

Summer Food Service Program 2011
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Hello, everyone. Thanks for joining us today and participating in the 2011 SFSP webinar series.

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By the end of today's presentation, I hope that we'll accomplish three main tasks.

First, I'm going to give you an overview of the Summer Food Service Program. Our SFSP 101 is meant to give you a broad overview of the program.

Second, I'll go over a few changes brought about by the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010

And Third, I'll be talking about some of the resources that USDA has to offer in order to help make this summer the best year for the Summer Food Service Program.

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Explained in the simplest terms, the Summer Food Service Program is a federally funded, state administered program that provides free nutritious meals to children in low-income areas.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service funds the program at the federal level and state agencies pass on the reimbursements to program sponsors. In most states, the state agency responsible for the program is the Department of Education, but it is the Department of Agriculture or a different Department like the Department of Health or Human Services in a few States. The contact information for each State agency is available on our website and I will point out where to find it during the presentation.

The program operates when school is not in session, typically from the end of the school year in late May or early June until school resumes, usually late August or early September. These dates are different across the country depending on when schools get out for the summer and starts again in the fall.

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First and foremost, the Summer Food Service Program helps to make sure that children get the nutritious food that they need during the summer. Many children from low-income families rely on school meals during the school year and no longer have access to those meals in the summer. This program can make sure kids who might not otherwise have access to enough food during the summer eat nutritious meals.

Kids aren't the only ones that rely on school meals during the school year. When students eat school breakfast and school lunch, it helps parents to stretch their family's food dollars. Summer meals can do the same thing. The cost of two meals a day for five days really adds up.

And last, we'll hear more about this a bit later, but many Summer Meal sites offer activities for children. We've all probably heard of "summer slump" where students lose some of what they learn during the

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school year during summer vacation. The activities at summer food sites can help keep them mentally engaged and ready to learn when the school year begins again.

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There are three major players in the Summer Food Service Program. State Agencies, Sponsors, and Sites. I'll explain the role of each in detail.

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First, States:

State agencies are responsible for all administrative requirements of the Program. To participate in the SFSP, sponsors must sign an agreement with the State agency. The agreement will explain the responsibilities of the State and the sponsor.

The State is also responsible for providing training and technical assistance to all sponsors.

State agencies are also responsible for monitoring the operations of participating sponsoring organizations.

State agencies may provide Sponsors start-up costs and advances before the SFSP season begins.

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Sponsors are the bread and butter of the summer program and are responsible for a wide range of functions.

First, they accept financial and administrative responsibility for their own program.

Second, they manage the food service. This means the sponsor must have food preparation facilities or the capability to oversee a food service management contract.

Sponsors also:

- Train site personnel,
- Arrange for meals at each site and make sure that meals meet USDA nutrition standards to provide kids with healthy food
- Supervise and monitor the operations at each feeding site,
- Assure all paperwork is completed accurately and in a timely manner, and
- Submit claims to the State agency for reimbursement.

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A feeding site can be located in a number of places, indoors and out-of-doors. Sites may be located in:

- Parks
- Swimming pools
- Community and recreation centers
- Churches and faith-based centers
- Playgrounds
- Housing projects
- Camps, both residential and non-residential,
- Schools,
- Migrant centers,
- Libraries, or
- Just about anywhere where children can come together to eat

All of these places are potential sites, but the process of opening a feeding site is a bit more complicated than that.

It's important to point out that organizations that have never been involved with the program before might want to consider participating as a site rather than taking the full administrative responsibility of becoming a sponsor.

To find out if there are existing sponsors in your area, contact your State agency. If a Sponsor exists in your area, you may be able to participate as a site under their sponsorship. It's a great way to get involved.

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Determining eligibility for sites and the kids that eat there can be complicated. Here are two of the most common examples.

The first is an open site. These sites serve meals free to all children 18 years of age or younger. The site must be located in a school attendance area where 50% or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced price meals. The "50%" criteria is based upon school data or census data. Your State agency can provide substantial technical assistance in making these determinations.

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The second type is an enrolled site. At least 50% of the enrolled children at the site must be eligible for Free or reduced price school meals. You can determine this by looking at school or census data OR, but collecting household income application.

Again, I want to stress that these are only the two most common examples but there are more ways to operate the program. The best way to find out about your options is to work with your State agency.

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Reimbursement Rates are adjusted each year. Here you can see the current reimbursement rates for this summer. There are two columns for each meal because the rate is a bit higher for sites located in rural areas and for sites that prepare their own meals.

The reimbursement can be used to cover the operating and administrative costs of conducting the Summer Food Service Program.

Typical operating costs include: the cost of the food, food supplies such as paper bags and napkins, and the cost of labor to prepare and serve the meals and supervise the children.

Administrative costs might include costs associated with doing paperwork, training staff, and monitoring of sites.

The reimbursement supports the non-profit food service. Sponsors use the money for all of the above and also to enhance the food service with better quality food that children want to eat.

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Although at the Federal level, we are a bit removed from the action at summer sites, we often have the opportunity to talk with sponsors and State Agencies about their best practices and I'd like to share some tips here today.

