



## The Summer Food Service Program – Fact Sheet

### Program Overview

- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals and snacks to low-income children 18 and under when school is not in session.
- Local governments, school districts and nonprofits can sponsor summer food sites, which may be located at schools, parks, recreation centers, housing projects, migrant centers, Indian reservations, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, houses of worship, summer camps, and others places where children congregate when school is out.
- A site qualifies either as an open or an enrolled site. An open site is located in a low-income area where 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. The site is then open to all the children in the community (open restricted sites are open sites that limit or restrict participation for reasons of safety, security, or control). An enrolled site only provides meals to children enrolled in the program. An enrolled site qualifies if it is located in a low-income area or if at least half of the children enrolled in the program are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
- All meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards.



### SFSP Plays an Important Role in Communities

- When school lets out, millions of low-income children lose access to school breakfasts, lunches, afterschool meals and snacks that are available during the regular school year. SFSP helps fill this gap by providing free nutritious meals and snacks to children who might otherwise go hungry.
- Currently, the program is underutilized. Nationally, only 1 out of 7 children who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year continue to receive meals during the summer months. Communities could dramatically increase low-income children's access to summer meals by offering the program

### Summer Meals Benefit Low-Income Children and Families

- SFSP contributes to the healthy growth and development of low-income children by providing them with nutritious snacks and meals when school is out so they are better able to learn when they return to school.
- Many SFSP sites provide educational enrichment and recreational activities in addition to meals, which enables children to learn and stay safe when school is out. The meals

served through SFSP draw children to these activities.

- Summer meals help parents stretch their food dollars at home during the summer months.

### **It Pays to Serve Summer Meals**

- The SFSP reimbursements provide essential financial support to programs that serve low-income children when school is not in session.
- In the summer of 2012, SFSP sponsors receive \$1.90 for each breakfast served, \$3.33 per lunch, and \$0.78 per snack. Sponsors located in rural areas or those that prepare their own meals on-site receive a higher reimbursement: \$1.94 per breakfast, \$3.38 per lunch, and \$0.80 per snack.
- Summer nutrition funding can add up. For example, a summer program serving breakfast and lunch to 50 children for eight weeks would receive approximately \$10,460 in federal funding through the SFSP.
- Programs that provide meals but have not received federal funding through SFSP can be reimbursed and use the money previously spent on food to serve additional children, offer more activities or hire additional staff.

### **USDA Guidance Makes the Program Easier to Operate**

- States can create a simplified SFSP application process for afterschool programs that already participate in the CACFP Afterschool Meal Program.
- Sponsors sign a permanent agreement with the state SFSP agency.
- Private nonprofit sponsors can operate under the same rules as all other sponsors – there is no longer a cap on the number of sites or children served.
- Sponsors are no longer required to keep records and accounts separately for administrative and operating costs. Instead, sponsors simply follow a “meals times rates” formula that allows them to claim the maximum reimbursement. This change in accounting procedures dramatically reduces the paperwork involved in operating SFSP.

### **Get Started**

- Summer meals provide nutritious food to hungry children when school is out. To get started, contact the state child nutrition agency at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>.
- The state agency can provide potential sponsors with more information about the program, an application and inform them when the next SFSP training takes place.

