



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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SUBJECT: Mobile Feeding Options in Summer Feeding Programs

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on the use of the mobile feeding model in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This memorandum supersedes SFSP 17-1999: *Mobile Feeding Sites in Rural Areas*, February 12, 1999.

Transporting meals to children rather than requiring children to travel to a meal service site is known as the 'mobile feeding' model. A site is defined as a physical location at which a sponsor provides food services for children and at which children consume meals in a supervised setting [7 CFR 225.2]. Allowable uses of Program funds include the costs of processing, distributing, transporting, storing, or handling any food purchased for, or donated to, the Program [7 CFR 225.2]. Therefore, SFSP and SSO regulations allow Program funds to be used for mobile feeding.

Traditionally, sites are located at schools, playgrounds, parks, churches, community buildings, or other similar places. In rural areas, where children may live in isolated locations, access to meal service sites operated by schools, parks and recreation departments, and private nonprofit organizations is often limited. In urban areas, violence and traffic safety concerns are examples of issues that may limit viable options for site locations. In these cases, mobile feeding may provide the flexibility sponsors need to reach children who do not have access to more traditional sites.

Sponsor and Site Requirements

In mobile feeding, the sponsor delivers meals to an area using a route with a series of stops at approved sites in the community. The meal service must take place on approved days and the sponsor must serve reimbursable meals during approved service times.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Sponsors operating mobile feeding are subject to the following requirements:

- Each location where a bus or other vehicle stops to serve meals must meet the site eligibility criteria and other requirements set forth in Program regulations (e.g., the site must be area eligible, meal service must be supervised, meals must be consumed at the site [on the bus or near the drop-off location], times of meal service must be established, the sponsor must have the ability to adjust meal deliveries based on fluctuations in attendance, etc.).
- Sponsors of mobile sites must take extra precautions to ensure that food is safe for children to eat. State and local health and safety standards must be met at all times. At a minimum, food must be maintained at proper temperatures along the entire delivery route, and temperatures must be monitored with a food thermometer. Program staff serving meals must follow appropriate hand washing procedures, as required.
- A site supervisor must be present at each meal service. Mobile sites may operate as a full service route, where the site supervisor travels with the vehicle along the route and supervises the site at each stop or where meals are delivered to each stop with an onsite supervisor waiting to receive the meals. Site supervisors must remain onsite during the entire approved meal service time, regardless of site attendance.
- State and sponsor monitoring visits and reviews must adhere to the same requirements as all SFSP and SSO sites.

Program Funds

Allowable use of Program funds may include costs related to the processing, distributing, transporting, storing, and handling of any food purchased for, or donated to, the Program.

Expenses associated with vehicles used as part of an SFSP operation is an allowable cost, but must be supported by adequate documentation and must be properly allocated. For example, if the mileage for SFSP deliveries is fifty percent of the van's total mileage, then the sponsor may count only fifty percent of the mileage expense as an allowable cost to the Program. Additionally, the cost of retrofitting a vehicle to allow more efficient transportation of meals is allowable. However, the purchase of a vehicle is not an allowable use of Program funds.

Sponsors should consult with their State agency to ensure specific costs associated with operating mobile sites are allowable. If partners donate money for the cost of operating the vehicle, these funds must be tracked and reported separately from USDA Program funds.

Inclement Weather

Sponsors are required to make arrangements for meal service operations during periods of inclement weather [7 CFR 225.6(c)(2)(D)]. Sponsors of mobile sites should make a reasonable effort to inform children of contingency plans to deal with extreme weather conditions, such as thunderstorms and excessive heat, particularly if meal services would be canceled. In addition, sponsors operating traditional sites may consider mobile feeding as an option when they develop their contingency plans.

Funding Considerations and Opportunities

Building partnerships and seeking out additional funding sources can increase the ability of sponsors to successfully use mobile feeding. Additional sources of income that support the meal programs must be tracked and reported separately from Program funds.

Communities have utilized a variety of approaches to control costs when implementing mobile feeding. To reduce fuel costs, for example, some organizations park mobile feeding buses in the communities, near the feeding sites they serve. They use just one van to deliver meals, one or two times a week, from a central kitchen and the meals are kept in donated cold storage facilities near each bus. As sponsors work with community partners, they can identify additional approaches that will work best for their meal service programs.

Funding opportunities also may be available to support mobile feeding effort, through programs administered by USDA Rural Development agencies and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD), State programs that support housing and economic development, and foundations and other private sources. These funding sources will often have a specific focus. Some will fund only capital expenditures, whereas others may provide funding for operating costs.

The USDA Rural Development Officer in each State can help identify potential funders. When developing a proposal and seeking funding it is important to clearly identify: the needs that the sponsor intends to address; the sponsor's plan for implementing the program; the legal entity that will apply for, receive, and account for the funds; and community stakeholders who support the plan.

Once a proposal is developed, sponsors should contact funders within their State and community. Stakeholders in support of the proposal may also be able to identify funding sources.

To find information about HUD's [Community Development Block Grant Program](#) and local offices in your State, visit

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/about/local.

Regional Directors
State Directors
Page 4

Additional information is available about HUD at <http://www.hud.gov> and about USDA Rural Development at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office.

Original Signed

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