

Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Comparison Chart

Here is a comparison between the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for the 2025 summer season. Please use the information below to determine which meal program best meets the needs of your summer season operation.

Topic	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	Seamless Summer Option (SSO)
Sponsoring Organization	School Food Authorities (SFAs), private non-profit organizations, community and faith-based organizations, colleges or universities, and local government agencies	School Food Authorities (SFAs) currently administering the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP)
Times of Operation	May – September, outside of the regular school year calendar October – April, during unanticipated school closures	May – September, outside of the regular school year calendar October – April, during unanticipated school closures
Site Locations	Schools, community buildings, libraries, apartment complexes, parks, swimming pools, splash pads, churches and other public sites where children gather	Schools, community buildings, libraries, apartment complexes, parks, swimming pools, splash pads, churches and other public sites where children gather
Eligible Participants	All children who are 18 years of age and under and those persons over age 18 who are enrolled in school programs for persons with disabilities are eligible	All children who are 18 years of age and under and those persons over age 18 who are enrolled in school programs for persons with disabilities are eligible
Establishing Site Eligibility	<p>May operate as:</p> <p>Open - sites that serve all children 18 and under. To be eligible, the site must be located within an area where at least 50 percent or more of the children are certified eligible for free or reduced price meals based on school or census data.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Closed Enrolled - sites that serve only an identified group of children, such as the students enrolled in a summer enrichment program. At least 50 percent or more of the children enrolled at the site must be approved for free or reduced price meals or the site is located in an area eligible region based on school or census data.</p>	<p>May operate as:</p> <p>Open - sites that serve all children 18 and under. To be eligible, the site must be located within an area where at least 50 percent or more of the children are certified eligible for free or reduced price meals based on school or census data.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Closed Enrolled - sites that serve only an identified group of children, such as the students enrolled in a summer enrichment program. At least 50 percent or more of the children enrolled at the site must be approved for free or reduced price meals or the site is located in an area eligible region based on school or census data.</p>

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	<p>OR</p> <p>Camp (residential or non-residential day camp) – sites that offer regularly scheduled food service as part of an organized program for enrolled children. No required minimum free or reduced price percentage.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Conditional Non-congregate – sites that conduct a non-congregate meal service for eligible children in an area that does not meet the definition of “area in which poor economic conditions exist.”</p>	<p>OR</p> <p>Camp (residential or non-residential day camp) – sites that offer regularly scheduled food service as part of an organized program for enrolled children. No required minimum free or reduced price percentage.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Conditional Non-congregate – sites that conduct a non-congregate meal service for eligible children in an area that does not meet the definition of “area in which poor economic conditions exist.”</p>
Reimbursement Rate	<p>Meals are reimbursed at the SFSP Reimbursement Rates:</p> <p>Breakfast -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$3.0875 (self-prep or vended-rural) ● \$3.0300 (vended-urban) <p>Lunch/Supper -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$5.4025 (self-prep or vended-rural) ● \$5.3150 (vended-urban) <p>Snack -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$1.2800 (self-prep or vended-rural) ● \$1.2500 (vended-urban) 	<p>Meals are reimbursed at the free NSLP and SBP Reimbursement Rates:</p> <p><u>NSLP/SBP rates through June 30:</u></p> <p>Breakfast -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$2.37 ● \$2.84 (Severe Need) <p>Lunch/Supper* -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$4.52 ● \$4.54 (Severe Need) <p>Snack -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$1.21 <p>*Includes performance-based reimbursement of \$0.09</p> <p><u>NSLP/SBP rates effective July 1:</u></p> <p>SY 2025-26 rates have not yet been released as of 3/11/25 but will be effective July 1, 2025</p>
Meal Reimbursement for Children	<p>Open and Closed Enrolled sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All meals served to eligible children are reimbursed at the appropriate SFSP rate. <p>Camp and Conditional Non-congregate sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meals are reimbursed at the appropriate SFSP rates for children eligible for free or reduced price meals. 	<p>Open and Closed Enrolled sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All meals served to eligible children are reimbursed at the appropriate NSLP or SBP free rate. <p>Camps and Conditional Non-congregate sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meals are reimbursed at the appropriate NSLP/SBP free rates for children eligible for free or reduced price meals.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reimbursement is provided for meals served to children approved for paid status. Camps and Conditional Non-congregate sites may charge children for these meals or cover them with other non-program funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reimbursement is provided for meals served to children approved for paid status. Camps and Conditional Non-congregate sites may charge children for these meals or cover them with other non-program funds.
Meal Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakfast Lunch Snack (AM or PM) Supper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakfast Lunch Snack (AM or PM) Supper
Maximum Number of Meals Served	<p>Open, Closed Enrolled and Conditional Non-congregate sites (per day, per child):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 2 meals <i>or</i> 1 meal and 1 snack <i>or</i> 2 snacks Lunch and supper cannot be reimbursed for the same day for the same site <p>Camp Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 3 meals/snacks per child, per day 	<p>Open, Closed Enrolled and Conditional Non-congregate sites (per day, per child):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 2 meals <i>or</i> 1 meal and 1 snack <i>or</i> 2 snacks Lunch and supper cannot be reimbursed for the same day for the same site <p>Camp Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 3 meals/snacks per child, per day
Meal Pattern	<p>SFAs can elect to follow the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSLP Meal Pattern SBP Meal Pattern <p><i>or</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFSP Meal pattern <p>Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is allowed for SFA sponsors.</p>	<p>SFAs must follow the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSLP Meal Pattern SBP Meal Pattern <p>Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is allowed.</p>
USDA Foods	<p>Available to program sponsors who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare their own meals Purchase meals from an SFA that participates in NSLP Are SFAs that procure their meals from the same FSMC that provides their NSLP/SBP meals 	<p>Available to SFAs who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare their own meals Purchase meals from an SFA that participates in NSLP Procure their meals from the same FSMC that provides their NSLP/SBP meals
Food Production Records	<p>Food production records are not required but the sponsor must maintain documentation of the meals served. This recordkeeping could be via production records or a detailed menu plan with identified portion sizes.</p>	<p>Food production records are required.</p>

