



#072-22

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #072-22**

DATE: April 1, 2022
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Jillian Balow, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Summer Feeding Options**

The purpose of this memorandum is to encourage local school divisions to promote and participate in summer feeding programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). During the summer months, children continue to be vulnerable to food insecurity, especially those not attending summer school.

Several USDA waivers that provided flexibility to School Food Authorities (SFAs) to assist in serving meals during the pandemic are expiring on June 30, 2022. These flexibilities include allowing meals to be consumed offsite, allowing parents or guardians to pick-up meals on behalf of students, allowing meals for all students at no charge, higher reimbursement rates for all meals served, and flexibilities in meeting the meal pattern for reasons relating to the pandemic, such as supply chain issues. The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs (VDOE-SNP) is dedicated to supporting local school divisions and SFAs as they transition back to pre-pandemic summer feeding operations. There are several programs and options available to ensure students have access to nutritious meals this summer.

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is federally funded through the USDA and administered by the VDOE-SNP. SFAs and other community organizations are eligible to

operate meal sites in communities where 50 percent or more of residing children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Meal sites are open to any child or teenager ages 18 and below, and all meals are reimbursed at the free rate. SFAs may be the sponsor of the SFSP by preparing and serving meals and earning federal reimbursement or they may opt to be a vendor to another organization and provide meals at a contracted price. SFAs may also collaborate with nonprofits and faith-based organizations to provide these meals to children. The SFSP offers a higher reimbursement rate and simpler meal pattern than other summer feeding options. SFAs will need to complete a separate application to operate the SFSP in summer 2022. The federal deadline to submit a SFSP application is June 15, 2022.

Seamless Summer Option

Similar to the SFSP, the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) is another USDA funded program administered by the VDOE-SNP that is available to SFAs. The SSO combines features of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the SFSP, and offers a streamlined process for schools to provide meals during the summer. SFAs may utilize the USDA waivers to operate the SSO using flexibilities through June 30, 2022, and after that date must transition to traditional SSO summer operations. SSO meal sites may operate in communities where 50 percent or more of residing children qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and sites are open to any child or teenager ages 18 and below. All meals are reimbursed at the free NSLP rate. This rate is lower than the SFSP rates received in the school year 2021-2022. SSO operating days in June, July, and August 2022 will be entered in the school year 2021-2022 SSO site applications with the NSLP application packet in SNPWeb. Although the SSO offers a more streamlined application process than the SFSP, the meal pattern is more complex and the reimbursement rate is lower.

National School Lunch Program Academic Summer Schools

SFAs with sites that do not qualify for the SFSP or SSO must serve meals during Academic Summer School operations under the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP). It is a VDOE requirement for reimbursable meals to be served to all students on instructional school days. This requirement applies to Academic Summer School. Beginning on July 1, 2022, SFAs with ineligible SFSP and SSO sites will begin serving meals to Academic Summer School students via

the NSLP and SBP. July and August operating days will be entered into the 2022-2023 school year application packet in SNPWeb.

Sites operating the NSLP and SBP would operate as traditional closed-enrolled sites, not open to the public. Under the NSLP and SBP, sites cannot serve meals to individuals not enrolled in the programs and meals are counted and claimed based on free, reduced-price, and paid eligibility. The return to charging for reduced price and paid meals will also likely result in increases in student meal debts.

Existing eligibility for the current school year from direct certification or income eligibility applications should be used to determine eligibility for summer meals at the NSLP/SBP sites. Otherwise, sites not participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) will be required to collect new income eligibility forms to establish student eligibility status. Processing applications will require an additional layer of administrative responsibility for the local education agency (LEA). Applications for school year 2022-2023 cannot be processed until the new income eligibility guidelines go into effect and the SFA POS software is updated. The income eligibility guidelines were published in the federal register and go into effect on July 1, 2022.

The school year 2022-2023 meal reimbursement rates for the NSLP and SBP will be less than the previous school year under which schools were reimbursed at the higher SFSP rates. NSLP and SBP reimbursement rates for the coming school year are typically announced by the USDA in July.

Planning

The VDOE-SNP encourages SFAs to begin planning their summer operations early. In an effort to provide free meals to as many children as possible, the VDOE-SNP encourages local school divisions to host academic summer schools at schools located in areas eligible to operate the SFSP or SSO. As a reminder, the federal deadline to submit an SFSP application is June 15, 2022. Local school divisions with schools located in ineligible areas to operate the SFSP or SSO are limited to operating NSLP Academic Summer School to feed students enrolled in summer school after June 30, 2022. If a combination of eligible and ineligible sites plan to serve summer meals, SFAs will have to operate two different programs simultaneously. This means different claims, SNPWeb applications, and meal patterns. School divisions may use general

funds to subsidize the meals for students that qualify for reduced-price and paid meals, in an effort to feed all kids for free this summer.

The VDOE-SNP strongly encourages all SFAs to choose the summer meal program that best fits the eligibility of the sites that will be utilized for summer feeding and begin using that meal program starting on the first day of summer operations. This will minimize the administrative challenges associated with attempting to switch summer feeding programs on July 1, 2022, when the federal waivers expire. If a SFA chooses to continue with the SSO but wishes to operate the SFSP in summer 2023, the SFA will be treated as a new SFSP sponsor and will receive a SFSP administrative review that year.

Program Promotion

Federal regulations require SFAs to make information on their summer meals programs widely available to the public. The VDOE-SNP encourages SFAs to promote their summer meals programs through local media, social media, and school/organizational webpages. As plans change throughout the summer, SFAs should continue to update the public on when meals are available at meal sites.

Other Resource Available

No Kid Hungry Virginia is available to assist SFAs in finding partnerships and connecting other resources to help meet the needs of the community. No Kid Hungry Virginia is also available to support with marketing ideas and the creation of promotional materials to help spread the word about summer meal sites. No Kid Hungry's Free Meals Finder allows families to text "FOOD" or "COMIDA" to 304-304 to learn about meal sites in their area.

For more information

For questions or more information, please reach out to your assigned VDOE-SNP regional specialist.

JB/SCC/MVP/AN