



Summer Food Service Program Applications are now open



STARTING SUMMER 2023:

NON-CONGREGATE OPTION FOR RURAL AREAS

Important General Information:

- Must be approved by the State Agency
- Sites must have good food safety plans; instructions should be included for proper at-home storage and preparation
- The non-congregate option is not intended to replace congregate meal service
- Non-congregate sites are still required to follow all SFSP program requirements in regulation

What Sites are Eligible?

- Sites must be Area Eligible
- Site must be in what has been predetermined as rural or a rural pocket (determined by the State Agency)
- Sites cannot operate as a congregate and non-congregate site simultaneously during a meal period

Non-Congregate Site Logistics:

- Sites can operate under a meal pickup, home delivery, or shipped to home model
- Multiple days of meals can be served at once
- Meals may be picked up by the student, their parent, or guardian
- Sponsors must have strong integrity plans in place



**PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM TO REPORT
YOUR NON-CONGREGATE PLAN:
REQUEST FOR NON-CONGREGATE**

This form is *in addition* to the MAPS application

CLICK HERE

[Please contact your OPI Specialist regarding any questions.](#)

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2023 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Guidance

To increase access to healthy meals over the summer, SFSP program operators in rural areas have a new non-congregate meal service option currently available for summer 2023 only. This new non-congregate meal service option allows for determined rural sites to provide meal pick up such as grab and go meals, curbside service, take-home backpack meals, or even home delivery of meals. Non-congregate meal service is **not** intended to replace congregate meal service and cannot be provided along with congregate meal service. This new rural non-congregate meal service option is intended to increase access to healthy meals to children who are widely disbursed and not being served by congregate meal service.

Congregate Meal Service Model:

- Congregate meal service is encouraged at sites.
- Meals must be consumed on site.
- Children are drawn to locations that offer educational, enrichment, and recreational activities. Selecting sites that can provide an activity along with the meal, such as an art project, game, school or community garden, or nutrition lesson, is a strategy sponsors can use to boost participation and overall enjoyment at their sites.

Non-congregate Meal Service Models:

Sponsors will need to work with the State agency to provide and get approval for their [rural non-congregate SFSP meal service plan](#) in **addition** to submitting the SFSP application in [MAPS](#) this year. Meal pick-up or home delivery options may be used for summer 2023; in many cases, non-congregate meal service may look very similar to non-congregate service implemented during the COVID-19 public health emergency, which can serve as a reference point. State agencies opting to use these models must ensure that sponsors are able to maintain accountability and program integrity. Food safety is important for all meal service models. Sponsors should ensure food selections and packaging promote food safety; sponsors should include instructions for at-home storage and preparation.

- Non-congregate SFSP meal Sites must be approved sites located in rural [area-eligible](#) locations (areas in which poor economic conditions exist where at least 50% of children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals as determined by school data, census data, or other approved sources).
- Non-congregate meal service is limited to rural areas with no congregate meal service.
- Sites may be able to provide up to two meal types together as grab and go (no meal-time restriction requiring separation of mealtimes with this service option).
- Sites may be able to provide multiple days worth of meals (bulk meal service) with approval of the sponsors plan of operation from the State agency.

Meal Pickup Non-Congregate Meal Service Model:

This non-congregate meal service model is designed to provide packaged meals that are taken home for children to eat later. Examples of meal pickup include “grab and go,” curbside service, or take-home backpacks. Meal pickup is available to all children when the pick-up site is in an area-eligible area, or to children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals when the pick-up site is in an area that is not area-eligible. Meals must be packaged and portioned to allow children to carry the food from the SFSP site to their home.

- Pick-up site is rural and area eligible.
- Provide packaged meals for children to take home to eat (Grab and Go, Curbside service, Take-home backpacks)
- May provide breakfast and lunch together (no meal-time restriction).
- May provide multiple days worth of meals with State agency approval on file of the sponsors planned meal service
- Meals may be picked up by the child or by their or parent or guardian if sponsor has plan to ensure program integrity and maintain accountability.
- No duplicate meals.

- Meet state or local food safety requirements. Consider providing instructions on at-home storage and preparation if providing multiple days worth of meals (bulk meals).
- Offer vs. Serve (OVS) may be allowed only for SFAs who are approved by the State agencies to provide OVS meal service being able to ensure program meal integrity.

Home Delivery of Meals Non-Congregate Meal Service Model:

This non-congregate meal service model is designed to deliver meals directly to homes. Delivery could be completed by mail or delivery service, or could be hand-delivered by the sponsor’s staff, volunteers, or others.

- Sponsor must be a School Food Authority (SFA).
- Obtain written consent from the eligible child’s parent or guardian to deliver meals.
- Confirm the household’s contact information, delivery address, and eligible children (child must qualify for free/reduced meals in order to receive meals in non-area eligible locations).
- Protect privacy of participating households.
- With the home delivery model, the site is the non-congregate meal service operation overall.
- Meals can be delivered even if the child is not home if the sponsor has written consent and the current address has been verified.
- What sources of data are used to determine eligibility for receiving non-congregate meals in non-area eligible areas?
 - Individual eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals may be determined by using individual eligibility determinations through school data or by the application process described in Program regulations (7 CFR 225.15(f)). Only meals served to children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals may be claimed for reimbursement for non-congregate meals.

Q&A

- **Can offer vs serve (OVS) be used in non-congregate settings?**

Yes, with State agency approval, only SFAs may use OVS. When using OVS in a non-congregate setting, SFAs should consider the unique service situations of each site, as well as each site’s ability to follow appropriate safety measures. All required meal components or food items must be offered, and all participants must have the opportunity to select a reimbursable meal. FNS encourages SFAs that wish to use OVS to think creatively about how to implement this flexibility while ensuring that all meal service requirements are met. [Summer Food Service Program Offer vs. Serve \(OVS\)](#)

- **Are sponsors required to follow established meal patterns when serving non-congregate meals?**

Yes. Like congregate meals, non-congregate meals must comply with the current [meal pattern requirements for SFSP](#)

- **Are second meals reimbursable for non-congregate meal service?**

No. Sponsors may only claim one meal, per child, per meal service for non-congregate meal service.

- **Can sponsors provide food items in bulk, either through pick up or home delivery?**

Yes, at the State’s discretion. State agencies must determine whether a sponsor’s proposed bulk distribution meets the safety, service, and integrity standards of the Program. States should follow the guidance at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-multiple-meals-part-summer-non-congregate-meal-service>, when considering allowing bulk distribution. Sponsor must complete and submit a plan of operation to the State agency for each site that is requesting approval to provide multiple days of meals (bulk meals).

For more guidance and Q&A’s please see the [Implementation Guidance: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas, Q&A](#)

[Rural Designation MAP](#) – As needed, reach out to your OPI SNP Specialist to see if the urban designated site may qualify as being in a rural pocket area.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.