



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754, East Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334

(404) 656-5957

**Nathan Deal**  
*Governor*

**Bobby Cagle, MSW**  
*Commissioner*

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**MEMORANDUM**

To: All Summer Food Service Program Participants (SFSP)

From: Falita Flowers, Program Manager  
Nutrition Services

Date: May 16, 2013

Subject: Bright from the Start's Policy Memo "Demonstration Project for Non-Congregate Feeding for Outdoor Summer Feeding Sites Experiencing Excessive Heat".

Legal Authority: United States Department of Agriculture Memoranda SP 24-2013, SFSP 10-2013

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The purpose of this memorandum is to describe a new demonstration project allowing non-congregate feeding at certain outdoor summer sites experiencing excessive heat. Also, the purpose of this memorandum is to include "frequently asked questions" regarding the administration of the project.

For summer 2013, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will initiate a new demonstration project allowing non-congregate feeding at certain outdoor summer meal sites experiencing excessive heat. The demonstration project utilizes authority provided in Section 749(g) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Act, 2010 (PL 111-80) to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to summer meals for low income children. Under the demonstration project, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors operating approved outdoor feeding sites without temperature-controlled alternative sites may operate as non-congregate sites on days when the area is experiencing excessive heat.

Under this demonstration project, non-congregate meal service shall be permitted only on days when the National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a Heat Advisory, an Excessive Heat Warning, or an Excessive Heat Watch for the area in which an approved outdoor feeding site is located. This demonstration project will evaluate the effect on SFSP participation when sponsors

are permitted to maintain service to children who would otherwise lose access to meals when excessive heat makes impractical the operation of a congregate feeding site lacking a temperature-controlled alternative site.

FNS also may extend this demonstration project to other situations where exceptional circumstances make congregate feeding impractical at an approved meal site. Requests based on exceptional circumstances other than excessive heat will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved in advance by the FNS National Office.

### **Applying for Participation in the Demonstration Project**

Upon application to the SFSP for summer 2013, interested sponsors must notify Bright from the Start of their intent to participate in the demonstration project and must identify those congregate feeding sites lacking temperature-controlled alternative sites that would be included in the demonstration project. Sponsors must select sites that are viable options for successful SFSP/SSO participation under the congregate feeding requirement on days when the area is not experiencing excessive heat. The demonstration project will simply allow maintenance of the meal service at those sites on days when excessive heat makes congregate feeding impractical. Outdoor sites with available temperature-controlled alternative sites will not be included in the demonstration project, and should serve meals at the temperature-controlled alternative site when the area is experiencing excessive heat.

Sponsors must be otherwise eligible to participate in SFSP or SSO and properly approved by the State agency in order to participate in the demonstration project. However, Bright from the Start may not deny a sponsor application based solely on the sponsor's intention to participate in the demonstration project.

### **Participation Requirements**

Approved outdoor sites must comply with the congregate meal requirements on all other days of operation. Requirements pertaining to the number and type of meals that may be served each day continue to apply and sponsors must continue to provide all required components of a reimbursable meal. Because meals will be consumed off site and possibly at a later time during that day, sponsors should carefully consider all food safety issues and risks. Only one meal may be provided to each child present at the meal site. Meals may not be provided to adults or other children to take to children not present at the site. All meal counting, claiming, and Bright from the Start's and sponsor's monitoring and oversight requirements continue to apply.

Sponsors electing to participate in the demonstration project must submit with their monthly claims for reimbursement the following information:

- The specific dates on which participants were permitted to take meals off site; and
- The number of meals claimed that were taken off site by participants.

The above mentioned information must be submitted via the attached form "FY 2013 Request for Participation in the Demonstration Project for Non-Congregate Feeding for Outdoor Sites Experiencing Extreme Heat." This request form must be returned to Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754, East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334; attention: Falita S. Flowers, Nutrition Services Program Manager. The above mentioned form is available as part of this memorandum and in the SFSP Forms Section on Bright from the Start's web site.

