

Early Childhood Education and Care Department

Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky

Congregate Meals and Non-Congregate Meal Service



NEW MEXICO

Early Childhood

Education & Care Department

Agenda

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Congregate Meal Service vs. Non-Congregate Meal Service

Congregate Meal Service

- **Congregate meal service** means a food service which meals are consumed on site in a supervised setting.

Non-Congregate Meal Service

- **Non-Congregate meal service** means a food service at which meals are provided for children to **consume all the components off site**. Non-congregate meal service must only be operated at sites designated as “**rural**” with **no congregate meal service being offered**

Congregate Meal Services Requirements

REQUIREMENTS:

- All meals should be eaten on the premises, however sponsors have the option to request on the application to have a child take one item offsite, such as a grain item, fruit or vegetable, for later consumption.
 - Congregate meal sites must ensure that all children in attendance are offered a complete meal before serving a second meal to any child or serving a meal to any adult.
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New Sites

- New sites means a site which did not participate in the program in the prior year.
- Sites switching from congregate meal service to non-congregate in summer 2025, are considered new sites.
- Sites switching from congregate meal service to operating a hybrid site (operating congregate and non-congregate meals service at the same site) are considered new sites.

Site Definition

- **Site** means the place where a child receives a program meal.
 - A site may be **indoor or outdoor location** where congregate meals are served
 - A stop on a **delivery route** of a mobile congregate service
 - A **distribution location or route** for a non-congregate meal service
 - However, a child's residence is not considered a non-congregate site.

Non-Congregate Meal Service

- Conducts a non-congregate meal service for eligible children
- In an area that does not meet the definition of “areas in which poor economic conditions exist, and
- Is not a camp
- Sponsors of these sites must **notify** participants of the availability of **free meals and if a free meal application is needed.**
- Sponsors of these sites are required to provide reasonable modifications to accommodate participants with disabilities.
- Non-congregate meal service must only be operated at sites designated as “rural” with no congregate meal service.
- A rural designation is **effective** for a period of 5 years.
- Congregate and non-congregate sites will not serve the same population of children for the same meal service on the same day.

Non-Congregate Meal Service Options

When utilizing non-congregate meal service options, sponsor must ensure that required food components for each reimbursable meal served meet the meal pattern requirements and that food items contribute to a reimbursable meal and are clearly identifiable, with menus provided to the nutrition staff for approval, and food preparation is minimal.

- Unitized
 - Bulk food
 - Combination of both
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Non-Congregate Meal Services/Good Standing

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Good standing** means;
 - Sponsor must be considered in good standing to operate a non-congregate meal service.
 - The sponsor meets its program responsibilities, is current with its financial obligations, and, if applicable, has fully implemented all corrective actions within the required time.
 - Located in a rural location

Multi-Day Meal Issuance

- **Bulk meals** provided must meet the meal pattern requirements for each meal service type with added safeguards to ensure program integrity and the health and safety of children. The maximum number of reimbursable meals provided to a child should not exceed the number of meals that could be provided over a **5-calendar day period**.
- Approved sponsors may distribute up to the allowable number of reimbursable meals that would be provided over a **5- calendar day** period.
- Sponsors who select this option are required to have procedures in place that document, to a reasonable degree, the number of meals being distributed to each eligible child.
- ***Consists of a unitized meal.***

Conditional Non-Congregate Sites

- Conducts a non-congregate meal service for eligible children
- In an area that does not meet the definition of “areas in which poor economic conditions exist, and
- Is not a camp
- Sponsors of these sites must **notify** participants of the availability of **free meals and if a free meal application is need.**
- Sponsors of these sites are required to **provide reasonable modifications** to accommodate **participants with disabilities**

Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-up

- Sponsor is in good standing may allow parents or guardians to pick up program meals on behalf of eligible children.
- Sponsor electing this option must have documented procedures in place to ensure that meals are only distributed to parents or guardians of eligible children and that duplicated meals are not distributed to any child.



(Your Logo Here)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Sun Meals to Go, in collaboration with _____, is offering **free meals** for children ages **1 to 18**. To ensure all children in the household receive a meal, parent(s) or guardian(s) are permitted to pick up meals for their children.

By signing below:

I affirm that the information above is correct, and I am the parent/guardian for the children listed on this form and no one else may claim them for this program. The meals cannot be shared with non-children, and I will NOT receive summer meals from another USDA Summer Meal Program, as this is against USDA rules and regulations.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

04/2025

Non-Congregate Plan

- What meal types are you planning to serve?
 - How many days of reimbursable meals will be served at one time?
 - Explain in detail in how you will ensure that multiple days of food will meet the meal pattern requirements.
 - What type of meal service will be provided?
 - Unitized
 - Bulk food
 - Combination of both
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Cont. Non-Congregate Plan

- What type of non-congregate service do you intend to operate?
- Sponsors allowing parent /guardian pick up must have a way to :
 - Verify the number of eligible children in the household
 - Obtain written permission, listing the parent/guardian who are permitted to pick up meal (form)
 - Have a process to ensure that meals are only distributed to parents/guardians and that duplicate meals are not distributed at another meal site location.

Offer Versus Serve

- **Only SFA's** sponsors, who are experienced with **OVS**, may utilize **OVS** in their non-congregate meal service.

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Program Resources for SFSP Sponsors-
**[https://summerfoodnm.org/sponsors/
program-resources](https://summerfoodnm.org/sponsors/program-resources)**

**More information about the New Mexico
Early Childhood Education and Care
Department-Programs for Parents
and Professionals**
<https://nmececd.org>