

Offering Seamless Summer Option During the School Year

Issue Number: E-Memo 11-2026

Correspondence Date: 11/06/2026

Regulatory Authority: Section 13(a)(8) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, [42 U.S.C. 1761\(a\)\(8\)](#),

Response Required: No

Attention: Superintendents and Child Nutrition Directors

Contact: Courtney Erick

Phone Number: 501-324-9502

Email: Courtney.erick@ade.arkansas.gov

The Seamless Summer Option (SSO) is an extension of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which allows children to receive nutritious meals during the summer months or during vacation periods longer than 10 days.

SSO serves a combination of two of the following programs: breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack. (Note: if offering lunch, supper may also not be provided). There are several types of sites that a district may operate:

- a. Open: First come, first serve basis serves all children aged 18 and under at a site that is located in an area that is considered area eligible.
- b. Restricted Open: First come, first serve basis serves a limited number of children aged 18 and under at a site that is located in an area that is considered area eligible. Attendance is limited for reasons of security, safety, and control.
- c. Closed Enrolled: Serves only an enrolled group of children aged 18 and under. These children are participating in a specific program or activity at a site that is located in an area that is considered area eligible.
- d. Camps: Serves enrolled children during a regularly scheduled food service period as part of an organized program. These programs may be residential or non-residential.
 - a. Area eligibility cannot be used to establish camp site eligibility under SSO. Eligibility may be determined for each enrolled student. This information can be determined by obtaining information from their school, submitting applications or direct certification.
- e. Migrant: Primarily serve children of migrant families aged 18 and under, as certified by a migrant coordinator. Eligibility is determined based on information from migrant organizations.

Establishing Area Eligibility

- a. School site free/reduced data: School data submitted on the Cycle 2 report to Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) will be used to establish area eligibility for SSO, excluding camps. Area eligibility must indicate that the proposed meal location is within a school attendance area where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
- b. Census data: School Food Authorities (SFAs) may document the area eligibility of their proposed open or restricted open sites based on census data. SSO sites that choose to establish eligibility using census data are required to use the most recent data available (Census Bureau or Area Eligibility Map).
 - a. Census Bureau data visit <http://www.census.gov> Under the Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS), new five-year estimates are made available each year. The duration of determinations or site eligibility based on census data is 5 years.
 - b. Area Eligibility Map using census data visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/area-eligibility>
 - i. The area eligibility map can be used to see if a potential site is in an area where it can be an open site. Census Block Groups are the geographical unit used to access eligibility for SSO when using census data. Fifty percent or more of the children in a census block group must be eligible for free/reduced price school meals to establish area eligibility.

Establishing Rural Sites

The non-congregate meal service option is only available in rural areas where there is no congregate meal service available. A rural area is defined as any area in a county which is not a part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area. Or any “pocket” within a Metropolitan Statistical Area which is determined to be geographically isolated from urban areas. Non-congregate style meal service includes options such as meal pick up or home delivery. Non-congregate sites may choose to serve up to five (5) days of unitized meals or five (5) days of bulk meals if using home delivery and/or meal pick up options. While utilizing this option, sites may only prepare and distribute up to two meals per child per day. Sites must ensure they are able to maintain program integrity and meet state and local health and safety requirements.

- a. Metropolitan Statistical Area: A Rural Designation Map to assist in determining sites that are considered rural.
 - a. For FNS Rural Designation Map visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/rural-designation>
 - b. Rural Pockets: ADE with the concurrence of FNS regional office have parameters to assist in determining sites that are located within a Metropolitan Statistical Area but are geographically isolated.

To participate in SSO, the SFA will be required to complete and submit a [Schedule C-26 application](#) for each meal site. Please submit all schedule Cs to ADE.CNU-A-PS@ade.arkansas.gov a minimum of two weeks prior to start of SSO operation. The schedule C must be approved prior to serving and claiming SSO meals for reimbursement.

During operation of SSO the SFA is required to complete the [SSO On-Site Monitoring Form](#), regardless of the type of service being implemented. This helps ensure the site is in compliance with Federal and State Requirements.

To claim SSO meals, schools must ensure that all meals meet USDA nutrition standards, maintain accurate daily meal counts, and submit an SSO claim, this is a separate claim than meals claimed under the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program. Only eligible meals served to children at approved sites can be claimed for reimbursement.

Nutrition Services will review each school district that has an Administrative Review and operates SSO. Nutrition Services is also required to monitor each new non-congregate site. These reviews consist of reviewing meal counting and claiming, meal pattern, and other general program requirements

Contact your Area Specialist via email or at 501-324-9502 for further details.