

Summer Meals 2025

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Response Required: No

Attention: Superintendents, Child Nutrition Directors and Managers

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Summer Meal Programs are established to ensure that children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) continues to offer two options for public schools to feed students after the regular school year ends. A list of summer meal programs may be found on the USDA website: [Summer Meals Site Finder](#)

OPTION 1: Regular Summer Meals Program

Regular Summer Meals Program serves breakfast and lunch as a continuation of the regular school meal programs. Any of the child nutrition programs (breakfast, lunch, or afterschool snack) may be served as part of the summer educational programs operated by the school district. With the regular summer meals program, the collection procedure approved in the current 2024-2025 Agreement and Policy Statement must be used to collect money and count/claim the students by eligibility category or updated to meet summer collection and meal count procedures. The regular summer meals program may be operated by any public school regardless of the percentage of children receiving free and reduced-price meals.

OPTION 2: Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

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

- a. **Open:** On a 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:** On a 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 DESE 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: 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/acs>. 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

- 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: DESE 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.

The non-congregate meal service option is only available in rural areas where there is no congregate meal service available. This option is available to sites who are operating under SSO or SFSP. 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.

To participate in SSO the SFA will be required to complete and submit a [Schedule C-25](#) application for Seamless Summer Meals 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 by CNU prior to the serving and claiming summer 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.

CNU will review each school district that had an Administrative Review and operates SSO. CNU 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.

OPTION 3: Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

This option is available to SFAs interested in administering a summer feeding program. The SFSP program is administered by Special Nutrition (SNU). You may contact SNU or further details at 501-320-8967.

All SFAs are required to inform families of the availability and location of free summer food service program meals for students when school is not in session. Outreach could include flyers, letters to parents, social media post, school website announcements, and other materials to help raise awareness about the availability of summer meals among children and their families.

Training/Resources:

Digital Learning April 3, 2025, [Register Here](#)

Sample Summer Meals Outreach [Flyer](#), [Social Media](#), [Summer Meals for Kids Site Finder](#)

[Training for SSO Non-Congregate Meal Service](#)

[SFSP V. SSO Reimbursement Rate Comparison](#)

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