

Summer Food Service Program Webinar Transcript HHS ACF – February 19, 2010

Welcome and thank you for joining us today to learn more about the Summer Food Service Program. My name is Usha Kalro, and I am with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. I also have here with me Pam Phillips and Julie Sutton.

Before proceeding, I would like to review some logistics of this webinar tool. First, handouts for today's session can be found in the handout tab of the webinar tool. The handout tab is on the top right hand side of the screen and looks like three pieces of paper. By clicking on that tab, you will see handouts available for you to download to your computer. There will be a question and answer session following today's presentation. You may ask a question through the webinar tool by typing a question into the question and answer tab located at the top left hand side of your screen, or by pressing "*1" on your phone.

This session is being recorded and will be available online and on demand in the near future. More information on this will be e-mailed out to all registrants.

We're very happy to have HHS Wagner with us today to help promote the Summer Food Service Program. And so I would like to introduce Seth Holmes. He is the director of the Division of Safe Assistance, Office of Community Services Administration for Children and Families, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Seth.

Okay. Thank you very much, Usha, and thank you to everyone who has joined us today. We're very pleased to be able to work together with the USDA on this webinar, and it is an opportunity to provide an important opportunity for the community action network agencies, as well as most importantly an opportunity to provide important services for low-income children and low-income communities.

Several months ago, the Office of Community Services was asked by our Assistant Secretary, Carmen Rosario, to work together with the USDA on ways to promote information on the Summer Food Service Program and ways to connect and make sure that community action agencies had information and were encouraged to look at opportunities to act either as sponsors or providers for the Summer Food Service Program.

We are very pleased. We know that there are many community action agencies that already participate in the program, and we will continue to promote it through a variety of projects at conferences and workshops. It's a natural fit for many community action programs. The missions align in terms of community services, our interest in low-income communities and poverty alleviation, as well as the history of community action programs with food distribution efforts. So with that, we look forward to hearing the webinar and to encourage you to look at the opportunities with this important program. And with that, I'll hand it back to Usha.

Thank you, Seth. What is the Summer Food Service Program? The summer program operates when school is not in session; specifically, from the end of the school year in late May or early June until school resumes -- usually late August or early September. These dates, of course, vary widely across the country. The Summer Food Service Program provides free nutritious meals to children in mostly low-income areas. To participate in this program, children must be eighteen years of age or younger. This is federally funded, but it is administrated by a State agency; generally, the Department of Education.

Your assistance with the summer program is needed. There are over eighteen million children in the country that are eligible for this program, but only three million of them receive meals through this program. The problem with low participation is especially critical in rural areas where transportation issues may be an obstacle. Regardless of your location, there is a good chance a program is needed in a community near you. We need new sponsoring organizations that will put a program together and feed hungry children.

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What are the benefits of this program? The program provides nutritious meals to needy children. In many communities, the two meals received by the children may be the only ones they receive each day during their summer vacation. It gives children the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow. This nourishment will help them properly develop and stay healthy to begin a new school year. It helps low-income families stretch their food dollar during the summer months. Remember, while the child is in school, lunch and many times breakfast is provided to the child at no charge, or very little cost, for nine months of the year. And then let's now talk about the eating machine a teenage boy can be. And lastly, the activities help keep the kids mentally engaged and ready to learn when the new school year begins.

The Summer Food Service Program provides two meals per child, per day. Any combination of two meals may be served, excepting lunch and supper. Normally, a program will provide a breakfast when the children arrive and then provide a lunch before the children leave the site. A snack may be served, and it does count as a meal.

There is an exception to the two-meal rule. \INAUDIBLE\ children of migrant workers may serve up to three meals per child per day, and all meals must meet USDA standards to be eligible for reimbursement. A typical lunch may consist of a meat and cheese sandwich, carrot sticks and apples, and a carton of milk.

The summer program begins when a community works with a State agency. State agencies are responsible for all administrative requirements of the program. To participate in this program, each sponsoring organization must sign an agreement with the State agency. The agreement sets forth the responsibilities of the State and the sponsor. The State is also responsible for providing training and technical assistance to all sponsors. States want sponsors to succeed, so they will take every step necessary to assist both new and experienced sponsors.

