

Summer Meals Updates 2024

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) e-newsletter for sponsors of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Topics May 1, 2024

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- Consolidated Appropriations Act: Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals
- Extension of Comment Period Deadline for USDA Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs: August 27, 2024
- Integrity Assurance for Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals
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- USDA Policy Memos and Guidance for Non-congregate Meal Service

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- Bookmark the CSDE’s Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs Webpage

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May 1, 2024

Distributing Meals to Children Outside of Congregate Settings in Rural Areas

Sponsors serving certain rural areas can distribute nutritious meals to children outside of the typically required group (congregate) settings through the SFSP and SSO. As part of the USDA's efforts to enhance the summer meal programs, approved program operators in rural areas can now use alternate service models tailored to the needs of the children and communities they serve. States will exercise discretion in approving sites for non-congregate meal service as they balance meeting the needs of their communities and ensuring program integrity.

Under the [Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs](#) (IFR), non-congregate meals are available only in rural areas with no congregate meal service. If the rural area meets the definition of an 'area in which poor economic conditions exist' (per SFSP regulations at [7 CFR 225.2](#)), then meals for all children may be claimed for reimbursement. If the rural area does not meet the definition of an 'area in which poor economic conditions exist,' only the meals served to children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NLSP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) may be claimed.

When determining if an area served by a congregate site would be better operated as a non-congregate site, the sponsor should consider if any of the following apply to the congregate site:

- there are physical conditions or other barriers preventing children from accessing the site;
- there is limited capacity that prevents the site from serving the community at large;
- the site serves the same children on different days, different weeks, or for different meals on the same day; or
- the site appeals to specific age groups or to children with unique dietary requirements.

Sponsors that are considering meal distribution methods for non-congregate meals should contact Terese Maineri at terese.maineri@ct.gov.

Consolidated Appropriations Act: Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals

The [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#) issued on December 29, 2022, required the Secretary of Agriculture to make available an option to states to provide summer meals for non-congregate meal service in rural areas with no congregate meal service and to establish a permanent summer electronic benefits transfer for children program (Summer EBT) for the purpose of ensuring continued access to food when school is not in session for the summer.

As required by law, on December 29, 2023, the USDA issued the Interim Final Rule (IFR), [Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs](#). The IFR amends the SFSP and the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) regulations to codify the flexibility for rural program operators to provide non-congregate meal service in the SFSP and SSO,

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collectively referred to as the summer meal programs. This rule also establishes regulations and codifies the Summer EBT Program in the Code of Federal Regulations.

The IFR takes immediate effect and will guide implementation in Summer 2024, but the IFR is still [open for public comment](#) until **August 27, 2024** (refer to “Extension of Comment Period Deadline for USDA Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs: August 27, 2024” below). Comments received on the IFR will be used to inform a future final rule.

Extension of Comment Period Deadline for USDA Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs: August 27, 2024

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service is extending for 120 days the public comment period on the interim final rule, [Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs](#), which was published in the Federal Register on December 29, 2023. This action extends the public comment period from April 29, 2024, to **August 27, 2024**, to give the public additional time to prepare and submit comments.

Integrity Assurance for Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals

Congregate and non-congregate sites cannot serve the same population of children for the same meal service on the same day. Sponsors opting to distribute meals to parents or guardians on behalf of their children must ensure through documented procedures that:

- meals are only distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children; and
- duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.

For more information on rural designations in Summer Meals, refer to [USDA Memo SFSP 15-2023](#): Best Practices for Determining Proximity of Sites in the Summer Food Service Program.

USDA Rural Designation Map

Sponsors may use the [USDA Rural Designation Map](#) to determine if a proposed site may be designated as rural for purposes of the SFSP and SSO, collectively known as the Summer Meal Programs. Use the steps below to determine if your location is designated as rural by the USDA.

1. Enter your location in the search tool in the upper left corner to find your location.
2. Use the plus and minus tool or scroll to zoom into the desired location.
3. The current layer has all the categories of rural. If the address is within a green area, it is considered rural.

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4. You can use the folder button on the upper left side of the map to turn on and off the individual rural categories.

For more information on rural designations in the summer meal programs, refer to [USDA Memo SFSP 04-2024 and SP 06-2024](#): Rural Designations in the Summer Meal Programs - Revised. **Note:** A site must be designated as rural and eligible to participate in Summer Meals Programs and offer non-congregate meals to the whole community.

