

Terms and Definitions

SFSP: Summer Food Service Program

SSO: Seamless Summer Option

NSLP: National School Lunch Program

SBP: School Breakfast Program

SFA: School Food Authority

SNP: School Nutrition Programs

SY 21-22: School Year 2021-2022

HEA: Household Eligibility Application (for USDA Meal Programs)

CEP: Community Eligibility Provision

Open sites may operate under SSO to serve children ages 18 years and younger who are enrolled in the site and/or in the community.

Closed sites may operate under SSO to serve children enrolled in the district; children in the community are not eligible to receive meals.

Child Nutrition Programs School Year 2021-22 Frequently Asked Questions

On April 20, 2021, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a set of waivers for Child Nutrition Programs: [Child Nutrition Nationwide Waiver Update for School Year 2021-2022 | USDA-FNS](#) The following are questions we have received and have answered based on confirmation from the USDA.

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Requirements for all School Nutrition Programs – SSO/NSLP/SBP (SY 21-22)

1) Q: What SNP requirements will SFAs be required to follow for SY 21-22 if operating either SSO or NSLP/SBP?

A: SFAs will need to comply with all applicable SNP program requirements if operating SSO or NSLP/SBP meal services. A full listing of all program requirements can be found in our [Administrative Handbook](#). The only program requirements that would not apply for the 21-22SY would be any requirements that have been waived by the USDA and/or ISBE for the SFA. Here is a list of some common requirements we have been asked about, that do remain requirements for both SSO and NSLP/SBP

- [Food Safety](#)
- [Local Wellness Policy](#)
- [Menu Signage](#)
- [Procurement](#)
- [Professional Standards](#) (When you open this link, click on “Professional Standards for all School Nutrition Programs Employees.”)
- [Resource Management](#)
- [SBP/SSO Breakfast and SFSP Outreach](#) (When you open this link, go to Page J-17.)
- [Smart Snacks](#) (When you open this link, click on “Smart Snacks (Nutrition Standards for all Foods Sold in Schools).”
- [USDA Meal Pattern and Nutrition Standards](#)

General Program Questions

2) Q: Since we are CEP and all our students eat free already is it worth doing the SSO for next school year?

A: SFAs approved for CEP districtwide would still benefit by changing to SSO since the [reimbursement rate](#) will be higher for meals served.

3) Q: With the new waiver extension for SFSP, do SFAs have to continue operation of the program through the summer to be able to use the program in the fall?

A: No, SFAs are not required to serve meals when school is not in session, including summer months. SFAs may choose to operate SFSP until the beginning of the school year and then must apply for either SSO or NSLP/SBP meal programs when they return to school in the fall.

4) Q: Are SFA required to operate a summer meal program during summer months?

A: No, SFAs are not required to operate a meal program during summer months when school is not in session. However, the [Illinois Summer Food Service Mandate](#) (SNP Administrative Handbook, Page J-4) requires that if a school is operating a summer program either academic or enrichment and that program is held in a school building that has a 50% or greater free and reduced eligibility percentage, then the school MUST come into either

SFSP or SSO and not only feed their children a breakfast and/or a lunch, but they must also open the doors to the community.

5) Q: Will schools be required to serve breakfast?

A: Operating under SSO does not obligate SFAs to serve breakfast. However, SFAs continue to be subject to the requirements of the Illinois Breakfast Mandate and would be required to offer breakfast through either SBP or SSO unless an opt out provision was granted.

6) Q: Do SFAs follow SSO monitoring requirements (once per site per year) or NSLP/SBP monitoring requirements (by Feb. 1 for each NSLP site and 50% SBP sites)?

A. Whether an SFA chooses to participate in SSO or NSLP/SBP the onsite monitoring requirements must be met per NSLP/SBP monitoring requirements. Those rules require each SFA, with more than one site where meals are served, to annually conduct their own reviews of each site's meal counting and claiming procedures. All lunch sites must be reviewed and a minimum of 50% of an SFA's breakfast sites must be reviewed. Reviews must be conducted by Feb. 1.

7) Q: If SFAs decide to stay in SFSP until school starts can they switch over to SSO then?

A: Yes, an SFA may continue to serve meals under SFSP until the start date of SY 2021-22. SFA who wish to continue in a federal meal program for SY 2021-22 will have to choose to operate either the Seamless Summer Option or National School Lunch/Breakfast Programs.

8) Q: Will SFAs that have been in NSLP in recent years be able to add sites that have not previously participated in NSLP?

A: Yes, SFA's will be able to add new sites to SSO or NSLP/SBP for SY21-22. For public schools, all official schools that are listed in the Entity Profile System (EPS) as being a part of the same school district, that are serving meals to students enrolled in that school should be sites in the meal programs. For non-public schools, all registered/recognized non-profit schools that are a part of the same fiscal agent and are serving meals to enrolled students should be sites in the meal programs. For RCCI's, any state ran or licensed RCCI site that is feeding children should be added to the WINS system. New site requests can be submitted to Nutrition Programs staff by clicking the Add New Site button on your home screen in WINS and submitting the required information. Those requests will be review by ISBE staff on a weekly basis.