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Meal Service Times	<p>Breakfast must be served at the beginning of the day.</p> <p>Breakfast cannot be served after a lunch or supper service.</p> <p>A minimum of 1 hour must elapse between the end of one meal and the beginning of another.</p>	<p>Meal times for breakfast and lunch must follow the times in the SBP and NSLP regulations.</p> <p>Breakfast must be served in the morning hours.</p> <p>Lunch must be offered between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.</p> <p>Snacks must be adequately spaced between other meal service times.</p>
Meal Service Options	<p>Congregate meal service – a food service at which meals that are provided to children are consumed on site in a supervised setting.</p> <p>Non-congregate meal service – a food service at which meals are provided for children to consume all of the components off-site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to rural areas with no congregate meal service ● Grab-and-Go ● Curbside Service ● Take-home backpacks ● Home delivery 	<p>Congregate meal service – a food service at which meals that are provided to children are consumed on site in a supervised setting.</p> <p>Non-congregate meal service – a food service at which meals are provided for children to consume all of the components off-site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to rural areas with no congregate meal service ● Grab-and-Go ● Curbside Service ● Take-home backpacks ● Home delivery
Can food be taken off-site from a congregate meal service?	<p>Yes, sponsors may allow a child to take one fruit, vegetable or grain item off-site for later consumption, if health and sanitation regulations are followed and adequate supervision is in place.</p>	<p>Yes, SFAs may allow a child to take one fruit, vegetable or grain item off-site for later consumption, if health and sanitation regulations are followed and adequate supervision is in place.</p>
Point of Service (POS)	<p>Meals must be counted at the point where meals are distributed using a meal count tally form, electronic POS, roster or clicker.</p> <p>In a Camp or Conditional Non-congregate site, meal participation must be collected on a roster with student's names or by utilizing an electronic POS.</p>	<p>Meals must be counted at the point where meals are distributed using a meal count tally form, electronic POS, roster or clicker.</p> <p>In a Camp or Conditional Non-congregate site, meal participation must be collected on a roster with student's names or by utilizing an electronic POS.</p>
Second (unplanned) Meal Claiming	<p>All SFSP sites must plan and prepare for one meal, per child, per meal service.</p> <p>Sponsors may be reimbursed for second meals or snacks, up to 2% of the total claimed.</p>	<p>All SSO sites must plan and prepare for one meal, per child, per meal service.</p> <p>SFAs may not claim reimbursement for second meals or snacks.</p>

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	Second meals in a rural non-congregate meal service are not allowed.	
IowaCNP Application Requirements	Sponsors must complete the full SFSP application packet in the SFSP module in IowaCNP.	SFAs must complete SSO site application(s) in the current School Nutrition Program (SNP) application packet in IowaCNP.
Application Deadline	May 1	May 1
Training Requirements	<p>Sponsors are required to participate in annual State agency SFSP sponsor training.</p> <p>Sponsors are required to provide training to administrative and operational staff.</p>	<p>No additional State agency training is required.</p> <p>SFAs are encouraged to provide training to administrative and operational staff related to summer season and school year operational differences.</p>
Notification to the Community/ Outreach	<p>A media release to announce the availability of free meals, the nondiscrimination policy and complaint procedure is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsors of camps and closed enrolled sites must notify participants or enrolled children of the availability of free meals and not the community as a whole. <p>Sponsors are required to conduct outreach to inform families about the availability and location of free meals for students via the SFSP. This information can be shared through the school website, flyers, email communication, newsletters, social media or other means of communication.</p>	<p>A media release may be completed but is not required.</p> <p>SFAs are required to conduct outreach to inform families about the availability and location of free meals for students via the SSO. This information can be shared through the school website, flyers, email communication, newsletters, social media or other means of communication.</p>
Health Dept Notification	Required	Not required
Monitoring Requirements of SFA or Sponsor	<p>SFSP Internal Site Monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Operational Visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New sites and sites with operational problems • Sponsor Site Visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New sites and sites with operational problems ○ Within first two weeks of operation 	<p>The SFA must monitor each SSO site once, annually, during summer season operations.</p> <p>The SFA monitoring includes review of meal counting, claiming, meal pattern compliance and food safety requirements.</p>

Topic	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	Seamless Summer Option (SSO)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Site Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All sites ○ Within first four weeks of operation ○ Can be conducted in conjunction with Sponsor Site Visit <p>Sites switching from congregate meal service to non-congregate are considered “new” sites, including those switching to a hybrid service.</p>	
Monitoring Requirements of State Agency	The State agency must conduct an administrative review of sponsors at least once every 3 years.	The State agency must conduct an administrative review consistent with NSLP/SBP requirements. The State agency must include the review of one SSO site as part of the school year administrative review.

If you have any questions, please contact your [Regional School Nutrition Consultant](#) or Stephanie Dross at stephanie.dross@iowa.gov

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1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:** Program.Intake@usda.gov

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