If participating institutions have questions concerning information in this memorandum, please contact the Policy Administrator at 404.651.7181.

## Questions and Answers

### Reporting Requirements

1. Who is required to document the National Weather Service (NWS) Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning, or Excessive Heat Watch for the days when non-congregate meal service takes place?

Sponsors must document the NWS Excessive Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning, or Excessive Heat Watch and maintain the records on file for review. Meals taken offsite may only be claimed on days for which documentation is maintained. Sponsors must print or obtain an electronic copy of the NWS notice on the public web found at <http://www.weather.gov/> on the day the Excessive Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning, or Excessive Heat Watch is issued. Please be aware, this notice is only posted on this site on the day on which the area experienced extreme heat, so if this is not documented on the day of extreme heat, it cannot be verified later.

2. What information must the States report for purposes of evaluating the demonstration project?

States must report monthly

- a. The number of sponsors electing to participate in the demonstration project;
- b. The number of sites under the participating sponsors included in the demonstration project;
- c. The total number of days on which at least one sponsor participating in the demonstration project permitted participants to take meals off site; and
- d. The total number of meals claimed that sponsors permitted participants to take off site.

3. How will the States submit this information to FNS?

FNS has developed a template to facilitate the State collection of information pertaining to the demonstration project. States are encouraged to provide the data elements included in the

template each month to their respective FNS Regional Office using the template provided to the State agencies with this memorandum, in addition to the submission of the FNS-14 and FNS-10.

### **Site Eligibility**

4. Must State agencies create an additional application system for sponsors participating in the demonstration project?

Interested sponsors must notify their State agency of their intent to participate in the demonstration project in their application to participate and individual site applications. Sponsors must identify those outdoor congregate feeding sites lacking temperature-controlled alternative sites that would be included in the demonstration project. This notification should be included in the site application for participation this summer, where the sponsor must indicate their arrangements for food service during periods of inclement weather. An addendum may be submitted to the State agency by sponsors who have already applied or have been approved to participate this summer.

5. May a site that previously had an alternative feeding site on days when the site experienced excessive heat participate in the demonstration project?

The intent of this demonstration project is to maintain service to children who would otherwise lose access to meals when excessive heat makes the operation of a congregate feeding site lacking a temperature-controlled alternative site impractical. Therefore, if the site has an alternative feeding site, or other viable alternatives, the site cannot participate in this demonstration project.

6. May a State agency prohibit a sponsor from participating in the demonstration project?

State agencies may not deny a sponsor application based solely on the sponsor's intention to participate in the demonstration project. However, the State agency must ensure that the sponsor is otherwise eligible to participate in SFSP or SSO and can adequately meet all program requirements when operating non-congregate meal service under the demonstration project.

7. May a State agency prohibit a site from participating in the demonstration project?

State agencies may deny participation in the demonstration project by an otherwise approved site based on concerns related to health, safety and integrity related to non-congregate feeding. We encourage State agencies to consult with their FNS Regional Office if they are considering denying a sponsor's participation in the demonstration based on these concerns.

8. Are there additional health and safety requirements for sponsor and site supervisors participating in the demonstration project?

All State-sponsor agreements are required to include an agreement to store, prepare, and serve food and maintain proper sanitation and health standards in conformance with all applicable

State and local standards. Therefore, sponsors participating in the demonstration project should prepare a food safety plan or alternate menu using non-perishable foods specifically for days when non-congregate meal service takes place, to ensure the meal service will be conducted safely.

### **Monitoring and Meal Service**

9. Must site caps remain the same for days sites are participating in the demonstration project?

A site cap is established for all sites during the application and approval process. When evaluating a proposed food service site, the State agency must ensure that the site is approved to serve no more than the number of children for which its facilities are adequate and the capacity of the site/sponsor to prepare and/or distribute meals. Because these requirements do not change when congregate feeding is removed, existing site caps must remain, ensuring that only one meal per child is prepared and distributed. Participating sponsors should take caution when establishing site caps for sites participating in the demonstration project to prevent food waste and preserve the integrity of summer meal operations.

