



Summer Food Service Program Fact Sheet

Illinois State Board of Education
Nutrition Department

What Is the Purpose?

The intent of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is to serve nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session. The program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Who Can Sponsor the Summer Food Service Program?

Sponsors must be organizations fully capable of managing a food service program. To be a sponsor, you must follow regulations and be financially and administratively responsible for running your program.

The following types of organizations are eligible to sponsor SFSP:

- Public or private nonprofit schools
- Units of local, municipal, county, tribal, or state government
- Private nonprofit organizations
- Public or private nonprofit camps
- Public or private nonprofit universities or colleges

What Is a Site?

A site is the physical location, approved by ISBE, where SFSP meals are served during a supervised time period.

There are five types of sites:

- Open – At least half the children in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals
- Enrolled – At least half the children in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals
- Camp – Offers a regularly scheduled food service as part of a residential or day camp program
- Migrant – Primarily serves children of migrant workers
- NYSP – A college or university participating in the National Youth Sports Program (NYSP)

Meal service sites may be located in a variety of settings, including schools, recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, churches, community centers, day camps, residential summer camps, housing projects, and migrant centers, or on Indian reservations.

Who Is Eligible to Receive Free Meals?

The following are eligible to receive free meals:

- All children 18 years of age or younger who come to an approved open site or to an eligible enrolled site may receive meals.
- At camps, only children eligible for free and reduced-price meals may receive SFSP meals.
- People over age 18 enrolled in school programs for persons with disabilities may also receive meals.

How Many Reimbursable Meals Can Be Served?

Most sponsors may be approved to receive reimbursement for up to two meals per day. Eligible meals are breakfast, a.m. snack, lunch, p.m. snack, and supper. The only combination not eligible for reimbursement is lunch and supper. If your site primarily serves migrant children, or you run a residential or day camp, you may be eligible to serve up to three reimbursable meals each day. If you run a camp, you may claim reimbursement only for the meals served to a child who qualifies for free and reduced-price meals.

How Are SFSP Meals Prepared?

A sponsor may prepare its own meals, purchase meals through an agreement with an area school, or contract for meals with a food service management company (vendor). If your site has its own kitchen, you may want to prepare meals yourself. If your kitchen is not on the premises, you may still want to prepare your own meals and then transport them to the site. Meals you prepare yourself receive a slightly higher rate of reimbursement.

Many government and private nonprofit sponsors lack the kitchen facilities to prepare meals themselves. In that case, you may arrange to purchase meals from a school or another public or private food supplier with approved meal preparation facilities.

Four Ways to Participate in the Program

1. **Be a Sponsor** – Make an investment in the children in your community. If your organization already provides services to the community and has capable staff and good management practices to run a food service, you can administer SFSP.
2. **Run a Site** – Some organizations do not have the financial or administrative ability to run the program, but they can supervise a food service for children, along with recreational or enrichment activities, at a site.
3. **Be a Vendor** – Organizations with kitchens and food service staff, including schools, commercial companies, or public or nonprofit institutions, can participate in SFSP as vendors. Instead of administering or supervising a meal service site, a vendor sells prepared meals under an agreement or a contract with an approved SFSP sponsor.
4. **Volunteer** – Even if your organization cannot take on the responsibilities of a sponsor or a site, you can team up with a sponsor to provide any activity that makes summer fun!

Obtaining Reimbursement for Summer Food Service Program Meals

ISBE reimburses SFSP sponsors on a per-meal basis for the meals they serve to eligible participants that meet program requirements. To receive your reimbursement, you must prepare a Claim for Reimbursement each month and submit it to your state agency. Total reimbursement is based on per-meal reimbursement rates. Without careful planning, you might not cover all your costs. Your costs will depend on many factors, including the number of meals you serve; the price you pay for food or meals, if purchased from a vendor; and the amount of wages you pay your staff. Reimbursement is made for both operating costs and administrative costs combined. The reimbursement calculation is based off the number of meals you serve multiplied by your reimbursement rate (meals x rate).

Listed below are the maximum operating and administrative rates of reimbursement for **fiscal year 2026**:

	Combined (Operating and Administrative)	
	Rural or Self Prep	Other
Breakfast	\$3.1975	\$3.1375
Lunch/Supper	\$5.6000	\$5.5100
Supplement/Snack	\$1.3250	\$1.2950

Remember, SFSP is a nonprofit food service program for children. In fact, payments to some sponsors are less than actual costs. Sponsors must be prepared to manage their food service programs carefully and add other resources to their programs, if necessary. Closely monitor all your costs to ensure you do not spend more than your reimbursement. You are responsible for the over costs if your expenses are more than your reimbursement.

Illinois State Board of Education Sponsor Training

New 2026 sponsors must complete the online training provided by ISBE, located at www.isbe.net/SFSP under the Training & Resources tab.

Additional Information

If you have any questions regarding the Summer Food Program, contact the Summer Meals Team at 217-782-2491 or SummerMeals@isbe.net.