

Congregate versus Non-Congregate Chart

The purpose of this table is to explain the major similarities and differences between the SFSP’s congregate and non-congregate meal service requirements. While this table highlights the main requirements, more detailed information is found in the published SFSP rules, memos, policies, and guidance.

| Requirement | Congregate Meal Service | Non-Congregate Meal Service |
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| Definition | A food service at which meals that are provided to children are consumed on site in a supervised setting. | A food service at which meals are provided for children to consume all of the components off-site. Non-congregate meal service must only be operated at sites designated as “rural” with no congregate meal service. |
| Times of Operation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May to September for traditional school calendar areas. • October to April during unanticipated school closures (i.e. emergencies). • During student vacations of 15 days or more for schools on a continuous year calendar. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May to September for traditional school calendar areas. • October to April during unanticipated school closures (i.e. emergencies). • During student vacations. |
| Meal Service Locations | Schools, camps, churches, community centers, housing projects, libraries, migrant centers, parks, playgrounds, pools, and other public sites where children congregate. | Rural sites with no congregate meal service. |

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| Meal Pattern | Meal pattern must meet 7 CFR 225.16(d) standards, though School Food Authorities may substitute NSLP or SBP meal patterns. | Same as Congregate. |
| Approved Types of Meals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Lunch • Snack (AM or PM) • Supper <p>Lunch and supper cannot be reimbursed for the same day by the same site, except for camp and migrant sites.</p> | Same as Congregate. |
| Maximum Number of Meals Per Day | <p>2 meals or 1 meal and a snack at open, restricted open, closed enrolled, or conditional non-congregate sites.</p> <p>3 meals or 2 meals and a snack at camps or migrant sites.</p> | <p>Same as Congregate.</p> <p>However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-congregate sites may issue a maximum of 10 calendar days' worth of meals at a time if approved by the State agency. • Non-congregate sites may issue a maximum of 5 calendar days' worth of meals if also providing bulk food items and approved by the State agency. |

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| Meal Service Times | <p>Breakfast must be served at or close to the beginning of the day and cannot be served after a lunch or supper.</p> <p>For all sites, except residential camps, a minimum of 1 hour must elapse between the end of one meal service and the beginning of another.</p> | <p>Not required to serve breakfast in the morning (close to or at the beginning of the day).</p> <p>Not required to allow 1 hour between the end of one meal service and the start of the next.</p> |
| Meal Duplication | <p>Must ensure that congregate sites will not be served in whole or in part by another site, unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the State agency that each site will serve children not served by another site in the same area for the same meal.</p> | <p>Must ensure that the non-congregate sites will not serve the same population of children for the same meal service on the same day as other non-congregate or congregate sites.</p> |
| Off-Site Consumption of Foods | <p>A child can take one fruit, vegetable, or grain item off-site for later consumption without prior State agency approval provided that all applicable State and local health, safety, and sanitation standards will be met.</p> | <p>Non-congregate meal service specifically provides meals for off-site consumption.</p> |

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| Multi-Day Meal Issuance: Multiple days' worth of meals are provided at one time, whether unitized or comprised of bulk items. | N/A | <p>Approved sponsors may distribute up to the allowable number of reimbursable meals that would be provided over a 10-calendar day period.</p> <p>Sponsors electing this option must have procedures in place that document, to a reasonable extent, the proper number of meals are distributed to each eligible child.</p> |
| Bulk Food Items: Specific food items are provided in a larger quantity than required for a single meal service. | N/A | <p>Approved self-preparation sponsors may provide bulk food items that meet the minimum amounts of each food component of a reimbursable meal breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack.</p> <p>The maximum number of reimbursable meals provided to a child cannot exceed the number of meals that could be provided over a 5-calendar day period.</p> |

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| Parent or Guardian Meal Pick-Up | N/A | <p>Approved sponsors may distribute meals to parents or guardians to take home to their children.</p> <p>Sponsors electing this option must have documented procedures in place to ensure that meals are only distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.</p> |
| Sponsor Eligibility | SFAs, local government agencies, private non-profit organizations, universities or colleges, community and faith-based organizations. SFAs are waived of the requirement to demonstrate financial and administrative capability for program operations. | Same as congregate. |
| Good Standing | New and current SFAs and CACFP institutions in good standing do not need to provide further evidence of financial and administrative capability. | All sponsors must be in good standing, as determined by the state to be approved for non-congregate meal service options. |
| Home Delivery | N/A | If the sponsor operates a non-congregate meal service that will deliver meals directly to a child's residence, it must obtain written parental consent prior to providing meals to children in that household. |

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| Site Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Open sites</u>: Located in the attendance area of a school or in a geographic area defined by census data where 50 percent or more of the children qualify for free or reduced price school meals, and sites are open to the community. • <u>Enrolled sites</u>: Where 50 percent or more of enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced price meals, determined by approved application under the NSLP and the SBP, or location in an eligible area, as determined by school or census data. • <u>Migrant sites</u>: With certification by a migrant organization that the sites serve primarily children of migrant workers. • <u>Camps</u>: Which offer a regularly scheduled meal service as part of an organized program for enrolled children. <p>Note: As applicable, alternative forms of data may be used to establish site eligibility, including the Community Eligibility Provision and other special provision data under NSLP or SBP, and census data.</p> | <p>Same as congregate.</p> <p>Additionally, sites that will offer non-congregate meal service must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be rural. • Not serve an area where children would receive the same meal at an approved congregate meal site, unless it is demonstrated that meal duplication will be avoided. • Be a conditional non-congregate site if providing meals in an area that does not meet the definition of “areas in which poor economic conditions exist” and is not a camp. |

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| Participant Eligibility | <p>Persons 18 years or younger, and persons 19 or older with a physical or mental disability, as defined by the State.</p> <p>Individual eligibility for free or reduced price school meals may be determined by using individual eligibility determinations through school data or by the household application process described in Program regulations at 7 CFR 225.15(f).</p> | Same as SFSP |
| Cost of Food for Children | All meals are free, although camps are only reimbursed for children who qualify for free or reduced price meals. Camp sponsors may, and usually do, provide meals free of charge to all children. | <p>Same as SFSP</p> <p>*However conditional non-congregate sites are only reimbursed for children who qualify for free or reduced price meals.</p> |