

**Comparison of Food Programs:
Summer Food Service Program/Seamless Summer Option/
National School Lunch Program**

**Illinois State Board of Education—Nutrition and Wellness Programs Division
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The purpose of the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) is to encourage more school food authorities (SFAs) to provide meals in the summer and other times when school is not in session. The Seamless Summer Option (SSO) combines features of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SSO can reduce some paperwork and administrative burden, making it easier for SFAs to feed children in low-income areas during the summer months or during the extended breaks of a year-round school schedule.

This side-by-side comparison of the Programs serves to highlight the similarities between the SSO, the SFSP, and the NSLP/SBP.

TOPIC	SFSP	SSO	NSLP/SBP
Times of Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May–September for traditional school calendar areas • October–April during unanticipated school closures (i.e., emergencies) • During student vacations for schools on a continuous year calendar 	Same as the SFSP	Operates when school is in session as established by the school district, traditional and balanced calendar.
Meal Service Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camps • Churches • Community Centers • Housing projects • Libraries • Migrant centers • Parks • Playgrounds • Pools • Schools 	Same as the SFSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Residential child care institutions (RCCIs)
Meal Cost for Children	<p>All meals are free*</p> <p><i>*Although camps are only reimbursed for children who qualify for free/reduced-price meals, camp sponsors may, and usually do, provide meals free of charge to all children.</i></p>	Same as the SFSP	<p>Meal cost (free [F], reduced-price [RP], and paid [P]) for children is based on their income eligibility.</p> <p>After-school snacks at area-eligible sites are free for all children.</p>

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Establishing Site Eligibility	<p><u>Open sites:</u> 50 percent or more of the children in an area qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, based on school or census data.</p> <p><u>Enrolled sites:</u> 50 percent of household income applications that families submitted are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or 50 percent or more of the children in an area qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, based on school or census data.</p> <p><u>Migrant sites:</u> Certification by a migrant organization that the site(s) serves children of migrant farm workers.</p> <p><u>Camps:</u> Offer a regularly scheduled food service as part of an organized program for enrolled children. Household income applications must be used for eligibility.</p>	Same as the SFSP	<p><u>Schools:</u> Public and private non-profit schools of high school grade and under that are part of State's education system.</p> <p><u>After-school snacks:</u> District must run the NSLP and sponsor or operate an after-school care program with educational/ enrichment activities.</p> <p><u>After-school snack sites in eligible areas:</u> 50 percent or more of the children in the attendance area of a school qualify for F/RP school meals, based on school data</p> <p><u>RCCIs:</u> Public and licensed, non-profit, private</p>
Type of Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Lunch • Snack (AM or PM) • Supper <p>Except for camp and migrant sites, lunch and supper cannot be reimbursed for the same day by the same site.</p>	Same as the SFSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Lunch • After-school snack
Maximum Number of Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two for most sites • Three for migrant sites and camps 	Same as the SFSP	Three
Meals—Seconds	Reimbursed up to 2 percent of the first meals served	Not reimbursable	Not reimbursable
Reimbursement Rates	SFSP FY rates	NSLP and SBP free rates	NSLP and SBP rates

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Commodities	1.5¢ per meal for public sponsors and self-prep sites. May receive bonus commodities	Same as the NSLP	Planned Assistance Level (PAL) current school year May receive bonus commodities
Reimbursement Method	Maximum level for all sites except camps = total meals by type of meal X operating and admin rates. Maximum level for camps = total meals by type for eligible children X operating and administrative rates. Reimbursement can be applied towards both operating and administrative expenses.	Same as the NSLP/SBP free rate Snack: Same as NSLP after-school snack rate (No administrative reimbursement provided)	Free, reduced, or paid rate for each type of meal. Extra 2¢ per lunch if 60 percent of lunches in second preceding year were F/RP Extra 6¢ per lunch for certification. Additional payments for F/RP breakfasts in severe need schools Total after-school snacks X free rate in eligible areas
Monitoring Required By SFA	Preoperational Visits before a new or problem site operates the summer program. Site visit during the first week of operation (waived for experienced SFA sponsors and for sites with no deficiencies in the prior year) . Site review during first four weeks of operation, followed by continued monitoring if problems are found.	Each year, SFAs are required to review sites at least once during the site's operation. The SFA must review the site's compliance with meal counting, claiming, and meal pattern requirements. The state agency (SA) may waive if the site had no problems in the previous summer.	On-Site Review of lunch counting and claiming system for each school by February 1 each year.
Monitoring Required By State	Review every three years; more frequently based on program size and prior problems identified by the state agency (SA).	Administrative Review (AR) in a three-year cycle must include at least one SSO site in the AR of an SFA participating in the option.	Administrative Review (AR) in a three-year cycle.

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Meal Pattern	Meal pattern must meet 7 CFR Part 225.16(d) standards. However, SFAs may substitute NSLP/SBP meal patterns.	Same as the NSLP/SBP	Must meet requirement for NSLP menu planning approaches in 7 CFR Part 210.10; or SBP approaches in 7 CFR Part 220.8;
Eligible Participants	Persons 18 years of age or younger and persons 19 years of age or older with a physical or mental disability, as defined by the SA.	Same as the SFSP	Students enrolled in a school of high school grade and under determined by the SA; including persons enrolled in a school program for the mentally or physically disabled; and persons under 21 enrolled in a residential child care institution (RCCI).
Public Notification	Sponsor must send public media notice regarding program and eligibility.	Public media notice may be done but is not required. The SFA must state in application how each site (excluding closed-enrolled sites) will advertise availability of meals to the neighborhood community.	SFA must send public media notice regarding program and letter or notice with an application to parents for all children in attendance at the school at the beginning of each school year.
Budget	Annually submit the budget with the application. (After one year in the program, requirements may be waived for experienced SFA sponsors).	Not required	Not required
Management Plan	Sponsors who operate more than 25 sites or who have received over \$100,000 in reimbursement the previous year. (Requirement may be waived for experienced SFA sponsors).	Not required	Not required.