

Frequently Asked Questions on How Summer Food Service Program Regulations Differ from National School Lunch Program Regulations

On August 31, USDA issued [nine waivers](#) necessary to allow schools and other summer meal sponsors to continue operation of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) through December 31, 2020, unless funding runs out before then. Eight of these waivers are extensions of current waivers allowing for non-congregate feeding, parent-pickup of meals, meal pattern flexibility, as well as waivers of area eligibility requirements, meal service time requirements, and first week site visits. A [new waiver](#) allows for the SFSP to be utilized even when school is in session, and even for children who are present at school.

These waivers were issued very suddenly, and USDA has not yet issued additional guidance to State agencies. Vermont AOE Child Nutrition Programs has submitted many questions to USDA with the hope that these will be answered in the near future. Until further clarification is received by USDA, AOE Child Nutrition Programs is offering preliminary answers to some frequently asked questions by the field.

A [full training on the program requirements for the SFSP](#) is available on the AOE's website. AOE Child Nutrition Programs has also provided a [Summer Meals Overview for Sponsors New to SFSP in Summer 2020](#) that may be helpful for SFAs in learning how the SFSP requirements differ from the NSLP/SBP.

Q1. Can we sell foods a la carte if we operate SFSP? Do we need to follow Smart Snacks regulations?

Yes, you can sell foods a la carte in SFSP. Based on Question 3 of "Applicability of the Smart Snack Standards" in [SP 23-2014 \(V. 3\)](#), AOE Child Nutrition Programs does not think that the Smart Snack standards apply to programs operating the SFSP. However, we strongly recommend continuing to follow the Smart Snacks regulations during this time so that the transition back to the NSLP is as seamless as possible. Temporarily ceasing to follow these standards will make switching back more difficult for students to understand. Your school wellness policy may also require that foods sold adhere to Smart Snack regulations, and you do still need to follow your wellness policy.

Q2. What are the regulations around serving adults in the SFSP?

There are two types of adult meals that can be offered in the SFSP: meals for program adults and meals for non-program adults. Program adults are anyone that is involved in the implementation or operation of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This includes Food Service Professionals, and if teachers are involved in the meal distribution and meal counting, they could also be considered program adults. Non-program adults are any other adult, such as

parents/guardians and other community members. No reimbursement is provided for meals served to any adults.

Meals may be provided at no cost to non-program adults. This is an allowable cost to the program and does not need to be covered by non-federal funds. Programs are not required to provide meals at no cost to non-program adults – it is simply an option.

Meals served to non-program adults must be sold at a rate high enough to cover the cost of the meal, such as your regular adult meals rate, or paid for with non-federal funds.

If program or non-program adult meals are served, they must be tracked, separately from the meals served to children, and reported on the claim for reimbursement, although no reimbursement is provided for adult meals.

Q3. Can you serve second meals in the SFSP?

Serving second meals is an option in the SFSP. However, sponsors only receive reimbursement for up to 2% of first meals served. This is based on the total number of first meals served, by meal type, each claim month. For example, if a sponsor served 100 lunches in the month of September, regardless of how many second meals were served, they are only receive reimbursement for 2 of them because 2 is 2% of 100. The online application and reimbursement system calculates the 2%.

Sponsors must not prepare meals with the intention of serving seconds. Second meals may only be served after all participating children have been served a first meal. Deciding whether or how to provide second meals when there are meals left over is up to the program. Some programs decide to only serve second meals if they cannot be kept to reserve the next day of service, as an alternative to throwing meals away. Managing second meals can be difficult if there not enough second meals to provide to every child that wants one.

Q4. How should we take meal counts in the SFSP?

Sponsors must take Point of Service (POS) meal counts. In the SFSP, meals do not need to be tracked by student or child name and student eligibility status is not applicable. Point of Service means that meals are counted in real-time when they are provided to the child or household. They cannot be based on pre-order numbers, attendance numbers, or taken by counting used trays. Meal counts cannot be taken before the meal is served or counted after the meal service.

Sponsors may use their electronic POS system, some form of electronic spreadsheet, or a paper tic sheet. For sponsors not using their POS system, the AOE has a [Template Daily Meal Count Form](#) we recommend using in SFSP. Sponsors with pre-order systems in place could have a

column for staff to note that a meal has been requested or ordered and a second column to indicate the meal has been taken/received.

During COVID, if sites are providing multiple meals at the same time, such as breakfast and lunch, and these meals are never served separately, the same meal count sheet may be used for both meals, as long as the meals are clearly indicated. This could be done by circling both “B” and “L” on the template sheet. If more than one day worth of meals is provided at a time, the same meal count sheet may be used for all the days provided at once, if the dates are clearly indicated on the sheet.

If the Daily Meal Count Form recommended for use by VTAOE Child Nutrition Programs is used, it must be completed correctly, with meals hashed off or circled. Drawing a continuous line through the numbers served or simply writing a total at the end of the sheet, with no numbers hashed or circled, is not a correct way to complete the form. Incorrectly completing meal count forms is a common finding in the SFSP, which can result in fiscal action. Please pay careful attention to correct meal counting procedures.

Sponsors must consolidate their daily meal counts into a monthly meal count, used to submit the claim for reimbursement.

For Schools who may return to the NSLP/SBP later in the school year, it may be simplest to stick with counting student meals by name when meals are served at school, using the POS system or other counting system that had originally been planned for Fall 2020. Under the SFSP, the student names would simply be counted to create the daily meal counts. Once the school returns to operating the NSLP/SBP, the child’s eligibility status would be used to generate the meal counts. Keeping this system in place will reduce the amount of staff retraining required when the program switches back to NSLP/SBP.

Q5. Can we use a clicker to count meals in the SFSP?

No, VT AOE does not allow the use of clickers to count meals, as there is significant room for error when using a clicker and it does not produce a record of the meals counted.

Q6. Is Offer Versus Serve allowed in the SFSP?

Yes, Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is an option in SFSP. OVS allows children to decline some of the meal service items at breakfast or components at lunch. To correctly implement OVS, Children must have the option of declining more than just the milk component. To accomplish OVS with unitized meals served in the classroom or non-congregate meals, a pre-order system could be instituted to allow children to select the foods they would like to comprise the unitized meal. Slides 139 and 145 of the [full training on the program requirements for the SFSP](#) show the requirements for OVS at breakfast and lunch in the SFSP.