

Tips for Successful Summer Meal Sponsors

Summer meal sponsors are the key to ensuring that the Nation's children and families do not face a summer of hunger. As sponsors of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO), you are the champions at the frontline in our battle to fight childhood hunger in the summer months.

Your summer meal program benefits not only your organization, but your community as well. To aid in your efforts this summer, below are simple steps that you can take to expand participation in your program. USDA also has many resources that can help. By working together, we can ensure that no child is hungry this summer!

Program Basics

When starting a summer meal program, the first step is to understand the program requirements. Below are tips and resources to help you comply with the Federal requirements so you can be sure to receive the full reimbursement for the meals you serve. Your State agency can also provide training and technical assistance to help ensure your success. Agriculture, Housing, and others that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources that can be shared and can share information about summer meals with their clients.

Provide appropriate training to supervisory staff and volunteers to ensure program requirements are understood. Be sure everyone understands that all children who come to your open sites have equal access to services and facilities.

Make sure you monitor all your sites throughout the summer. For tips on monitoring and technical assistance, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Monitoring.pdf>.

Regularly confirm that all site staff understand the proper way to count and record meals everywhere they are provided. Other tips on meal service operations are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Meals.pdf>.

Provide copies of the USDA Site Supervisor's Guide in both English and Spanish to ensure all Program requirements are met and your sites are reimbursed for every meal you serve. The Guides are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/library/handbooks.html>.

Highlight Your Program

Contact schools and afterschool programs in your community and ask them to work with you to inform families about the locations of your sites or to serve as a site. Give them materials on sites serving children in their area and ask them to distribute these materials to families and children before the school year is out.

Share USDA's free Public Service Announcements with your local radio stations. PSAs, available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/eupdates/summer.htm#summer_psas provide free advertising for your sites.

Distribute banners to all your sites and ask them to display them in strategic locations to best publicize to the community that meal service sites are open. Check with your State agency and local anti-hunger advocacy groups for free banners.

Ask elected leaders in your community and State to highlight your program in the media or State newsletters. This will give you free press and ensure that more families know summer meals are available for their children. Tips you can share with your local leaders on ways they can become more involved are available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/2013_campaign/mayor_flyer.pdf.



Summer Food Rocks!

Coordinate with other local agencies and organizations interested in the health and safety of low-income children. Creative and innovative partnerships can result in new advertising resources and sources of funding. For more tips on developing partnerships in your community, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Partners.pdf>.

Overcome transportation challenges in rural communities with creative and innovative partnerships. Mobile feeding models can be strategic in the location of sites to maximize participation. For more tips for rural programs, see http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Rural_Sites.pdf.

Explain your program to tenants, security staff, and other clients of the facilities where your sites are located, so they can direct children to the areas where meals are served. Share this video with them that quickly explains what the USDA Summer Meal Programs are all about!

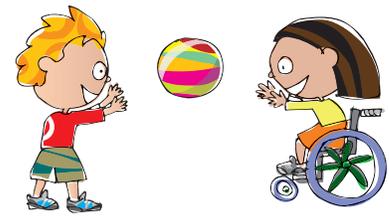
Keep Them Coming Back

Announce to children, at each meal service, the time and location of the next available meal service. Have a 'bring-a-buddy' program at your sites. Tell children in attendance that they will be recognized if they bring a friend with them the next day.

Ask the children at your sites how they like their meal. Adjust menus to serve more popular meals, to keep the kids coming back. For tips on serving nutritious summer meals, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Nutrition.pdf>.

Offer activities at the meal sites to keep children engaged and excited to come back. Get creative; the activities do not have to cost you anything! If your site serves multiple age groups, ask the older teens to teach the younger children a sport. Ask the local fire or police department to provide a safety demonstration or set up a cooking lesson with a community college or local chef. For more creative ideas, see the Innovative Strategies below.

Engage parents and grandparents. Inform them about the meals and the enrichment that children receive at your sites. Invite them to volunteer or to help promote summer meals to their neighbors. Recruit more volunteers through United We Serve at http://www.serve.gov/endlunger_sfsp.asp or AmeriCorps Vista at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-vista>.



More USDA Resources

The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service has many resources to assist States and sponsors in administering USDA Summer meal programs

- **Summer Food Rocks!** Download and distribute Program flyers in your community in both English: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf and Spanish: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/sp-SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf
- **National Hunger Hotline.** Make sure your State agency has registered with the National Hunger Hotline. Families use the hotline to find meal sites. <http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood>
- **SFSP Outreach Toolkit.** The USDA SFSP Outreach Toolkit includes webcasts, free radio public service announcements, templates for promotional items, and resources in English and Spanish. <http://www.summerfood.usda.gov/Outreach.htm>
- **USDA Guidance.** USDA handbooks for sponsors, monitors, and site supervisors (in English and Spanish) provide detailed guidance on administration of the program. Each handbook provides clear instruction at every level of administration and is updated annually to reflect policy and program changes. The handbooks are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/library/handbooks.html>.
- **Tips for Success.** Many more tips on building a successful summer meals program are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/library/tips.html>.
- **Innovative Strategies.** Creative ideas for recruiting sites, increasing attendance at sites, and ensuring a successful summer program are available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/states/best_practices.html.