Non-congregate Meal Distribution Methods

The methods below are allowed for non-congregate meal distribution.

- **Meal pick-up:** Packaged meals are taken home for children to eat later. Examples include “grab and go,” curbside service, and take-home backpacks. In accordance with [7 CFR 225.16\(i\)\(2\)](#), approved sponsors may distribute meals to parents or guardians to take home to their children. Sponsors approved by the state agency to distribute meals to parents or guardians must maintain accountability and SFSP integrity. This includes establishing procedures and processes that ensure meals are distributed only to children or to the parents or guardians of eligible children, and that duplicate meals are not distributed.
- **Home delivery:** Meals are delivered directly to homes. Delivery could be completed by mail or delivery service, or hand-delivered by the sponsor’s staff or volunteers. Sponsors that are approved to operate a non-congregate meal service using home delivery must be able to identify and invite households of eligible children to participate in the meal delivery service and obtain written consent from the eligible child’s parent or guardian to receive delivered meals prior to providing home delivered meals ([7 CFR 225.14\(d\)\(6\)](#)).

Sponsors that are considering meal distribution methods for non-congregate meals should contact Terese Maineri at terese.maineri@ct.gov.

USDA Policy Memos and Guidance for Non-congregate Meal Service

- [Offering Multiple Meals as Part of Summer Non-Congregate Meal Service](#)
- [Rural Non-Congregate Meal Service Examples: Summer 2023](#)
- [USDA Memo SFSP 02-2023](#): Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023: Effect on Child Nutrition Programs
- [USDA Memo SFSP 03-2023](#): Guidance on Performance Standards, Budgets, and Management Plans in the SFSP
- [USDA Memo SFSP 03-2024 and SP 05-2024](#): Implementation Guidance for the Rural Non-congregate Option Provisions of the Interim Final Rule, Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs

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- [USDA Memo SFSP 04-2024 and SP 06-2024](#): Rural Designations in the Summer Meal Programs - Revised
- [USDA Memo SFSP 07-2024 and SP 13-2024](#): Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers
- [USDA Memo SFSP 08-2024 and SP 15-2024](#): Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers #2
- [Webinar for Sponsors and Program Operators: IFR for Non-Congregate Summer Meal Service](#)

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Options for Operating the SFSP

SFSP sponsors may use any of the following options for implementing the SFSP:

- self-preparation site or sponsor ([7 CFR 225.2](#));
- competitive procurement of meals from a food service management company (FSMC); and
- entering into an agreement with a school food authority (SFA).

Federal, state, and local laws and regulations specify the methods that SFSP sponsors must follow to properly procure goods and services. When contracting with a FSMC, the sponsor must adhere to the procurement standards outlined in the SFSP regulations ([7 CFR 225.17](#)) and [2 CFR 200](#). State agencies will ensure that SFSP sponsors comply with the applicable regulations through audits, administrative reviews, technical assistance, training, guidance materials, and other means.

Definition of Vended Site for the SFSP

The USDA's final rule, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), added the following definition to the SFSP regulations [7 CFR 225.2](#):

Vended site means a site that serves unitized meals, with or without milk, that were procured through a formal agreement or contract with: (1) public agencies or entities such as a school food authority; (2) private, nonprofit organizations; or (3) private, for-profit companies such as a commercial food distributor or food service management company.

Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Application for SFSP Sponsors

In accordance with SFSP regulations [7 CFR 225.6\(l\)](#), the CSDE has developed a standard contract form, [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) Invitation for Bid and Contract \(IFB\) for Food Service Management Companies \(SFSP IFB\)](#) for use by SFSP sponsors contracting with a FSMC. Sponsors may use their existing or usual form of contract, provided it has been submitted to and approved by the CSDE, and the following criteria apply: 1) the sponsor is a public entity; 2) the sponsor has at least one exclusive year-round contract with a food service management company; and 3) the sponsor's FSMC contracts do not exceed \$150,000 in aggregate value.

FSMC Application for SFSP Registration: As a prerequisite to participation in the SFSP in Connecticut, all FSMCs must register with the State of Connecticut by completing and submitting the CSDE's [Food Service Management Company Application for SFSP Registration](#). This document outlines the required components and instructions for submitting the FSMC registration application. Instructions are available in the CSDE's [Guidance and Instructions for the Food Service Management Company Application for SFSP Registration](#).