However, because it is sometimes difficult for a State agency, sponsor or site to accurately assess capability and participation of a site, throughout the summer, trends in participation can be reassessed, and caps may be adjusted and approved by the State agency as necessary.

10. Must meal service times remain the same for days sites are participating in the demonstration project?

Meal times may not be shortened or extended on days the area is experiencing excessive heat. The meal time approved by the State for each site must remain the same on those days. Children regularly attending the site will expect the site to be open, and the State monitors may have a scheduled visit that day

11. Are sponsors and State agencies required to continue their monitoring duties on days the area is experiencing excessive heat?

Yes. Regardless of participation in the demonstration project, all sites are subject to the monitoring requirements outlined in Program regulations and guidance. Sponsor and State agency monitors should observe meal service on days when a site visit is scheduled to ensure Program requirements are met regardless of the weather conditions. Monitors are expected to ensure that sites conducting non-congregate meal services are complying with all other Program requirements and properly operating the non-congregate service (i.e., site is complying with food safety requirements, only one meal is being provided per child, etc.).

12. Are sponsors and State agencies required to specifically monitor on days the area is experiencing excessive heat?

Sponsors and State agencies are not required to specifically schedule site visits on a day the site is operating a non-congregate meal service. However, FNS strongly encourages site monitoring on excessive heat days to ensure that the demonstration project is properly operated. For sites that have provided non-congregate meals, monitors should compare meal counts for non-congregate days against days when congregate meal service takes place to ensure they are consistent with site caps and typical site participation and review documentation of National Weather Service excessive heat notifications to ensure non-congregate service is only happening on eligible days.

13. On days when non-congregate meals are provided, are second meals reimbursable?

No. Sponsors may only claim one meal, per child, per meal service on days the area is experiencing excessive heat. Since food safety considerations make it likely that meals served on excessive heat days are shelf stable, sponsors should retain excess meals for use on another day.

14. On days when non-congregate meal service takes place, may a site provide a child with two meals, or a meal and a snack, at the same time, so that the first could be consumed now, and the other could be consumed at a later time in the day?

While extra food may be provided to participating children, requirements pertaining to the number and type of meals that may be served and claimed each day as established by 7 CFR §225.16(b) continue to apply. As stated in Monitoring and Meal Service- Q 2, above, meal times, locations, and length of meal service must be operated as approved in the site agreement. Therefore, two approved meal services may not be condensed into one session on excessive heat days and only one meal may be provided to each child present at each meal service. Meals may not be provided to adults or other children to take to children not present at the site.

### **Exceptional Circumstance Demonstration Project Extension**

15. What exceptional circumstances would FNS approve under this demonstration project?

The exceptional circumstances submitted to FNS by State agencies for consideration must be situations which make congregate feeding not viable or unsafe. Circumstances based solely on inconvenience or a sponsor's difficulty administering congregate feeding will not be considered.

16. Are there specific criteria FNS will use to evaluate exceptional circumstance requests?

The criteria required for these requests will largely depend on the situation causing the need for the request. States are encouraged to contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office for assistance when preparing a request. Generally, the information submitted should clearly describe the problem, justify the need for the exception, and describe how the sponsors' operations will change and how eliminating the congregate feeding requirement will address the problem. The request also should identify the State's support for the request and plan for oversight of the demonstration. Please note, the State's request should describe the record keeping and documentation that will be used to demonstrate compliance with Program requirements. FNS will request additional information from the State agency if necessary.

17. What records and documentation are required for sponsors and State agencies participating under approved exceptional circumstance requests?

FNS will provide guidance on this requirement on a case-by-case basis, once a request for participation in a demonstration project based on exceptional circumstances is approved.

18. Must the State agency report and separately identify sponsors participating under the demonstration project for excessive heat versus those participating for exceptional circumstances?

FNS will provide guidance on this requirement on a case-by-case basis, once a request for participation in a demonstration project based on exceptional circumstances is approved.