

Summer Food Service Program

Rural Non-Congregate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. How do I know if I'm able to serve non-congregate?

- Non-congregate meal service is an option for area eligible sites located in a rural designated county where there is no congregate service, or barriers to accessing congregate service (i.e., busy highways, limited capacity, etc.). Sponsors may operate non-congregate if they have a good [integrity plan](#) to ensure they are not serving the same children. Please refer to the [USDA Food and Nutrition Service Area Eligibility Map](#).

2. Can I serve both congregate and non-congregate at the same site?

- Yes, you can serve both congregate and non-congregate at the same site. However, you may not serve both models at the same time or for the same meal service. An allowable example of this would be serving congregate meals Monday-Thursday and then serving non-congregate meals for Friday-Sunday. Another allowable example would be choosing to serve congregate breakfast every morning and send children home with their lunch to be eaten off site. Please work closely with the SFSP team to ensure separation between these two serving models. You must ensure clear separation between models, meal service times, and children served.

3. Can I serve congregate and non-congregate meals at the same time?

- No. As mentioned above, you can serve congregate and non-congregate at the same site but not at the same time, or for the same meal service.

4. How will I record meal counts if I am operating a site both congregate and non-congregate?

- It is required to distinguish between the number of non-congregate meals and congregate meals served when submitting claims. Please keep separate [meal counts](#) for each meal service model.

5. What do I do if I want to operate rural non-congregate this year?

- Sponsors must designate their sites as rural non-congregate in our MAPS application system. In addition to this, all Sponsors planning to operate non-congregate will be required to submit an [integrity plan](#) for approval.

6. How many days of meals can I send home at one time?

- The State agency may deny multiple days of meals or limit the number of days meals are provided for on a case-by-case basis. For non-congregate meal service, sponsors may be able to send up to 10 days of meals at a time, as long as they do not serve again until those 10 days have passed. When serving multiday meals, the Sponsor must include information on food safety, expiration, and simple meal prep instructions. Plans to provide multiday service will be reviewed and approved by the State agency depending on the sponsor's determined administrative and operational capabilities.

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7. Can I send bulk foods home (e.g. a loaf of bread, gallon of milk)

- Bulk meals are permissible in non-congregate meal service, except for Sponsors with vended meals. However, bulk foods must require minimal preparation, and specific instructions must be provided detailing meal preparation and menu in order to satisfy nutritional requirements for each meal.

8. Can I serve Offer vs. Serve (OVS) at a non-congregate site?

- Yes, sponsors that are School Food Authorities (SFAs) are allowed to serve OVS when operating non-congregate. This may be done by having children pick out food components they want that are then packaged and taken home. Non-profits are not eligible to operate Offer vs. Serve model.

9. Can I serve congregate for part of the summer and switch to non-congregate during the season?

- Yes, if you choose to change your site to non-congregate, you can. You will need to amend your application in [MAPS](#) to make sure it has the most current information. *Your application must be approved by OPI before you are able to switch serving models*, which includes submitting an [integrity plan](#). A site switching to non-congregate will require a new [initial site visit](#). Please reach out to your [regional specialist](#) prior to the switch.

10. Can I deliver meals directly to a student's home?

- Yes, but you must keep a few things in mind when doing so. You must develop a method to notify households that SFSP meals are available to all children who request them, and sponsors must develop a method (e.g., written, email, survey, verbal) for households to provide consent to initiate meal delivery. Sponsors must also maintain and keep current: Contact information, delivery location, and the number of children requiring meals. Households must also have a way of notifying the sponsor of medical or other special dietary needs must adhere to state and local food safety regulations. Home delivery must have eligibility documentation on file (F/R application or DC) for each child. If the sponsor is not an SFA, they may enter into written agreement MOU with the State agency or SFA to use their data or collect their own eligibility data using household application and keep confidentiality.

11. What is a conditional non-congregate site?

- The conditional non-congregate site is a new type of site. Conditional non-congregate sites may operate in a non-area eligible site with the purpose of serving children that are eligible for free/reduced school lunches. The sponsor must have documentation on file for each eligible child served to claim a reimbursable meal. These sites also must be open to the public, but only those meals served to eligible children can be claimed for reimbursement. Non-eligible

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children must either pay for their meal, or have their expenses covered through another means (as long as they are not federal funds). If you are interested in operating this service model, please get in touch with your regional specialist for more information.

If you have additional questions, please reach out to your [regional specialist](#). Commonly asked questions and answers will be added as they arise.

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