

Best Practices in Four Summer Food Service Programs in Three USDA Regions



Research Objective

To describe best practices in operating the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) through observations and interviews with key personnel in three districts and a food bank.

Methods

- This was a case study of four SFSP sites in three USDA regions.
- Structured interviews were conducted with SFSP directors and staff in three school districts and a food bank.
- Observations were made in central kitchens and at lunch locations.

Results

- The SFSP is a favorite federal program among school nutrition directors because they are meeting a need in their community and they can see the impact of the SFSP. Reaching even more children who are food insecure was a priority for the directors.
- Planning begins as soon as the SFSP ends but in January through March, plans are firmed up for summer.
- Two of the districts are using converted school busses and one of them has a library inside.
- One of the districts has weekend visits to a migrant camp and has partnered with the local health system for immunizations.
- The food bank sponsor serves lunches in parks and has an innovative community cafe that is open for dinner.
- The four programs had many partnerships including the YMCA, mobile home parks, public libraries, churches, and Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Directors were creative in using vendor reward points, community foundation support, Dairy Council, and Team Nutrition resources.
- The support of district administration and community partners was a key to success.

Application of Results

School nutrition directors are uniquely qualified to operate SFSPs because they are experienced in:

- running federal nutrition programs
- planning appealing menus
- providing meals in many locations

These best practices can be used by current SFSP sponsors, as well as school districts or agencies interested in becoming sponsors.

Quotations from Directors:

"We have every federal program but I love the summer feeding program because we are meeting such a need for the district."

"You see the immediate impact. When you see people standing and waiting for food, it makes an impression."

"It was about \$30,000 a bus to convert them and repair them. We added a generator for the AC and cooler. Each bus has an awning and a side door. The emergency exits are on the side. They can exit on the side."

"Number one is FARM Bus-Fun, Activities, Reading, Meals is ½ traveling library, ½ meals. On weekends we go to two migrant camps. Kids love to see the books. We have nutrition education (fun, food sampling) once a week."

"We partner closely with the YMCA - we reach families that may not know about the SFSP. Families are on a tight budget. We reach a wide variety of people in urban and rural communities."

"The minute summer foodservice is over, we are continuously strategizing for the following year. We constantly evaluate all summer with supervisors in the field. They are in the field every day."

"Our community supports the food bank. There is an increased understanding among school administrators including principals. We have local foundations behind us and supporting the SFSP is the 'cool thing to be involved in' in our community."



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