



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Potential 2026 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Sponsors

**FROM:** Shannon K. Yearwood, Bureau Chief   
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, Connecticut State Department of Education

**DATE:** April 1, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Application Package for the SFSP

This memorandum provides detailed information on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) electronic application for the SFSP Program Year (PY) 2026. The SFSP application resources and instructions are available in the "[Apply](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

As required by [Section 225.6\(b\)\(1\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) SFSP regulations, the CSDE has established a deadline of **May 1, 2026**, for submitting the electronic application for participation in the 2026 SFSP. If board approval is required, please plan accordingly. Submitted applications that are complete, in good order, and received by this date will be approved by the CSDE within 30 calendar days.

Sponsors requesting advance payments for June operation and administrative costs must submit a complete application to the CSDE by **4:30 p.m. on April 15, 2026**. A sponsoring organization must serve a minimum of ten operating days in June to be eligible for a June advance.

**Do not submit the previous year's forms.** The documents included in the application packet are provided to assist sponsors with the electronic application process for the current year only. Applications containing prior year's forms cannot be reviewed or processed. Application packets containing prior year forms will be considered incomplete and will delay the approval of the application.

### **Application Procedures for 2026**

Each SFSP sponsor must complete one electronic *Sponsor Application*. In addition, sponsors must complete an electronic *Site Application* for each site location that will be operated. The CSDE's [2026 Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) Application Components for Sponsors](#) provides instructions that sponsors must follow to complete all required application components. For information on using the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System) These additional resources are available on the CSDE's [CNP System](#) webpage.

SFSP regulations ([7 CFR 225.9\(d\)](#)) require that reimbursements shall not be paid for meals served at a site before the sponsor has received written notification from the state agency (CSDE) that the site has been approved for participation in the SFSP. Therefore, meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement if they are served prior to the date the sponsor has received written approval from the CSDE to operate the site. The CSDE must also provide written authorization prior to the sponsor implementing any operational changes that take place after the initial application has been approved, such as a change in meal service time or dates of operation.

## **Site Eligibility Documentation**

To establish an area eligible site, the site must be located where school data or census data show that at least 50 percent of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Receiving free meals during school year (SY) 2025-25 does not automatically confer individual income eligibility for free meals.

### *School Data*

Sponsors using school data to establish “open” or “restricted open” sites must specify the relevant school from which the site draws its attendance on the Site Application and indicate the year in which it was determined area eligible. For “open” and “restricted open” sites, area eligibility documentation using school data need only be established once every five years. If eligibility for an area eligible site was established between 2020 and 2025 using the CSDE’s Area Eligibility School List, the site is eligible in 2026. Area eligibility with school data may only be conferred using the CSDE’s [Area Eligible Schools List](#).

### *Census Data*

Sponsors may also document the area eligibility of their proposed “open” or “restricted open” sites based on census data. SFSP sites that establish area eligibility using census data are required to use the most recent census data available. Site area eligibility determined using census data is valid for five years and must be reassessed at least every five years. For more information, review [USDA Memo SP 08-2017, CACFP 04-2017 and SFSP 03-2017: Area Eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs](#), dated December 1, 2016.

Sponsors using census data may use one of two geographical units to assess SFSP area eligibility: Census Block Groups (CBGs) or Census Tracts. Sites established using census data are area eligible for five years if the site is located in a CBG or Census Tract in which 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

### *Census: Weighted Average*

If a potential SFSP site is not directly area eligible but is located right next to an eligible area that was determined eligible using census data, the sponsor may request CSDE approval to determine eligibility using a weighted average of up to three neighboring CBGs. The site will qualify as area eligible if the average percentage of children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals across these CBGs is at least 50%. However, each individual CBG must have at least 40% of children eligible for these meals to be included in the weighted average. Census

Tracts cannot be combined, and Census Tract and CBG data can be found on the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service [SFSP Area Eligibility Map](#).

### *Camps*

Residential and nonresidential camps cannot use area eligibility to establish site eligibility.

### **Site Definitions**

The electronic SFSP application requires an indication of the type of site being operated. Refer to the definitions listed below for the four most common types of sites and the type of eligibility documentation required. Additional types of sites are identified in the USDA's 2025 [Administration Guide Summer Food Service Program](#).

1. **Open Site:** Site eligibility based on "need and openness." Open sites are located in an at-risk area (where 50 percent or more of the children residing in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals) and meals are made available to all children 18 years old and younger in the area on a first-come, first-served basis. Sponsors of open sites must take the necessary steps to allow access to meal service for all children requesting a meal at the site. Information regarding the meal service (e.g., meals served, times, and location) at open sites must be publicized in the communities being served.
2. **Restricted Open Site:** An open site that, with the CSDE's prior, written authorization, must restrict or limit the site's attendance for reasons of space, security, safety, or control. The site must initially be open to broad community participation. An open site may not be approved as restricted due to convenience. Information regarding the meal service (meals served, times, location, etc.) at restricted open sites must be publicized in the communities served and that meals will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to all children of the community at large. Individual children must not be selectively denied meals or discriminated against.
3. **Closed Enrolled Site Not in an Area Eligible Location:** Closed enrolled sites are typically established where:
  - an identified group of at-risk children live in a "pocket of poverty;"
  - the identified children are transported to a congregate meal site located where less than 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals; and,
  - a program provides recreational, cultural, religious, or other types of organized activities for the identified group of children.

Closed enrolled sites are open only to enrolled children or to an identified group of children and are not open to the community at large. A closed enrolled site operating outside of an area eligible location must establish eligibility through the individual income

eligibility of each child attending the site. To establish eligibility based on the income of individual children, sites must collect household applications or work with the local school district to identify which enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. At least 50 percent of the enrolled children at the site must be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

Accredited summer schools do not qualify as closed enrolled sites and should obtain reimbursement for meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), unless they are: 1) also open to the community for the meal service, **and** 2) located in an area where at least 50 percent or more of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

- 4. Closed Enrolled Site in an Area Eligible Location:** Eligibility determinations for closed enrolled sites can be based on school or census data in place of applications. A closed enrolled site in an area eligible location must receive prior written approval from the CSDE to operate as a closed enrolled site and must not limit program access in the area that the site is located.

### **Program Guidance**

The SFSP guides, handbooks, and instructions are available on the USDA's [SFSP Program Guidance](#) webpage.

Questions pertaining to this memorandum may be directed to the [Summer Meals team](#).

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