Allow Specific School Meal Pattern Flexibilities for SY 2021-2022

9) Q: Are flexibilities extended to SFAs operating NSLP/SBP or SSO?

A: Meal pattern flexibilities may be requested by SFAs operating NSLP/SBP or SSO meal programs. Flexibilities will be approved on a case by case basis.

10) Q: If SFAs want the sodium flexibilities do they need to complete a waiver to receive the flexibilities?

A: Yes, SFAs who want a waiver for NSLP and SBP sodium flexibilities may complete the

waiver request. This waiver applies to meals served under NSLP/SBP or SSO. (The waiver request process will be available soon.)

11) Q: Will ISBE approve Sodium Flexibility Waivers for the full SY 21-22?

A: Yes, the USDA has allowed state agencies to approve request from SFAs for a waiver of SBP and NSLP sodium Target 2 sodium standards and approval is effective the entire SY 2021-22.

12) Q: What is the sodium standards for SFAs granted a Sodium Flexibility Waiver?

A: SFAs receiving a Sodium Flexibility Waiver must continue to meet [Target 1 Sodium Requirements](#); a Sodium Flexibility Waiver suspends USDA requirements to meet Target 2 Sodium standards for SY 21-22.

13) Q: Will ISBE approve a meal pattern flexibility for milk, grains, vegetable subgroups and grade groupings for the full SY 21-22?

A: No, ISBE will consider waivers for meal pattern flexibilities for milk, grains, vegetable subgroups and grade groupings on a case by case basis.

Seamless Summer Option School Year 2021-22 (SY21-22)

14) Q: Can an SFA serve meals under SSO for the regular SY 21-22?

A: Yes, USDA is allowing SFAs to operate SSO for SY 21-22. *“FNS is allowing SSO operations to continue when school is open during the regular school year, effective July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. This flexibility is available to all school food authorities in States that opt to participate under this waiver, and may be used at any school, regardless of its location or the type of SSO site it is operating.”* USDA Memo, [COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #85](#)

15) Q: Does a site have to be area eligible to participate in SSO for SY21-22?

A: No, area eligibility is not required to operate SSO in SY 21-22.

16) Q: Can SFAs operate an open site and serve children who are not enrolled in the district, for example homeschool children and children who are not yet school age?

A: Yes, SFAs may select open site option on site application(s) in WINS. Operating an open site allows meals to be served to the community, which may include younger siblings of enrolled students or children from the community not enrolled in the district who are 18 years of age and younger.

17) Q: Under SSO, if an SFA operates open to the community where should these meals be claimed?

A: Meals served to community children ages 18 and younger must be claimed at the site where the meals are distributed.

- 18) Q: Can SFAs operating SSO choose to operate a closed site and serve only students enrolled in the district?**
A: Yes, SFAs may select SSO closed site option on the site application(s) in WINS. Operating a close site restricts meal service to students enrolled in the site. Closed site meals may not be served to younger siblings or children from the community.
- 19) Q: Will SFAs who operate closed SSO sites be allowed to serve remote meals?**
A: Yes, with a waiver, SFAs operating a closed site may serve meals to students enrolled in the district in-person or by distributing to remote enrolled students. If the SFA wishes to serve the community meals, they should indicate on the application in WINS the intent to operate as an open site. However, the Nationwide Waivers to Allow Non-Congregate Meal Service, of Meal Times Requirements, and to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals must only be used as needed. The intent of the USDA is to return to normal in-person feeding.
- 20) Q: Are schools operating SSO required to complete the public announcement of eligibility criteria for SY21-22?**
A: Yes. Schools operating SSO must provide public notice regarding the availability of school meals and the eligibility criteria at or near the beginning of the school year. School providing SSO should notify households that all meals will be offered free through SSO.
- 21) Q: Can SFAs distribute SSO meals to a parent/guardian to take home to their children enrolled the in the district?**
A: Yes, with an approved waiver, SFAs may distribute SSO meals to a parent/guardian to take home to their children enrolled in a site/district operating as open or closed. However, the Nationwide Waivers to Allow Non-Congregate Meal Service, of Meal Times Requirements, and to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals must only be used as needed. The intent of the USDA is to return to normal in person feeding.
- 22) Q: Can SFAs distribute SSO meals to a parent/guardian to take home to their children not enrolled in the district?**
A: Yes, with an approved waiver, SFAs may distribute SSO meals to a parent/guardian to take home to their children enrolled or not enrolled in a site/district operating as open. However, the Nationwide Waivers to Allow Non-Congregate Meal Service, of Meal Times Requirements, and to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals must only be used as needed. The intent of the USDA is to return to normal in person feeding.
- 23) Q: Will schools operating SSO be allowed to provide weekend and holiday meals?**
A: Meals for weekends and holidays may only be served under SSO during unanticipated school closures. No weekend or holiday meals may be claimed during the regular school year. However, weekend and holiday meals may be provided through Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, which is more widely available in SY 21-22 due to area eligibility waiver (Nationwide Response Waiver #93).

24) Q: Will SFAs operating SSO be required to collect Household Eligibility Applications (HEA)?

