# Superintendent’s Memo #085-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: April 12, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Options for Providing Meals to Students in the Summer

The purpose of this memorandum is to encourage local school divisions to promote and participate in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to provide meals for children when school is out for the summer and during unplanned school closures.

Ensuring that children have access to nutritious meals should continue year-round. As we know, child hunger persists in our communities beyond the school calendar. Many children, especially those not attending summer school lose access to nutritious meals when school is not in session. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) continues to encourage increasing availability of meals to children throughout the year. Local school divisions have the unique ability to provide this service because of their direct contact with families and the community. Local school divisions also have infrastructure and resources to provide meals including existing programs, facilities, equipment, and well-trained staff. Local school divisions can also sponsor qualified sites where education and enrichment activities for children are being held or vend meals to the non-school sponsors.

There are several options available to schools to help bridge the summer nutrition gap for children in their community. Detailed comparisons of program requirements and reimbursement rates are provided in Attachment A to this memorandum.

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

1. **Academic Summer School Programs through the 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 NSLP and SBP as done 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 VDOE 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. **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** - The SFSP is a federally funded USDA program administered by VDOE. School divisions may apply to participate in the SFSP beginning April 15, 2019 via SNPWeb. SFSP application guidelines are available in SNPweb in the download forms section. 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:
	1. The school has, or is located within the attendance area for another school that has, at least 50 percent of the enrolled students eligible for free and reduced meals;
	2. The school opens the program to neighborhood children; and
	3. 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 not an 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.

1. **Seamless Summer Option (SSO)** – This option combines features of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Summer Food Service Program. The Seamless Summer Option requires less paperwork with a streamlined process for schools to provide children meals when school is not in session in the summer and unplanned closures during the school year. Under the SSO, schools with at least 50 percent of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals remain in the regular NSLP and SBP and serve meals to all children at no charge. All meals are reimbursed at the 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. Some simple strategies to let parents know about the SFSP include:

* Announcements through social media, on your May and June menu, and on the division web site;
* Sponsoring sites both at your schools and also in the community;
* Using your schools and staff to vend meals to sites in the community;
* Partnering with stakeholders to gauge the needs of the children in the community;
* Expanding meal service beyond the limited time of academic summer school;
* Partnering with programs in the community that have enrichment activities to provide meals;
* Free summer meals are served in your community. Call 1-866-3HUNGRY or text “FOOD” or “COMIDA” to 877-877 to find a site near you; and
* Promote [FeedVA](http://www.feedva.org/).

Other helpful strategies can be found in Attachment B, *The Summer Meals School Outreach Toolkit,* providing easy action steps and templates to grow awareness of the SFSP.

If you have any questions or request additional information about any of these summer options, please contact your assigned SNP Regional Specialist, or Maggie Parker, CNP Manager, by email at maggie.parker@vdoe.virginia.gov.

JFL/SCC/lj

### Attachments

 A. Comparison of Summer Meal Programs Requirements and Reimbursement Rates

 B. Summer Meals School Outreach Toolkit