



Non-Congregate Feeding Pilot

Summer 2023

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

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Food and Nutrition Division
Summer Meal Programs

Updated 3/29/2023
www.SquareMeals.org

2022 Appropriations Act

- Non-congregate summer service can occur in rural areas where no congregate service currently exists
- Free or reduced-price children in non-area eligible areas (high income areas) can receive non-congregate summer meals
- These policies are permanent.
- USDA mandated to issue regulatory changes by December 29, 2023.



USDA Clarification – February 28

- Both SSO and SFSP can participate
- Sites must be located in rural-designated counties... OR
- Rural pockets of urban-designated counties (rural census tracts)
- It is State discretion to determine where congregate service does not exist.



Where No Congregate Service Exists

- A non-congregate site cannot operate within 2 miles of an existing congregate site.
- “Existing congregate site” = SFSP/SSO open site that operated in Summer 2022



USDA Clarification – February 28

- Non-congregate service is not intended to replace congregate service... BUT
- At State discretion, some existing sites can switch to non-congregate service.



Who Can Switch to Non-congregate Service?

- Limited to school districts that were mandated by State law to operate a summer program in 2022 and reported a financial loss on their Summer Cost report.
- Gives TDA a manageable sample size to determine how much non-congregate service will increase participation and revenue compared to 2022.
- Data to be provided to USDA for input into rulemaking.



Who Can Switch to Non-congregate Service?

- “Switched” sites must be at least 2 miles away from the nearest congregate site.
- Private non-profits will not be allowed to switch sites.





New Sites

- CEs not approved to switch can establish new sites if they meet proximity requirements.
 - Note that existing private non-profits operating SFSP will also have existing sites.
 - You cannot close an existing site to meet proximity requirements.
- Districts that have never operated a summer feeding site but are in good standing in the School Nutrition Programs are encouraged to participate.

PILOT OBJECTIVE: Increase participation in counties where little to none has existed before.

Open versus Closed Enrolled

- For the most part, only open sites will be approved for non-congregate service.

EXCEPTION

In higher income areas in rural counties only, TDA will allow schools to establish closed enrolled non-congregate sites at which 100% of the students enrolled qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

EXAMPLE

A school that is located in a higher income area of rural county wants to feed their free and reduced/price students summer meals. They could establish a home delivery “site” that delivers summer meals to the households of eligible children.

Closed Enrolled Non-Congregate School Sites in High Income Areas

Criteria for participation:

- Must be an SFA in good standing
- Enrollment roster includes only children that qualify for free or reduced-price meals as they are the only children eligible for NC meals
- Proactively notify eligible students' families about the availability of the program.
- Avoid overt identification of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Summary So Far!

- Only available in rural counties and rural census tracts in urban counties
- Only school districts participating in NSLP and experienced Private Non-Profits in good standing can participate
- Primarily only new sites will be allowed to participate
 - USDA does not intend for NC to replace congregate service.
 - Only school districts that reported a loss last summer AND in a rural county will be able to switch from congregate feeding to NC.
- All NC sites must be at least 2 miles away from an existing congregate site.
- With one exception, only open sites in area eligible areas can participate



Remember!

**THIS IS A
PILOT**

- Actual regulation not available until after Summer 2023 – Program thus likely to change in 2024
- Goal is to establish infrastructure and lessons learned for subsequent years
- Data collected will inform USDA in their rulemaking

**HEALTHY
SUMMER
MEALS
FOR KIDS**



Non-Congregate Service Overview

- Grab-and-go, home delivery, or mobile route (beginning of the route is the site)
- Home delivery can only be operated by school districts or PNP with an MOU with a school district
- Bundled meals allowed for up to one week's worth of meals – days of intended consumption must align with approved site application
- **Bulk food component distribution NOT allowed.**
- Parent pick-up is allowed.
- All other SFSP/SSO requirements must be adhered to.

Process Overview

1. CE will use mapping tool and published list of rural counties to determine site eligibility for NC.
2. CE must have an approved site application **PRIOR** to submitting NC request.
3. CE submits one online NC request form **per site**. Request form will document method and times of service.



Process Overview

4. TDA validates that the site is in rural area and meets proximity requirements.
5. Once approved, TDA will add an “NC” designation to the site name.
6. On the Summer Site Finder, TDA will provide instructions to the public to contact any site with an NC designation to determine actual days and times of service.



Resources and Support

By April 6, the following resources will be available:

- Dedicated SquareMeals page
- Dedicated FAQs
- List of all rural counties published
- Interactive map to determine eligibility for NC
- List of school districts that qualify to switch sites from congregate feeding to NC
- Link to online request form

TDA will be issuing a press release about the program as well as conducting outreach.



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