A. No, for the purposes of operating SSO, SFAs are not required to collect HEAs.

25) Q: Will SFAs operating SSO be required to conduct Verification?

A. Yes, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is requiring Verification for School Year 2021-2022. SFAs operating SSO will be required to do the annual Verification process if they collected Household Eligibility Applications before Oct. 1.

26) Q: What is the reimbursement [rate](#) for meals served under SSO?

A: Meals served under SSO will receive the SFSP meal rates, effective July 1, 2021-Dec. 31, 2021. (See next Question)

- SSO Breakfast Rate: \$2.4625
- SSO Lunch Rate: \$4.3175
- SSO Snack Rate: \$1.02

27) Q: Will SFSP meal reimbursement rates change in January as usual and will the SSO rate change at that time as well?

A: SY 21-22 all meals served under SSO will be reimbursed at the SFSP breakfast meal rate. In January of each year, the USDA releases new SFSP reimbursement rates. If SFSP meal reimbursement rates change for SFSP FY22, SSO meal rates will change effective Jan. 1, 2022. No action is required on the part of a sponsor to receive the new rates.

National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) (SY21-22)

If SFAs elect to operate NSLP/SBP meal service

28) Q. Will SFAs who remain in NSLP/SBP and choose not to join Seamless Summer Option receive the SNP reimbursement rate or SFSP rates?

A. SFAs who remain in NSLP/SBP will receive SNP reimbursement rates for National School Lunch/Breakfast Program. USDA releases new rates annually effective July 1 to June 30 of the following year. SY 2021-22 rates will be released in July 2021.

29) Q: Will SFAs operating NSLP/SBP be required to collect Household Eligibility Applications (HEA)?

A: Yes, SFAs operating NSLP/SBP must provide HEAs to households to determine individual student eligibility for students not directly certified. For SFAs operating NSLP/SBP all traditional certification requirements are in place. SFAs must conduct direct certification and must provide HEAs to households that were not directly certified. Please visit our [Administrative Handbook](#) for additional information on the certification process. SFAs that are districtwide CEP will not need to collect HEAs. RCCIs that remain in NSLP/SBP would also need to determine individual eligibility through the traditional processes. Please visit the [RCCI guidance](#) document for additional information.

30) Q: Will SFAs operating NSLP/SBP be required to conduct verification?

A: Yes, SFAs operating NSLP/SBP and collecting HEAs must conduct the annual Verification process and submit a Verification Summary Report. [Verification Information](#)

31) Q: Can SFAs in NSLP/SBP apply to participate in Community Eligibility Provision?

A: Yes, SFAs in NSLP/SBP may apply to participate in [Community Eligibility Provision](#). The application period for SY2021-22 is April 1-Sept. 30, 2021.

32) Q: Can SFAs distribute NSLP/SBP meals to parents/guardians of children enrolled in district?

A: Yes, with an approved waiver, SFAs may distribute NSLP/SBP meals to a parent/guardian to take home to the children enrolled in the district. The intent of the USDA is to return to normal in-person feeding. Parent/guardian pick up is allowed in rare instances on a case by case basis for SFAs that have an approved waiver and only for students that have not already received meals for that day.

33) Q: Can SFAs distribute NSLP/SBP meals to parents/guardians of children not enrolled in district?

A: No, SFAs may not distribute NSLP/SBP meals to a parent/guardian to take home to their children not enrolled in the district. Only under SSO, with an approved waiver, SFAs may operate an open site which would allow distribution of meals to parents/guardians for children not enrolled in the district.

34) Q: Will schools operating NSLP/SBP be allowed to provide a weekend box including breakfast and lunches for the weekend?

A: Under NSLP/SBP meals served on weekends are not eligible for reimbursement. However, weekend and holiday meals may be provided through Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, which is more widely available in SY 21-22 due to area eligibility waiver (Nationwide Response Waiver #93).

USDA Foods

35) Q: What is the Food Distribution Entitlement Waiver that Illinois opted-in to?

A: On Jan. 15, 2021, USDA offered a second opt-in waiver to all states, allowing the use of SY18-19 lunch meal counts in the calculation of Food Distribution Program entitlement dollars for SY21-22, the same as it did for SY20-21. Normally, the lunch meals counts from SY20-21 would be used to calculate entitlement for SY21-22, but due to many Illinois schools operating SFSP during SY20-21, Illinois' SY20-21 meal counts were significantly lower than SY18-19 meal counts, which would have resulted in less Food Distribution Program funding. In order to maintain a consistent level of funding, Illinois opted-in to the waiver.

36) Q: Can USDA Foods, DOD and processed USDA Foods be used in SSO?

A: Yes, USDA Foods, DOD Fresh fruits and vegetables, and USDA Foods diverted for

processing can be used in SSO the same as they would be used in NSLP.

37) **Q: Will SY21-22 SSO and/or NLSP meal counts be used to calculate SY22-23 entitlement?**

A: Yes, according to the SY21-22 entitlement waiver, SY21-22 meal counts will be used to calculate SY22-23 entitlement. SSO and NSLP meal counts are the meal counts used to calculate entitlement per the federal regulations.