children in the community to Summer Meals – as a sponsor or as a site operator.

Sponsors are at the heart of Summer Meals – responsible for the safe and efficient operation of meal sites, ensuring children have access to meals, and that families are aware that meals are available for children.

Site operators organize and provide a well-supervised program with fresh, well-balanced meals that are appetizing to children.

Q: Can Head Start centers in CACFP also serve Summer Meals?

For Head Start centers that participate year-round in CACFP, adding SFSP allows the center to serve up to two reimbursable meals to siblings and other children who are not enrolled in Head Start. Sponsors can also serve afternoon snacks and suppers to children after the Head Start day ends.

To participate in both Programs, sponsors must keep separate records to ensure that a child who receives a Summer Meal does not receive the same type of meal in CACFP. The Head Start center would continue to serve reimbursable meals – up to two meals and one snack – to enrolled children through CACFP.





Resources

USDA

- *Summer Meals: SFSP 101 and How to Be a Summer Meals Champion*
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-sfsp-101-and-how-be-summer-meals-champion>
- *Make Your Summer Meals Site the Talk of the Town*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/make-your-summer-meals-site-talk-town>

Head Start

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

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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