First of all, the most successful summer programs offer activities for kids. Kids are much more likely to come out for a meal when there is an activity to keep them there. Activities include anything from sports, tutoring and arts and crafts, to more creative activities with community partners. Developing partnerships with other community organizations is often the key to being able to offer great activities. One of the most innovative activity partnerships I've heard about is one where a local credit union offered kid and teen-friendly financial lessons like how to open a bank account, how to balance a check book, and how to handle savings to kids at a summer food site. Not necessarily the most intuitive partnership, but it worked for the community and helped the kids to keep learning during the summer. Another creative idea we've heard is zoo keepers coming and bringing an animal. You can also see that in these examples, the summer program used volunteers from the community. Think about the other organizations, businesses, and offices around your location and find ways to get them engaged. There are so many different types or activities you could do at sites, the possibilities are endless.

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Also, a few words on outreach. We're going to talk a bit about the Outreach Toolkit available on the FNS website, But here are a few important best practices that we feel are worth mentioning.

1st, something of a new trend in Summer Food outreach: many organizations are using 211 the social services hotline to advertize summer site locations. This is a great idea and takes a bit of coordination with your local 211 provider. It's working a few different ways, but ultimately, either the sponsor shares site location data with 211 for the area, or the State Agency shares state-wide site information with 211 to make sure the information reaches those looking for food help.

And last, I'll throw in a plug for good old fashioned outreach. Nothing can replaces getting out there and walking the neighborhoods you are trying to serve. Hang door hangers with site information, hang signs and hand out flyers. All the technology in the world can't replace having a conversation about where to get meals in the summer.

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The Healthy and Hunger Free Kids Act made a number of changes to the Summer Food Service Program. I'll talk about three provisions in the law that were specific to the Summer Food Service Program.

First, the Act the number of sites and children that private nonprofit organizations participating in the SFSP can serve. Previously, private nonprofits were permitted to operate no more than 25 sites, with no more than 300 children served at any one site. Private nonprofit sponsors are now subject to the same limits as other sponsors. That is, all sponsors may now be approved to operate a maximum of 200 sites and serve a maximum total average daily attendance of 50,000 children.

The Act also lessens the burdens on State agencies and Sponsors by making all operating agreements permanent. This means that agreements don't expire and don't need to be renewed each year when a Sponsor begins serving meals each summer.

And last but not least, Schools are required to help sponsors get the word out to families about summer food sites. The Act makes it easier for sponsors to reach as many families in a community as possible.

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Now that you know the basics, here's our pitch.

We need your help. As you've probably heard, the Summer Food Service Program is extremely underutilized.

There are over 22 million children in the country taking advantage of free and reduced price meals, but only about 3 million of them eat meals provided by either the Summer Food Service Program or School Meals during the summer.

The problem with low participation is especially critical in rural areas, where transportation issues can make it difficult to get food to the kids and the kids to the food.

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We also know that it is easier to reach younger kids. We especially need help with targeting middle and high school kids.

We are dedicated to improving access to the program, but success happens at the local level with this program.

Regardless of your location, there is a good chance that kids in your community would benefit from better access to the program. We need new sponsoring organizations that will put a program together and feed hungry children. We also need more sites. The good news is, as you just heard, the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 has made it possible for non-profits to operate more than 25 sites each.

If your organization has never run the program before, you should to contact your State agency, find out who sponsors the program already in your community and offer to come on board as a site under their program.

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I'm going to switch gears a bit now and talk about some of the resources that USDA has to offer to assist sites and sponsors.

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The first place to turn when looking for tips and resources is the USDA summer food website at www.summerfood.usda.gov. I'm going to give you a little tour of what's available on the site, but I can't stress it enough, the best thing to do is to visit and see for yourself.

So, this is the SFSP home page on the Food and Nutrition Service website.

The "see also" tab holds all of the other information you're going to need. I mentioned earlier that we have the contact information for State agencies on our website. It's right here in that "see also tab."

If you click on the "How to do community outreach for SFSP" link....

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You'll see this page. I'm not going to go through everything but I do want to point out that this is where the Outreach Toolkit lives, which you can also find in the handout section of the webinar tool that I described earlier and, I also wanted to point out another great resources, our guide to starting the Summer Food Service Program. This guide has all of the information that we're covering today AND a whole lot more.

Whenever we have a new outreach resource, you'll find it here.

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I want to point out the Summer Food Service Program Toolkit. You can see here that it's divided into chapters. The chapters are:

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1. What is outreach?
2. Outreach to families and children
3. Outreach to Media
4. Outreach to community organizations

Within each chapter, you'll find templates for various outreach materials like calendars, letters to parents for schools to send home, flyers to reach kids, additional door hangers, certificates and checklists. There's also a sample news releases, a letter to the editor, program fact sheets, and much more.

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I mentioned the fact that the Summer Food Service Program is a great way to help kids get not only a meal, but a nutritious meal. FNS has resources to help sponsors plan healthy meals within the Healthy Meals Resource System. The screen that you see now can be found through the Team Nutrition section of the FNS website. You'll find recipes, meal planners and many tips for creating healthy meals for kids all summer long.

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That brings us to the end of the presentation. So, now that you have all of this information, what are your next steps if you want to get involved?

Contact your State agency! Remember, the state agency contact information for your state is available on our website under that "see also" tab that I pointed out. Your state agency will be able answer any questions that you might have and also help you get started.

I'd like to thank everyone for participating and taking the time out of your schedules to learn about this program. We really hope we excited you and motivated you start this program – either as a sponsor, a site, or even a volunteer. See what's already in your community and where you can help. There are so many ways for you to get involved and help feed hungry kids in your community this summer. It all starts with you and contacting your state agency. Thank you.