



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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SUBJECT: Expanding Awareness and Access to Summer Meals

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify and provide guidance on requirements in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) related to expanding awareness and access to these programs. This memorandum also highlights resources available to States and sponsors for conducting their required expansion efforts. This memorandum supersedes:

- SFSP 04-2011, *Child Nutrition Authorization 2010: Outreach to Households on the Availability of Summer Food Service Program Meals*, January 25, 2011, and
- SFSP Policy, *Outreach Strategies*, February 4, 2004.

State Agency Requirements

By February 1 of each year, State agencies must announce the purpose, eligibility criteria, and availability of summer meals throughout the State through appropriate means of communication. Additionally, State agencies must target rural areas, tribal organizations, and areas with a concentration of migrant farm workers, as applicable to their communities. State agencies also must identify priority areas in accordance with Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) guidance and target expansion efforts in these areas [7 CFR 225.6(a)(2)].

By February 15 of each year, State agencies must submit a Program Management and Administration Plan (MAP) for approval to the appropriate FNS Regional Office (RO). The MAP must include the State's plan for use of Program funds and funds from within the State to the maximum extent practical to reach needy children. State administrative funds (SAF) may be used for Program expansion, including expenses related to employing personnel, travel, providing technical assistance to sponsors, and any other administrative expenses included in the approved MAP [7 CFR 225.4]. As a reminder, State agencies may also transfer a portion of their State administrative expense funds (SAE) for administrative expenses.

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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.

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FNS ROs are prepared to assist State agencies with the development of MAPs in order for State agencies to successfully meet this regulatory requirement. FNS has developed resources for States and sponsors to use as a part of their expansion efforts, including flyers, door hangers, and brochures for targeted audiences. Information about registering sites with the National Hunger Hotline, and other FNS resources available to assist with the State activities required by 7 CFR 225.6(a)(2) can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>.

As a reminder, Federal funds provided to State agencies for the administration of the Child Nutrition Programs must not be subject to State budget restrictions or limitations including hiring freezes, work furloughs, and travel restrictions [SFSP 07-2011, *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization 2010: Section 361, Full Use of Federal Funds*, February 18, 2011, at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP20_CACFP10_SFSP07-2011_os.pdf].

Outreach through Schools

State agencies that administer the NSLP are required, to the maximum extent possible, to ensure that SFAs cooperate with SFSP sponsors to inform families of the availability and location of free summer meals for students when school is not in session [7 CFR 210.12(d)]. FNS encourages State agencies to facilitate working relationships and partnerships among SFAs, SFSP sponsors, and local governments to ensure that school administrators help promote the availability of meals for children during the summer months.

If the NSLP and SFSP are not administered by the same State agency, the two State agencies must work together to ensure SFAs will inform families of the availability and location of summer meals and help facilitate connections between SFAs and SFSP sponsors. FNS strongly encourages SFAs to inform families of the availability and location of free summer meals through the SSO as well.

SFAs may distribute information through means normally used to communicate with households of enrolled children. Acceptable expansion activities may include developing and distributing printed and electronic materials that provide information on the availability and location of summer meals to families of school children prior to the end of the school year. SFAs should consult with the SFSP State agency if they are not certain whether their activities promote the availability and location of summer meals.

Sponsor Expansion

SAF or SAE may be used by State agencies to fund duties and resources related to expansion responsibilities [7 CFR 225.5(a)(2)]. FNS encourages State agencies to be creative and persistent

in their expansion techniques. Below are areas for State agencies to focus on when developing the State plan.

Sponsor Retention

Retaining successful sponsors from year to year is vital to improving participation. Thorough training and proper monitoring can ensure effective communication between State agencies and sponsors. State agencies are required to make training available in all necessary areas of Program administration to sponsor personnel, food service management company representatives, auditors, and health inspectors who will participate in the Program [7 CFR 225.7(a)]. To better meet the specific training needs of sponsors, State agencies are encouraged to solicit feedback from sponsors at the end of each year's Program operations. State agencies are also encouraged to review findings and observations made during sponsor and site reviews to identify areas in which sponsors would benefit from focused training.

Utilizing Partners

Many statewide advocacy groups, local organizations, public or private agencies, and large school districts have experience with, and systems for, communication with the public. Partnering organizations can assist State agencies by identifying new sponsors, identifying new sites, and raising awareness of open sites in the community.

