



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: April 27, 2018
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven M. Constantino, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: Options for Providing Meals to Students in the Summer

The purposes of this memorandum are to present program options available to school divisions for providing meals to students in the summer months and to provide a valuable toolkit for schools to use for summer meal outreach.

The importance of good, nutritious meals for effective learning does not stop when school is not in session. Many students lose access to the nutritious meals during the summer. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) continues to focus on expanding the availability of summer meals served. In October 2017, VDOE assumed administrative responsibility of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in Virginia. This allows for a more streamlined process for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to apply and administer the SFSP.

Schools have equipment, trained staff, and facilities that position them to be successful in providing meals to students during the summer months. Three options are available to schools to help bridge the summer nutrition gap for their students. Detailed comparisons of program requirements and reimbursement rates for the three options are provided in Attachment A to this memorandum.

While the USDA is no longer granting state-wide waivers for schools to operate the Summer Meals Program as “restricted open” sites, the need for summer meals is unchanged.

We recognize operating as “open” sites may require a change in the way you operate your summer program. We understand this change may present local operational challenges, particularly at a time when school safety is a critical priority. However, it is also a continuing priority to ensure as many students have access to these meals in the summer that will benefit from them, not just those formally enrolled in summer programs.

The VDOE and other partners, such as the No Kid Hungry Campaign and the Virginia Dairy Alliance, have best practices and technical assistance available to support your programs and facilitate the transition to open site programs.

School divisions are encouraged to consider participating in one or more of the following summer programs:

- 1. Academic Summer School Programs-National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).** Schools that offer academic summer school may serve breakfast and/or lunch to enrolled students and receive federal reimbursement for meals served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs as they do during the school year. Students enrolled in academic summer school may participate in these programs. School divisions wishing to participate in the summer NSLP and SBP must request approval through the DOE School Nutrition Programs Web-based software (SNPWeb). Meals served to students in academic summer school are claimed by eligibility category under the NSLP and SBP and reimbursed at the regular free, reduced, and paid rates.
- 2. USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).** The SFSP is a federally-funded USDA program administered by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Division of Community Nutrition. School divisions may apply to participate in the SFSP by contacting VDOE. Schools may qualify to

participate as an open site under SFSP and earn higher reimbursement rates for meals served if they plan to offer meals to children in the community. Eligibility criteria required to qualify as an open site include the following:

- a. The school has, or is located within the attendance area of another school that has, at least 50 percent of the enrolled students eligible for free and reduced price meals;
- b. The school opens the programs to neighborhood children; and,
- c. The school serves all meals at no cost to participants.

Federal reimbursement rates under SFSP are higher than NSLP. All SFSP meals are reimbursed at the same rate. There is no academic requirement for participation in the SFSP. The SFSP is ideal for summer recreational, enrichment, or activity programs in high poverty areas. A school may be the sponsor of the SFSP by preparing and serving meals and claiming federal reimbursement, or schools may provide meals as a vendor to other sponsoring institutions such as the local parks and recreation department, the YMCA, the public library, or other community organizations.

3. **Seamless Summer Option (SSO).** This option combines features of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The Seamless Summer Option has less paperwork, making it easier for schools to feed children during the traditional summer vacation periods. Under the SSO, schools with at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price meals remain in the regular NSLP and SBP and serve meals to all children at no charge. All meals are reimbursed at the regular free rates established for NSLP and SBP.

School Outreach Toolkit

Schools are essential partners in providing information to families ensuring no child goes hungry this summer. Attachment B is a *Summer Meals School Outreach Toolkit* providing easy action steps and templates to grow awareness of summer meals. The toolkit contains:

- A step by step list of actions for increasing awareness;
- A template letter to parents to announce the LEA's summer meals program;
- A template to utilize robo call;
- Customizable "Frequently Asked Questions" for the LEA's summer meal program;
- Tips for using social media to promote summer meals; and
- Additional resources for marketing and operating a successful program.

If you have questions or want more information about the USDA Summer Food Service Program, please contact Courtney Jones, SNP Coordinator, by email at courtney.jones@doe.virginia.gov ✉.

For questions or information about academic summer school using the NSLP and/or SBP or the Seamless Summer Option, please contact Dr. Sandy Curwood, Director of School Nutrition Programs, at sandra.curwood@doe.virginia.gov ✉ or by telephone at (804) 225-2074, or the school nutrition program specialist assigned to your division.

SRS/SCC/cc

Attachments:

- A. [Summer 2017 Comparison of Programs](#) (Word)
- B. [Summer Meals School Outreach Toolkit](#) (Word)