

Thinking About Participating in the School Lunch Program? Important Things to Know and Consider Before Applying

Listed below are the national food programs offered:

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP):**
This is a federally funded program that provides states with cash assistance and donations of food to be used to assist local schools in serving nutritious lunch meals to students each school day. In order to receive this cash and donated food assistance, schools must agree to comply with specific regulations as set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture.
- **School Breakfast Program (SBP):**
Similar to the NSLP, the SBP provides children with nutritious foods before their school day begins thus improving their diets and encouraging the learning process. All students may eat breakfast if the program is offered at their school.
- **Afterschool Snack Program:**
This program provides a nutritious snack to students participating in afterschool activities on the school campus.
- **Special Milk Program (SMP):**
This program encourages the consumption of milk by students who do not participate in other child nutrition programs. For example, children attending split-session kindergarten who do not have access to the breakfast and lunch programs may participate in the SMP.

Is the school eligible to participate in the NSLP?

- Public, charter and private schools that accept full administrative and financial responsibility are eligible to participate in the programs.
- All charter schools are eligible to participate by providing a copy of their charter agreement with the local school district.
- Private schools must qualify according to Florida Department of Education rules and have a nonprofit status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Does this make financial sense for the program?

- Estimate the Federal Reimbursement for the National School Lunch Program
- Reimbursement Rates for Child Nutrition Programs (Refer to Estimated-Reimbursement Attachment)

Evaluate the kitchen and storage facilities. Is there space for children to eat meals?

- **What type of kitchen does your school have?**
 - **On-Site Kitchen**: All food is stored, prepared and served on site.
 - **Satellite Kitchen**: All food is brought into the school by an outside kitchen; the school only has capability to reheat and serve meals. The food is prepared within the district, but not at this kitchen.
 - **Vended Kitchen**: All food is brought into the school by an outside catering company or from a separate school food authority. The school has no capability to heat and serve meals. “Outside catering company” is the key here – the individual site does not prepare food nor does another school in the same district handle it.
 - **Re-Therm Kitchen**: Preparation and production are limited to reheating previously prepared, stored and chilled food to serving temperature. These are mostly commercially prepared items. The kitchen needs adequate refrigerator and/or freezer space for storage for a minimum of one week.
- **Is there adequate space and equipment to store, prepare and serve meals?**

Are there staff members to devote to the child nutrition programs?

- As federally funded programs, the child nutrition programs entail much more than the preparation and service of meals to children.
- The programs require significant amounts of documentation and record keeping, along with the preparation of menus, staff supervision and the counting and claiming of each child’s meals according to his/her respective eligibility category.
- Each school should have at least one full-time staff member who can devote time fully to the administration of the program.

Menu Planning

- o Each school food authority must submit two weeks of menus on the approved menu template for each meal service the school plans to serve. The menus must be approved by the Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness. **Copy and paste this link into your web browser:** <https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Menu-Planning-and-Meal-Service>

Available Resources

Websites: The child nutrition program website contains additional information, forms and useful links:

- <https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program>

- <https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Sponsor-Application-to-Serve-School-Meals>