

Summer Feeding Options in Tennessee

Many students rely on nutritious school meals on a daily basis, and when school is not in session, this service needs to continue. There are two summer feeding programs that are available for communities to feed children during the summer: the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) is a continuation of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and is administered by the Department of Education and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is administered by the Department of Human Services. Summer feeding programs also allow for the ability to serve meals to students during unanticipated school closures and thus have been a crucial aspect of maintaining food security during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Program sponsors administer summer and emergency feeding programs at the local level. Sponsors must demonstrate financial viability, accountability, and administrative capability to operate a summer feeding program. Only School Food Authorities (SFAs), entities that already administer NSLP, are eligible to become SSO sponsors; SFSP may be sponsored by SFAs or can also be sponsored by other community organizations, including but not limited to, YMCAs, human resource organizations, and local governments.

Sponsors are responsible for establishing summer feeding sites where food is consumed or distributed. Regulations and guidelines for establishing site eligibility are the same across both programs. Under normal operating conditions, food must be consumed on site, but due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, meals can currently be distributed for consumption off-site. Many flexibilities set forth from the USDA are set to expire June 30; therefore, the models of how these programs operate may shift. More information on summer feeding flexibilities related to COVID-19 can be found on the [USDA website](#).

Summer and emergency feeding operations rely on many community partners to be successful. Communities are encouraged to work collaboratively to create a transition plan to move from an emergency feeding model as the June 30 deadline approaches. Many families may have become accustomed to picking up multiple meal types for multiple days with or without children present. Clear communication will need to be provided regarding how long the current emergency feeding operations will continue and how the operation will change in coming months. Although communities are encouraged to continue participating in summer feeding programs, sometimes participation is not feasible for a multitude of circumstances. However, lack of participation in a formalized USDA summer feeding program does not equate to a lack of community support to ensure food security; often, communities work together to provide food to families through other programs.

To find summer feeding sites, utilize the [USDA Meals for Kids Site Finder](#) or text 'Food' or 'Comida' to 877-877. For additional information regarding summer feeding programs, contact Randa Meade at Randa.Meade@tn.gov.



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