



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

April 22, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Options for Providing Meals to Students in the Summer

The purposes of this memorandum are to present program options available to school divisions for providing meals to students in the summer months and to provide information schools may share with households about how to access summer meals.

Good nutrition is essential for good health and effective learning every day, year-round. When school is not in session, many students lose access to nutritious meals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has identified Virginia as one of several states with pockets of persistent poverty where hunger is a prevalent issue. USDA has asked partner agencies in Virginia, including the Department of Education (DOE), to focus their efforts and attention on expanding the availability of summer meal programs and increasing the number of meals served to children during the summer to help address childhood hunger.

Schools have equipment, trained staff, and facilities that position them to be successful in providing meals to students during the summer months. Three options are available to schools to help bridge the summer nutrition gap for their students. School divisions are encouraged to consider participating in one or more of the following programs:

1. **Academic Summer School Programs-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 the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs as they do 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 DOE 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. **USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).** The SFSP is a federally-funded USDA program administered by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Division of Community Nutrition. School divisions may apply to participate in the SFSP by contacting VDH. 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:

- a. The school has, or is located within the attendance area of another school that has, at least 50 percent of the enrolled students eligible for free and reduced price meals;
- b. The school opens the programs to neighborhood children; and,

- c. 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 no 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.

3. **Seamless Summer Option (SSO).** This option combines features of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Under the SSO, schools with at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price meals remain in the regular NSLP and SBP and serve meals to all children at no charge. All meals are reimbursed at the regular free rates established for NSLP and SBP. There is no academic program requirement. The SSO may be operated as:
- o An open site that must be open to anyone under 18 years of age in the neighborhood.

Summer Meals Outreach

Whether or not the school division participates in these summer meal programs, schools are encouraged to provide information about the SFSP to all families to ensure they are aware of the availability of nutritious meals for their children throughout the local community.

- o Schools may spread the word through partner groups, send electronic announcements to parents through their notification system, or provide written communication to tell families about the availability of summer meals.
- o Schools and school divisions should also share the following information with families:
 - 2-1-1 is a toll-free phone number families may call to find a summer feeding site closest to their neighborhood.
 - Families may text “FOOD” to 877-877 on a mobile phone, at no cost, to find the summer feeding site closest to their home.
 - Neighborhood feeding site locations can be found on the No Kid Hungry Web site at: <http://va.nokidhungry.org/find-free-summer-meals>.
 - The National Hunger Hotline, 1-866-3-HUNGRY, operated by WhyHunger, is a toll-free phone number available to people in need of food assistance. Families may call the hotline to find summer meal sites in their area.

If you have questions or want more information about the USDA Summer Food Service Program, please contact Courtney Jones, VDH certification and training supervisor, by telephone at (804) 864-7820, or by e-mail at courtney.jones@vdh.virginia.gov, or Miriam Stiefel, VDH No Kid Hungry program associate, by telephone at (804) 864-7893, or by e-mail at miriam.stiefel@vdh.virginia.gov.

For questions or information about the other summer meal programs, please contact the school nutrition program specialist assigned to your division or Office of School Nutrition Programs staff at (804) 225-2082.

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