Additional forms and guidance are below.

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- [Recommendation for Bid Award for the SFSP](#)
- [SFSP Sponsor/Vendor Award Conference Checklist](#)
- [Summary of Instructions for SFSP Sponsors Contracting with a Food Service Management Company](#)

All resources are available in the “[Contracts in the SFSP](#)” section of the CSDE’s FSMC webpage.

USDA Memo SFSP 09-2024: Meal Claim Validation in the Summer Food Service Program

The USDA’s final rule, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), amended SFSP regulations to strengthen SFSP integrity by clarifying, simplifying, and streamlining SFSP administration to facilitate compliance with SFSP requirements. This final rule established a process that state agencies must follow to validate SFSP sponsor meal claims during the sponsor review. The meal claim validation process utilizes a streamlined record review process outlined at [7 CFR 225.7\(e\)\(6\)\(i\)](#). The recently released [USDA Memo SFSP 09-2024: Meal Claim Validation in the Summer Food Service Program](#) provides an overview and step-by-step process for how to complete the meal claim validation process. This memorandum includes two attachments. Attachment 1 provides a flow chart on conducting a meal claim validation. Attachment 2 provides an example to complement Attachment 1.

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Summer 2024 SFSP Application Due May 15, 2024

The Summer 2024 SFSP application process is now open. The submission deadline is **May 15, 2024**. Applicants needing additional time to complete their application packet should contact the CSDE's [Summer Meals staff](#) to discuss an extension in advance of the deadline.

The documents below provide guidance on meeting the Summer 2024 SFSP application requirements. Review these documents carefully to ensure that the application packet submitted in the [Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs \(CNP System\)](#) is complete and accurate. Incomplete application packets will be returned, which delays the approval process.

- [Application Package for the SFSP](#): Describes the SFSP application process to participate for summer 2024.
- [2024 SFSP Application Components for Sponsors](#): Describes the required forms and materials for SFSP applications.
- [Management Plan for the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\): Program Year 2024](#): New required form for documenting sponsor compliance with the USDA's new viability, capability, and accountability (VCA) performance standards (refer to "New Required Form: Management Plan for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Program Year 2024" below).

The [User Manual for Connecticut Sponsors of the Summer Food Service Program](#) provides guidance on submitting the 2024 SFSP application in the CNP System. Additional resources are available in the "[CNP System for the SFSP](#)" section of the CSDE's CNP System webpage. CSDE templates for various application components are available in the "[Apply](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

Applicants with access to the CNP System through previous work with the SFSP or through participation in other CNPs (National School Lunch Program or Child and Adult Care Food Program) will use their current user ID and password. Applicants who do not currently have access to the CNP System and will be contributing to the application process on behalf of their organization should contact the CSDE's [Summer Meals Staff](#).

Performance Standards for the SFSP: Financial Viability, Administrative Capability, and Program Accountability (VCA)

The USDA final rule published on September 19, 2022, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), made changes to the SFSP regulations. Section 7 CFR 225.6(d) of the SFSP regulations clarified existing SFSP requirements and provided support and guidance to state agencies when evaluating sponsor applications. The changes to [7 CFR 225.6\(d\)](#) include the addition of VCA performance standards for the SFSP.

- Performance Standard 1 – Financial Viability and Management
- Performance Standard 2 – Administrative Capability
- Performance Standard 3 – Internal Controls for Program Accountability

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As part of their application, sponsors must demonstrate compliance with the performance standards in their management plan. Section 7 CFR 225.6(d) defines and explains the requirements for the three standards. A summary of the requirements is available under “Clarifying Performance Standards for Evaluating Sponsor Viability, Capability, and Accountability” in the USDA’s [Streamlining Requirements and Improving Integrity in the SFSP Final Rule - Comparison Table](#). For additional guidance, refer to the resources below.

- USDA Memo SFSP 03-2023: [Guidance on Performance Standards, Budgets, and Management Plans in the Summer Food Service Program](#)
- USDA Webinar (April 4, 2023): [Performance Standards in the SFSP](#)

New Required Form: Management Plan for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Program Year 2024

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) final rule, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), requires that SFSP sponsors, as part of their application, must demonstrate compliance with the VCA performance standards in their management plan and as part of their administrative budget. The CSDE’s new form, [Management Plan for the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\): Program Year 2024](#), obtains the VCA performance standards compliance information required by the final rule. Applicants must submit this form to the CSDE’s CNP System with their Summer 2024 SFSP application materials.