State agencies are also responsible for monitoring the operations of participating sponsoring organizations. Sponsoring organizations 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 the 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 and monitor sites and site personnel; arrange for meals at each site; oversee the operations at each feeding site; assure all paperwork is completed accurately and in a timely manner; and most importantly, submit claims for reimbursement.

Several types of organizations can be sponsors of this program. They include such groups as community and State-based organizations, private non-profit organizations, local government, colleges and universities participating in a national youth sports program, migrant centers and Indian reservations. A feeding site can be located in any number of places, indoors and outdoors. Sites may be located in parks; food, community, and recreation centers; churches; playgrounds; housing projects; camps, both residential and non-residential; schools; migrant centers; libraries; or just about anywhere where there are children.

Basically, there are two types of feeding sites. The first is an open site. These sites serve meals free to all children eighteen years of age or younger. The second site is an enrolled site. These sites require the child's family to complete an enrollment form and a household income application. More about this on the next slide.

In order to for a site to be eligible for the program, it must meet one of two criteria. For an open site, the location where meals will be served 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. For an enrolled site, families must submit a household income application for each child enrolled in the program. If 50% of the applications demonstrate eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, then the site may serve free meals to all of

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the children. These criteria may sound a bit confusing, but your State agency can help you through the process.

There are, however, two exceptions to the basic site eligibility rule. Residential and non-residential summer camps may serve up to three meals per child per day; however, only meals served to children who meet the free or reduced-price meals criteria, based upon household income applications, will be reimbursed.

The second exception is for feeding sites that primarily serve children of migrant workers. In order to for the site to be determined eligible, the location must be certified by a migrant organization. Then the site may serve up to three meals, per child, per day to all children.

USDA provides two types of reimbursements to defray the cost of operating the Summer Food Service Program. Sponsoring organizations receive reimbursement for operating costs which include the cost of the food; food supplies, such as paper bags and napkins; and the cost of labor to prepare the meals. Sponsors also receive administrative reimbursement for costs associated with doing paperwork, \INAUDIBLE\, monitoring the sites, and all the other functions we discussed earlier. Additional reimbursement is also provided to sponsors that operate sites in rural areas or prepare their own meals, sometimes referred to as "self-prep."

What can you do to help? You could become a sponsor of the program; or, if you want less responsibility, you could supervise a feeding site; or you could oversee an activity program at a feeding site. Many folks spend their summers looking for interesting and innovative activities for their children. We even had a zoo representative bring an animal to a feeding site for show and tell. If you have meal preparation facilities, you could be a meal vendor. As a vendor, you could enter into a contract with a sponsor to provide the meals for all sites.

Listed here are just a few organizations you may want to contact to obtain community information or form partnerships. These are not the usual suspects, so bear with me. The mayor's office: They will know community organizations you can partner with. County extension agents: They usually know their community and other organizations. Boys and girls clubs: They are probably aware of many local children's programs. The Salvation Army already has many successful sites. Police and fire departments: They are usually willing to help community organizations. Local community groups like the Rotary Club can possibly help with transportation issues. And local libraries, often having summer reading programs, may have a building suitable for serving meals. Contact these organizations, plus others in your community that may be helpful.

So what are some of the keys to a successful summer program? Over the years, we have found five ingredients for a successful program. The first key is to have creative activities for kids and teens. We have found that the meals are often not enough to draw children to a site; however, add one or two activities to your recreation program, and you have a winning combination. Partnerships are becoming more important as funding for children's programs continue to decrease. There may already be an established program in your community that could serve a breakfast when children arrive and lunch before they leave.

Next, involve parents whenever you can. Parents often know the community and the neighborhood children very well, and are often your best source of information. Be resourceful and innovative, looking for opportunities especially unlikely ones. For instance, in rural Nebraska, a sponsor was having difficulty finding a meal vendor. They approached a local hospital that was very interested and needed very little technical assistance on how to serve nutritious meals.

Above all, you need to find a local champion, especially in rural areas. This is someone who will go the extra mile to get the job done. This person needs to know and understand that starting a program, especially in a rural area, may be difficult at first but a little hard work will pay off in the end. Local champions are creative, innovative, and self-starters. Every community has a few of these champions. You just need to find them. Perhaps that champion is you.

