

Understanding Nutrition: Primer Module on Summer Nutrition Programs

Two federal entitlement programs, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), including the Seamless Summer Food Option (SSFO), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), serve nutritious meals to children and youth during the summer (See Table 1). The programs are administered federally by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and, within California, by the California Department of Education (CDE).

California state law^a requires all non-charter, public schools to make at least one nutritionally adequate meal available during each school day to low-income students^b at little or no cost. This requirement applies to summer school sessions. Summer schools meeting certain conditions may request a waiver^c of this requirement.

Nutritious diets are critical to children's year-round health and development. During the summer, nutritious diets can help mitigate unhealthy weight gain that students, particularly low-income students, may experience when school is not in session.^d

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Recommended Citation

**Table 1: Quick Facts
Summer Nutrition Programs in California
NSLP, SSFO, and SFSP for July 2010**

Average daily participation among low-income children and youth	410,000
Change in summer meal participation from July 2009	-15%
Change in summer meal participation from July 2002	-50%
Low-income students participating in school lunch but NOT summer lunch	2 million
Percent of low-income students participating in school lunch but NOT summer lunch	80%

Source: California Food Policy Advocates. (June 2011). *School's Out...Who Ate? A Report on Summer Nutrition in California* [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/Summer/CFPAPublications/SOWA-FullReport-2011.pdf>

^a See California Education Code 49550.

^b "Low-income students" refers to students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

^c For more information about the waiver, please see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbnsdsnp012011.asp>

^d For more information about student health, learning, and enrichment during the summer months, please visit the Partnership for Children and Youth's *Summer Matters* webpage: <http://partnerforchildren.org/what-we-do/out-of-school-time-initiatives/summer-programs/summer-practice-consortium>

Summer Nutrition Programs in California

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program – Summer

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) can be operated during the summer months to serve students attending year-round schools and summer school. During the summer, these programs use the same guidelines for participant eligibility and program administration that are required during the school year. (Go to www.ccrwf.org to access the nutrition primer module on school-based nutrition programs.)

Seamless Summer Food Option (SSFO)

The Seamless Summer Food Option is available to certain agencies^a that already operate the NSLP or the SBP. For example, if a school (1) participates in NSLP or SBP, and (2) has 50 percent or more of enrolled students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals,^b the site may adopt the Seamless Summer Food Option (SSFO). SSFO was first launched as a pilot program in California during 2001 and is now a permanent option nationwide.

SSFO providers must make meals available free of charge to any children and youth in the community who wish to participate. In return, SSFO providers receive the highest rate (i.e., the free rate) of federal reimbursement^c for each meal served. With SSFO, sites serve summer meals using the same administrative and accounting procedures that apply to NSLP (for lunches served) and SBP (for breakfasts served).

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), established in 1969, makes meals available free of charge to children and youth (0-18 years old). Like meals served through all federal nutrition programs, SFSP meals must meet specific nutrition standards. As described below, SFSP operates in low-income areas and in conjunction with programs serving low-income children and youth.

SFSP Sponsors and Site Eligibility

SFSP may be sponsored by private nonprofit organizations (e.g., local youth organizations, food banks, community-based service organizations) or local public agencies (e.g., school districts, municipal park and recreation departments, or health departments). Sponsors, which must be approved by CDE, may operate SFSP sites directly or in partnership with other local agencies. Each sponsor may establish and operate up to 200 sites. Additional sites can be added with a waiver from CDE.

^a For a description of all types of agencies and sites that are eligible for SSFO, please visit USDA's *Seamless Summer Option* page at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Seamless_Summer.htm.

^b Eligibility for free and reduced-price meals is based on household income or certain categorical criteria, such as participation in CalFresh or CalWORKS. Eligibility criteria are detailed in the NSLP and SBP modules.

^c For federal reimbursement rates, please see the primer modules on NSLP and SBP.

Sites must meet eligibility criteria and be approved by CDE in order to operate SFSP. School and community sites are “area eligible” to operate SFSP if at least 50 percent of the children in the surrounding area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Meal service at these sites is open to all children and youth in the community.

In contrast, summer learning and enrichment programs (such as summer schools or day camps) may operate SFSP at either area-eligible sites or sites that are not area eligible. For sites that are not area eligible, 50 percent or more of the children enrolled in the summer learning or enrichment program at that site must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals in order for the site to operate SFSP. Meal service at such sites is open only to those enrolled in the summer learning or enrichment program, not all children and youth in the community. As with all SFSP sites, all participants are served free of charge.

SFSP Reimbursement

Reimbursement for meals provided through SFSP varies depending on the type of meal, whether or not the site is rural or urban, and whether meals are prepared on site or are vended (purchased) through another organization (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Summer Food Service Program
Federal Per Meal Reimbursement Rates (2011)^a**

	Breakfast	Lunch/Supper	Snack
Rural or Self-Prep Sites	\$1.8800	\$3.2925	\$0.7750
Other Sites	\$1.8450	\$3.2375	\$0.7575

^a This table shows rates for the continental United States. Alaska and Hawaii receive higher per-meal reimbursements.

