



Summer Food Standards of Excellence

As an anti-hunger advocate, you understand the link between the food served at summer programs and participation rates. Simply put, if children don't find the meals appealing and the site engaging, participation will suffer. Quality, kid-friendly food attracts children to meal programs and makes them more likely to consistently participate throughout the summer. Hunger Free Vermont has identified a list of 24 best practices that can be used to evaluate the success of summer food sponsors and sites. The primary goal of the evaluation is to hold sponsors and sites to the highest standards, which will boost participation rates and ensure that hungry children receive healthy meals when school is out.

There are three levels of quality that can be achieved:

- ☆ **GOLD LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 22 of the 24 best practices
- ☆ **SILVER LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 20 of the 24 best practices
- ☆ **BRONZE LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 15 of the 24 best practices

Food Quality

- ☆ Children are offered choices of meal components. (Example: children are able to choose between yogurt or a cheese stick or an apple or banana).
- ☆ In addition to low fat (1%) milk and/or skim (nonfat) milk being offered daily, whole milk is not offered at the site.
- ☆ Site offers children additional servings of fruit and vegetables (above and beyond USDA required amounts).
- ☆ At least two sites have held food tasting events or surveyed the children to find out what foods they would like to have served during the summer. *
- ☆ Four different entrees or meat/meat alternates are offered throughout each week.
- ☆ No entrée or meat/meat alternate is offered more than 2 times within each month on the main lunch menu (including food offered as a substitute meal for children with special dietary restrictions).
- ☆ Three different fruits and five different vegetables (can be canned, fresh or frozen) are offered each week in the lunch menu.

* HFV can offer assistance

- ☆ Fresh fruits or raw vegetables are offered five days a week in the lunch menu.
- ☆ Whole-grain foods are offered three or more times a week.
- ☆ Local fruits and/or vegetables are offered once per week (local is listed on the menu). *
- ☆ The food is served in an appealing manner. (No items are crushed, soggy, frozen, or damaged. Fruits and vegetables are ripe and in good condition).

Environment

- ☆ Sponsor operates for the entire summer, leaving no gap between the beginning and end of NSLP and summer food (with the exception of one week before and after the academic year.)
- ☆ Site is able to maintain steady participation rates throughout the summer.
- ☆ At least two sites offer nutrition education two times a week. *
- ☆ At least two sites offer opportunities for physical education every day.
- ☆ If the site has vending machines, children at the site do not have access to them at any point during the day.
- ☆ The site has created a “sharing table” so that children can place non-perishable food components they do not want on it and other students can take them.
- ☆ Sites provide daily feedback to the sponsor. *

Outreach Efforts

The following criteria are most applicable to “open sites”

- ☆ At least one site has conducted outreach specifically targeted to older, low-income children. *
- ☆ The staff and/or volunteers from at least one site have walked around the surrounding neighborhood or visited areas where low-income families congregate to tell children and families about the free summer meals program.
- ☆ The summer food site is listed with a widely used community hotline service (such as 211) as a place that children can receive free meals throughout the summer. *
- ☆ The site or sponsor used media (radio, newspaper, community or church newsletter, tv) to promote the program.
- ☆ Site or sponsor has worked with local school to expand outreach.
- ☆ Sponsor convenes end of summer meeting with sites to review successes and challenges.

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