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So now you're thinking, How do I get started? The answer is easy. Contact your State agency. Your State agency will provide you with an application, training on the required paperwork, and will help you with every aspect of the program. To find your State agency, please visit the USDA website on the Summer Food Service Program. The link is here on this slide. Then click on "Getting Started" to find your state. The state contact list is being updated as we speak, and will be posted at this website in a day or two. We will also have an online tool kit that will be available very soon.

So at this time, I would like to open up the floor to questions. We are ready to take questions in two ways: press "*1" on your phone, or type your question into the Q&A tab on the top of the \INAUDIBLE\ screen.

Operator, could you please open up the phone lines?

If you'd like to ask a question, please press "*1." You will be prompted to prerecord your first and last name. To withdraw your question, please press "*2." One moment, please.

"*1" to ask a question.

While we're waiting for people to call in over the phone, we have one question here: "Our agency is not capable of preparing and serving the meals. Is it possible to apply and have another local agency subcontract with us to prepare and serve the meals?" Judy, would you like to take this?

Sure. It is possible for a community-based organization to sponsor the program and develop a contract with a vendor or a company that can prepare meals. And the issue comes under the nuance in your question -- the part about preparing and serving. You can develop a contract with a vendor to purchase the meals from the vendor, and they can deliver them to the site. You are responsible for training the site folks and your own folks to oversee the service of the meals.

The next question: Is the PowerPoint available online?

Yes, it's one of the documents. If you click on the "Documents" -- the top hand right corner where you see three pieces of paper, this PowerPoint is posted, and it can be downloaded.

The PowerPoint is also available on the summerfood.usda.gov website under \INAUDIBLE\.

Operator, are there any phone questions at this time?

There are no audio questions.

There's another question we have here: "Do the meals have to have a meat and cheese sandwich, apple, and milk; or can other food be substituted?"

Meals must meet meal pattern requirements that are set by the Summer Food Services Program regulations, and those are also available on the website. But the meals are based on four food requirements which are \INAUDIBLE\ and milk, bread or a bread alternate, fruit and vegetables, and a meat or beef alternate. So those are the four meal pattern requirements that are set by regulation. You do have a lot of organizations that prepare \INAUDIBLE\ and serve \INAUDIBLE\.

While we're waiting for some more questions to come in, if somebody would like to comment on a success story that they may be aware of in their community regarding this program, we would be happy to get some of that information here. Would anybody like to share a success story with us right now?

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Any questions, operator?

Again, if you'd like to ask a question, please press "*1."

[Pause]

At this point I would really like to emphasize we really need your help. We are not serving all the children that need to be served, and we really need the communities to come together and help us serve these children so they don't go hungry.

Okay. If there are no more questions at this time, then I would like to say thank you to all of you once again for joining us, and that concludes today's webinar.

We have one more question, operator. Can we take this question?

Go right ahead.

It says, "Can volunteers and \INAUDIBLE\ that work at my agency participate in this?"

I'm not exactly sure how to answer that question. The organization that sponsors the program can use their staff or community volunteers to operate the program. The sponsor is responsible for making sure that the folks that are \INAUDIBLE\ are trained \INAUDIBLE\. And yes, you can use your current volunteers \INAUDIBLE\.

Any other questions? Please press "*1" or type it in to the Q&A \INAUDIBLE\.

Actually, we do have a couple of questions on the audio portion. Please state your name. Your line is open. Please state your name.

Okay, there is one other question.

Ma'am, my name is \INAUDIBLE\, I'm sorry. Can you hear me now?

Your line is open.

Okay, great. The question I have is that I work for a new \INAUDIBLE\. We just became a \INAUDIBLE\ in the past six months, and our organization already delivers Meals on Wheels to the citizens, but some of these citizens reside with their adult children and their children. And so I'm just wondering if we could incorporate this program when we're doing the Meals on Wheels to also deliver meals to the children in the household of the Meals on Wheels citizens. Could we do that?

\INAUDIBLE\

Okay, okay thank you.

There is one other question. Please state your name.

Beckie Hassler.

You're line is open, ma'am.

My question is, we have a number of working moms in our community action agency; and if their children or their household met the eligibility criteria, is there any difficulty with agency staff children participating in the program?