Source: California Department of Education. (August 2011). *2011-12 CNP Reimbursement Rates* [Web page]. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/rs/rates1112.asp>

SFSP Site Lists

CDE maintains a list of SFSP sites, organized by county:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites.asp>

Families can use this list to locate the nearest SFSP site. Local organizations that want to operate SFSP sites can use the list to identify a sponsoring agency.

Summer Nutrition Program Participation

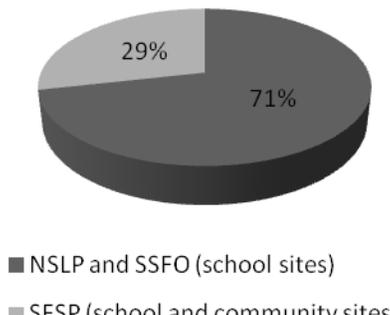
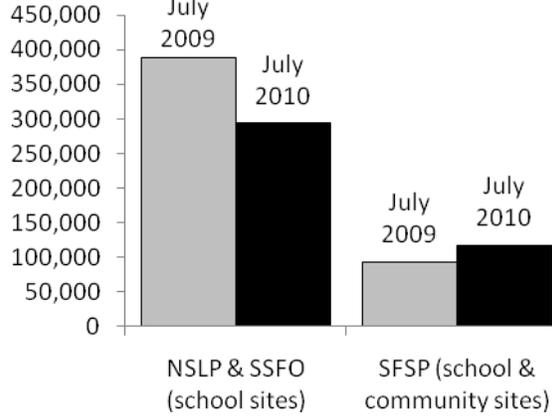
Statewide, 410,000 low-income children and youth participated in the federal summer nutrition programs during July 2010.¹ This represents a 15 percent decline in average daily participation from July 2009, a nearly 25 percent decline from July 2008, and a full 50 percent decline from July 2002.²

Across California, the majority of meals served through the federal summer nutrition programs are served by schools.³ As shown in Table 3, for instance, 71 percent of summer lunches served in July 2010 were served by schools operating NSLP or SSFO.

Because the majority of meals served through the federal summer nutrition programs are served by schools, budget cuts that reduce or eliminate summer school programs dramatically decrease access to federally funded summer meals. From July 2009 to July 2010, the number of school sites serving summer meals decreased by over 50 percent from more than 8,500 sites to fewer than 4,200.⁴

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Table 3: Summer Nutrition Program Participation in California

Percent of Summer Lunches Served by Program (July 2010)	Average Daily Participation by Program (July 2009 vs. July 2010)
 <p>■ NSLP and SSFO (school sites) ■ SFSP (school and community sites)</p>	
<p><i>Source:</i> California Food Policy Advocates. (June 2011). <i>School's Out...Who Ate? A Report on Summer Nutrition in California</i> [PDF document]. Retrieved from http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/Summer/CFPAPublications/SOWA-FullReport-2011.pdf</p>	

Among low-income children and youth in July 2010, average daily participation in NSLP and SSFO was approximately 300,000 while average daily participation in SFSP was approximately 117,000.⁵ Two million (or 80 percent) of California's low-income students who benefitted from federally funded school lunches during the academic year did not benefit from federally funded lunches during the summer of 2010.⁶

For more information on summer nutrition in California, please see:

- *School's Out...Who Ate?*- California Food Policy Advocates' annual report on summer nutrition in California: <http://cfpa.net/sowa-2011>
- California Food Policy Advocate's *Summer Nutrition Page*: <http://cfpa.net/summer-nutrition>
- Food Research and Action Center's *Summer Nutrition Page*: <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/summer-programs/>
- The Summer Meal Program Coalition website: <http://www.ccrwf.org/other-projects/>
- USDA's *Summer Food Service Program* page: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/>
- CDE's *Summer Food Service* page: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sf/>
- For a list of summer meal sites, please visit: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites.asp>

To access additional modules in

***Understanding Nutrition:
A Primer on Programs
and Policies in California***

go to

www.ccrwf.org

END NOTES

¹ California Food Policy Advocates. (June 2011). *School's Out...Who Ate? A Report on Summer Nutrition in California* [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/Summer/CFPAPublications/SOWA-FullReport-2011.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This module on summer nutrition programs is one component of *Understanding Nutrition: A Primer on Programs and Policies in California*. Go to www.ccrwf.org to access additional modules.

The primer program modules were produced by the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF), in partnership with California Food Policy Advocates and the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California (Network)*, a public health effort working with hundreds of partners and organizations to empower low-income Californians to live healthier lives through good nutrition and physical activity.

CCRWF thanks our funders, partners, advisors and reviewers for their contributions to the development of *Understanding Nutrition*, and takes full responsibility for all errors and omissions. Please email comments to ccrwf@ccrwf.org.

Funded by USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh. • California Department of Public Health.



RECOMMENDED CITATION

Karpilow, K. A., Reed, D. F., Chamberlain, P.T., & Shimada, T. (October 2011). *Primer Module on Summer Nutrition Programs*. In *Understanding Nutrition: A Primer on Programs and Policies in California* (2nd ed.). Sacramento, CA: California Center for Research on Women and Families, Public Health Institute. Available on the CCRWF website: www.ccrwf.org.

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