State agencies may use SAF or SAE to award contracts to partnering organizations working on summer meals expansion. Contracts that include social media marketing services, developing advertising materials, and executing kick-off events are all allowable uses of Program funds as long as they are procured in accordance with 7 CFR 3016.36 and meet the requirements of 2 CFR 225 (OMB Circular A-87, Appendix B, Sections 1 and 32). If State procurement requirements prohibit such formal partnerships, State agencies may work with partners to develop a memo of understanding where duties can be shared without a formal contract or fee.

Identifying Areas of Need

Geo-mapping software, in conjunction with the census data provided by FNS, can be used to identify unserved and underserved areas of need. These identified areas should be prioritized for sponsor and site expansion by State agencies and included in the State's MAP [7 CFR 225.4(b)]. The purchase of geo-mapping software is an allowable use of SAF or SAE as long as it is procured in accordance with 7 CFR 3016.36. Additionally, due to the complexity and cost of many mapping software packages, an analysis should be conducted to ensure that the State agency only purchases software that meets, and does not significantly exceed, the level of functionality it needs to achieve Program goals.

Start-Up Payments

Start-up payments provide financial assistance to sponsors for administrative costs to enable them to effectively plan a summer food service, and to establish effective management procedures for such a service. Start-up payments may be made to sponsors with Program agreements at the State agency's discretion [7 CFR 225.9(a)]. State agencies should make clear to those sponsors receiving start-up payments that the funds will be deducted from either the first advanced payment or reimbursement the sponsor receives.

Peer- to-Peer Connections

Partnering experienced sponsors with new or potential sponsors can add strength to expansion efforts. Connecting similar types of sponsors, such as an existing school sponsor and a potential school sponsor allows an opportunity for the interested applicant to develop a more realistic expectation of their Program's operations. FNS encourages State agencies to facilitate these connections, particularly for new sponsors requesting start-up payments, so that sponsors can more effectively plan operations.

Reaching Families

National Hunger Hotline

The National Hunger Hotline, 1-866-3-HUNGRY, operated by WhyHunger, is a toll-free phone number available to people in need of food assistance. Families can call the National Hunger Hotline to find summer meal sites in their communities, so it is important that sites are accurately listed in the directory. States should register all open sites with the National Hunger Hotline.

To list sites, State agencies should fill out the excel template found at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/Registration_Template.xlsx and email it to nhc@whyhunger.org. State agencies should also update the spreadsheet throughout the summer as 1-866-3-HUNGRY changes. Sponsors are encouraged to call the Hotline directory.

2-1-1

Many communities have 2-1-1 call programs which serve to connect people with important community services such as food, housing, employment, health care, and more. All information is free and confidential. Many 2-1-1 call centers have successfully collaborated with summer meal sponsors by listing open meal service sites in their area. State agencies are encouraged to promote the 2-1-1 call centers and urge sponsors to list their sites. Sponsors are encouraged to work with their local 2-1-1 centers to share summer site information. The 2-1-1 call program is

currently in all 50 States and serves over 90 percent of the population. Visit <http://www.211.org/> to find 2-1-1 call centers in your State.

Community Expansion and Awareness Activities

Media Release

Sponsors must announce the availability of summer meals to the media annually [7 CFR 225.15(e)]. FNS encourages State agencies to complete this requirement for all sponsors in their State through an all-inclusive statewide media release. Radio public service announcements and scripts that may be used are available for download at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>.

Media releases issued on behalf of camps and other programs not located in areas where poor economic conditions exist must include the following information:

- SFSP Income Eligibility Standards established by the Department of Agriculture;
- A statement that a foster child and children who are members of households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families benefits are automatically eligible to receive free meal benefits at eligible Program sites; and
- A statement that meals are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Resources for Raising Awareness

Materials and expenses associated with community awareness efforts are an allowable use of SAF or SAE. Sponsors are encouraged to make use of FNS resources, including the “SFSP Outreach Toolkit for Sponsors and Sites,” which includes fliers, letters to parents, and other materials that help sponsors raise awareness of the Program among children and their families. The Outreach Toolkit can be found at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SFSP_toolkit.pdf. Additional FNS resources, including fliers, door hangers, public service radio announcements, and training videos are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>.

Targeting Media Publications

State agencies are encouraged to submit articles to newsletters and websites of statewide organizations with readers who may be viable potential sponsors. Contact associations in early winter to submit articles promoting summer meals, and include pictures, charts, and statistics

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illustrating the problem of childhood hunger in the summer. Work with local anti-hunger organizations for assistance.

Engaging Local Elected Leaders

State agencies are encouraged to reach out to local elected leaders. Use their visibility to champion summer meals in the form of press, highlighting summer meal programs in print, television, and online media. For tips on ways local leaders can become more involved, please visit http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/mayors_flyer.pdf.

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 FNS RO.

Original Signed

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