

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a federally funded nutrition program aimed at providing free meals to kids during the summer months when they do not have access to free/reduced-price meals at school. Sites can qualify to serve free meals to all children 0-18 years old if more than 50% of the students residing with the school attendance zone qualify for free or reduced price meals. There are additional ways to qualify locations, including census data, if your location does not fit this criterion. The schools or organizations operating the program receive a reimbursement for each eligible meal served. SFSP is an anonymous program, so children do not need to provide any personal or financial information to receive the meals. Meal sites can be located at a variety of locations including schools, community centers, parks, churches, and non-profit organizations. A meal site can serve up to two meals or one meal and one snack per day.

Ways for Schools to Engage

Your school may already be involved with the Summer Food Service Program as a site serving meals. This is typically true if you offer summer school or other summer programs. Other schools may not have experience with the program. No matter what your current engagement is there is a way to help students access meals through SFSP.

Already Serving Summer Meals

If you are already serving summer meals, then the next step is to promote the program as widely as possible. It's important to know and to help inform others, especially students, that at most sites children can take advantage of meals even if they aren't participating in summer school or programs. This can help increase participation at your site, which means more kids get the food they need during the summer months.

Not Serving Summer Meals but Running Summer Programs

If you aren't currently a SFSP meal site but have students around in the summer you should consider adding meal service to your program. The Nutrition Navigator can work with you to explore this possibility and assist with the process of becoming a meal site or sponsor. There are multiple ways this can be arranged and your school can become a meal site without a lot of additional work for summer staff.

Not Serving Summer Meals and Not Running Summer Programs

For schools that do not offer meals and don't have students regularly at the school in the summer months, the best thing you can do is promote nearby meal sites to your students. This will help your students obtain meals in other locations close to where they live and play.

In all three of these scenarios an important part of the process is promoting the program to students and families. This is a great thing to do in May and early June before school gets out, but while students are starting to think about summer. The more you can help promote SFSP the more likely students are to know about the free meals and take advantage of them over the summer. The Nutrition Navigator can work with you to design an outreach plan that fits your school's situation and the needs of your students.