



NON-CONGREGATE SUMMER MEALS QUICKIE GUIDE FOR TEXAS CHILD NUTRITION SPONSORS

With the passage of [federal legislation](#) in December 2022 and USDA's announcement of its [interim final rule](#) in December 2023, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors across the country can now operate non-congregate programs in rural communities without access to a congregate meal site. For more information, visit the [Texas Department of Agriculture's Non-Congregate Summer Meals Page](#) and [Summer 2025 Non-Congregate Feeding FAQs](#).

Program Model Flexibilities

Drive-Thru or Curbside Pick-Up. In drive-thru or curbside pick-up models; most families arrive by car to receive meals. Families drive to the pick-up spot, and the meals are loaded into their cars outside. This model is best for meal programs planning to distribute multiple meals at one time.

Walk-Up Distribution. In this model, most families arrive at an indoor or outdoor location to pick up meals without a vehicle. Individual meals or multi-day meal packs are with this grab-and-go model. Walk-up distributions are ideal for communities with central locations easily accessible by public transportation, car, or walking. It is also ideal when fewer meals are provided at one time to accommodate those walking or taking public transportation.

Mobile Route Distribution. With non-congregate meal distribution via mobile routes, sponsors use a vehicle to travel to multiple site locations. Similar to congregate mobile models, non-congregate mobile routes are ideal in areas where families face transportation difficulties and areas with few central gathering points.

Why Operate Rural Non-Congregate Sites?

- Ensure kids in your rural communities can access meals throughout the summer.
- Ability to offer meals-on-the-go, without monitoring consumption of meals onsite.
- Reach more kids than with congregate sites alone.
- Provide summer employment to staff.
- Provide higher meals per labor hour with multi-meal type and multi-day service.
- Program flexibilities allow you to design your program to better meet your community's needs.

Menu Building Options to Meet Community Needs

- Provide breakfast, lunch, or supper, as well as weekend meals.
- Options to provide bulk/groceries or unitized meals with state agency approval.
- Options to provide fresh, frozen, or shelf-stable meals.

Best Practices

Start Planning Early. Start discussions now with potential sites and your state agency about sponsoring summer meal service. This will give you a jumpstart on applications, menu planning and selecting staffing. You can even start planning with partner agencies who can support your meal distribution and marketing efforts and enhance your program with wrap-around services.

Summer School Solutions. If your summer school site is serving daily congregate meals to students and the community, consider offering meals-to-go to participants for weekends when school is not in session. When school is out for the summer, consider "converting" the site to a drive-through or pick-up site.

Staffing Strategies. Begin outreach to your staff now for the availability of summer meals work. Consider offering flexible shifts to accommodate staff who can only work a portion of the summer. Build a volunteer brigade by promoting the opportunity through schools and community organizations. Hiring youth can also be a great way to fill vacancies and provide high school students with income.

Build Your Integrity Plans. Consider a pre-registration system to ensure you are not serving duplicate meals. Generate QR or bar codes for families and purchase scanners to help check in participants and avoid long pick-up lines. Other ways to avoid duplication include strategically timed service windows or cross-checking participants with summer school rosters. In very rural areas serving smaller numbers, staff knowledge of the community may be sufficient to avoid duplication. Work with your TDA specialist to determine what is best for your site(s).

Check Out These Summer Success Stories

- [Smithville ISD, Texas](#)
- [Burke County School District, Georgia](#)
- [Bledsoe County School Nutrition, TN](#)
- [Regional Foodbank of Northeastern New York](#)

Important Dates to Remember

- **January 15th, 2025:** Application opens for summer
- **March 15th, 2025:** March SFSP Deadline for Advance
- **April 15th, 2025:** Deadline for New CE Application or Operational Issues
- **May 15th, 2025:** Summer Meals Renewal is Due
- **May 31st, 2025:** Deadline to Submit Sites to TDA

No Kid Hungry Resources

- [No Kid Hungry's Center for Best Practices](#)
- [Summer Meals Outreach Toolkit](#)
- [Successful Non-Congregate Meal Service Models for Rural Areas: Implementation Guide](#)
- Register for [No Kid Hungry Webinars](#).

Additional Resources

- [Texas Department of Agriculture- Summer Meal Programs](#)
- [TDA Non-Congregate Site Eligibility Tool](#)
- [Summer 2025 Non-Congregate Feeding FAQs](#)