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## Announcements from the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

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Summer 2023 Non-congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas



### Summer 2023 Non-congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas

On December 29, 2022, President Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (the Act) (P.L. 117-328). The Act included significant policy changes for Child Nutrition programming, including the authorization of a permanent, non-congregate meal service through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for rural areas with no congregate meal service. It also made permanent the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program (Section 502 of the Act).

The non-congregate model for rural areas is available for States to participate in Summer 2023, although regulations will need to be written in advance of Summer 2024. Wisconsin will implement the non-congregate model and has developed an application process and policies based on USDA guidance for 2023.

The purpose of implementing non-congregate meals in rural areas is to provide broader access to nutritious meals in the summer months, when school is not in session, in areas where it is more difficult for children to participate in congregate meals or when there is a lack of facilities to host congregate meals. There are benefits of congregate meal service, which often also provide enrichment activities. Sponsors are encouraged to continue to provide these opportunities when feasible. ***The rural non-congregate option is not intended to replace congregate meal service.***

Below are some instances when to offer non-congregate meals:

- After summer programming has ended (i.e., summer school, recreation program, etc.). When enrolled programming ends it may not be feasible to continue to offer summer meals as children do not have easy access to the site.
- When a rural area does not have a facility to use to host a congregate site, non-congregate meals could be offered all summer.
- When a sponsor cannot staff a congregate program but has enough resources to prepare and provide non-congregate meals once or twice a week.
- When the only other summer meal sites nearby, are closed to community participation and there are no other means to host a congregate site.

Sponsors can provide non-congregate summer meals in rural areas that do not have congregate meal service. Non-congregate meals cannot be provided in non-rural areas for reasons that include lack of transportation, safety concerns, lack of a location to serve meals, or other similar reasons.

To determine if your SFSP operates in a rural area and if you may potentially be eligible to provide non-congregate meals, review the [Rural Non-congregate Meal Service Option in the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option](#). Please follow the instructions provided in the document to begin the application process.

The information contained in this Bulletin is also located on the [SFSP website](#). Questions may be directed to your [assigned SFSP consultant](#) or sent to [sfsp@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:sfsp@dpi.wi.gov).



*Program Abbreviation/Definition Key*

**SFA**=School Food Authority  
**SSO**=Seamless Summer Option  
**SFSP**=Summer Food Service Program

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