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That a very unique question, and I would encourage you to get with your State agency \INAUDIBLE\ with that question.

Ma'am, we can't make out what you're saying.

I'm sorry. The question was can working staff children \INAUDIBLE\, and I am not going to be able to answer that question. \INAUDIBLE\ State agency.

There are no further questions.

Okay, we have a couple more questions coming in. How much time is needed to plan for this program? Is there enough time to complete agreements with my State agency to provide meals this summer?

The answer to that question is going to vary from state to state. Each State agency sets its own deadlines \INAUDIBLE\. Many states also have training. \INAUDIBLE\.

Any other questions, operator?

There is one other question. One moment. Please state your name. Please unmute your line and state your name. Please unmute your line and state your name.

\INAUDIBLE\.

Your line is open.

We're having a very difficult time hearing the answers to the questions. Is there a way that you can send the questions out -- the questions along with the responses?

We have some of these questions that have come to us by the Q&A. We will attempt to put answers to some of these questions and post them online for anybody to see.

Okay, thank you.

Hi, this is Pam \INAUDIBLE\. You can also submit your questions to Emily Buckham, whom some of you -- I think you all have her as the contact; or, if she isn't the contact, whoever the contact is on the signup that you did. I believe it is Emily Buckham. And we will make sure that all of the questions and answers are provided.

If somebody would call me back now and let me know what is occurring when you're getting the answer -- if you're hearing it broken up. Operator, can someone press "*1" and indicate what feedback they're getting that's negative, so we'll know for future reference? Okay. Well, just submit your questions; and we will then get back with you with the answers.

Ma'am, we do have another question. Daklin Elby Shannon, your line is open.

Okay. You asked for someone to call back and tell what is happening with your responses. It is really a muffled sound. You can barely hear the voices.

All the voices?

Well, you can hear the person asking the question very clearly, but the person responding to the question is very muffled and crackling.

And you heard the presentation also -- all of it?

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Yes, we heard the presentation; and that was very clear. But when we got to the question and answer session, we could only hear the person asking the questions very clearly; but the responses, we could barely make out.

Okay. Since we have quite a few questions right now, we do want to continue on. How about if we try to assist that effort by working to repeat the answer that's provided?

Okay.

Here's another question. I just visited the site, but I do not see the RFP or application form. How is the application listed?

As we mentioned before, the applications are not online. You have to contact your State agency, and they have their own application processes that you must complete.

Okay, and let's repeat that -- that the applications are not online, that you will need to contact your State agency.

We do have another question. Hector Sanchez, your line is open.

No, I was just going to state the same thing.

Did we agree that answered your question then?

Yes.

All right. Thank you.

Patty Atherton, your line is open. Patty Atherton, your line is open.

It was the same thing about the muffled phone. Thank you.

Thank you for responding to that because that helps us make sure that we work out all of our kinks in our presentations. Thank you.

You're most welcome.

Here's another question. What is the deadline for applications?

Again, the deadline for application is going to vary from state to state. The regulatory deadline is in June; but each state can set an earlier deadline. And I'm hoping -- was that easier to hear?

Yes.

Okay.

Once again, if you'd like to ask a question on the audio portion, please press "*1."

I just want to let folks know that a lot of these questions that have been asked today are available on line. We have a "Frequently Asked Questions" portion on our website, and I encourage you to go there just to see if some of your questions can be answered there.

We do have another question. Shirley Trummley, your line is open.

Hi, my question was the first one that you answered online; and I did not hear the answer at all. I was wondering if you could repeat that?

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Would you repeat your question, because it goes away once we answer.

Oh, sure. We're an agency that's not capable of serving or preparing meals; but we're questioning if another agency could subcontract with us to prepare and serve them.

Yes, the answer is you may enter into a contract agreement with another organization to prepare the meals; but you cannot enter into an agreement with another organization to prepare and serve the meals.

Okay.

So you are responsible for overseeing the service of the meals.

Okay, I understand. Thank you for repeating the answer.

There are no further questions.

Okay. Once again, once this webinar ends, please feel free to contact Emily Buckham with your questions; and we will attempt to answer them for you. If there are no more questions at this time, I would like to say thank you all for joining us today, and that concludes today's webinar.