Recording Available for Summer Meals Training from April 11, 2024: SFSP Application Process and SFSP Administrative Review Process

The recording of the CSDE’s April 11 webinar, [SFSP Application Process and SFSP Administrative Review Process](#), is now available. This is the second of the seven webinars for the CSDE’s annual Summer Meals training for SFSP sponsors. All webinar recordings and training slides are the “[SFSP Annual Sponsor Training 2024](#)” section of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.

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April 10, 2024

CSDE Launches Summer Meals Updates

Welcome to the first edition of Summer Meals Updates, the CSDE's new email notification for sponsors of the SFSP and SSO. This e-newsletter provides important guidance and resources for complying with the federal requirements, identifies deadlines for completing required activities and reports, and provides links to relevant resources and training.

Summer Meals Updates will be issued on Wednesdays. Through June 2024, the schedule will be weekly. For July, August, and September, the schedule will be monthly, with additional issues as needed, based on relevant updates and deadlines.

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. Previous versions will be available in the "[Summer Meals Updates](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

Reminder: Annual Summer Meals Training 2024

The CSDE's annual Summer Meals training for SFSP sponsors consists of seven one-hour webinars held on Thursdays from 2:00-3:00 p.m. during March through June. Sponsors are strongly encouraged to participate live, which allows the opportunity to ask questions and learn from other sponsors. Recorded webinars will be available for sponsors with a scheduling conflict.

At least one individual from each SFSP sponsoring organization must register to attend either live or by recording. Attendance must be documented and submitted to the CSDE at a later date.

- March 28, 2024: USDA Updates, Rural Non-congregate Meal Service: Access the webinar recording and training slides in the "[SFSP Annual Sponsor Training 2024](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.
- April 11, 2024: SFSP Application Process & SFSP Administrative Review Process
- May 9, 2024: SFSP Regulations
- May 16, 2024: Seamless Summer Option of the National School Lunch Program
- May 23, 2024: Local Foods. USDA Foods, Food Safety
- June 6, 2024: Outreach
- June 20, 2024: Summer 2024 Kick-off

Join the Teams trainings using the links below.

Microsoft Teams meeting for all dates except May 16, 2024

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

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Meeting ID: 257 292 443 91

Passcode: Yizq7A

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 860-840-2075,,834102498#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 834 102 498#

Microsoft Teams meeting for May 16, 2024

Microsoft Teams meeting for May 16, 2024

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 225 336 668 44

Passcode: muTuBy

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 860-840-2075,,920756855#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 920 756 855#

For questions about Summer Meals training, please contact caroline.cooke@ct.gov.

Rebranded USDA Summer Programs: SUN Programs – USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recently announced the [rebranded USDA summer programs](#).

Moving forward, the suite of newly developed and previously established programs that help fill the summertime hunger gap will be called **SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids**.

This incorporates:

- **SUN Meals:** In-person summer meal sites; group summer meal service
- **SUN Meals To-Go:** To-go or home-delivered meals in certain rural areas

The SUN name – derived from the words Summer and Nutrition – reflects the broader, brighter impact USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs will have on kids across the nation, helping them thrive during summer and beyond.



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USDA Final Rule: Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the SFSP

Effective October 1, 2022, the USDA final rule, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), made changes to the SFSP regulations ([7 CFR 225](#)). These changes simplify SFSP program requirements, improve the customer experience for participating children and families, and strengthen the integrity of the SFSP. Many provisions codified through this final rule were previously allowed as program flexibilities and are demonstrated to facilitate program administration and service delivery for children and their families.

The USDA's [Streamlining Requirements and Improving Integrity in the SFSP Final Rule - Comparison Table](#) compares the previous and current SFSP regulations. An overview of the final rule is available in the USDA's webinar, [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the SFSP](#). For additional guidance and resources, visit the USDA's [Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the SFSP](#) webpage.

Bookmark the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs Webpage

The CSDE's [Program Guidance for the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage includes an alphabetical listing of links to information on federal and state requirements, guidance, and resources for the SFSP. This webpage page is the go-to resource for easy access to all topics related to the SFSP. Make sure to bookmark this webpage for future reference.

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Summer Meals Updates](#) section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage, or contact the [SFSP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/summermealsupdates/summer_meals_updates_2024.pdf.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil

rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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