

# Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs (ODE CNP)

## Rural Non-Congregate Meals Guidance and Q&A for Summer 2024

### **Site Eligibility:**

#### **1. Can an SFSP/SSO site located in an urban area serve non-congregate meals in summer 2024?**

No. Non-congregate meal service is only allowable in eligible rural areas. For non-rural outdoor locations with no alternative service location, sponsors may be eligible for excessive heat waivers and/or air quality waivers. ODE CNP will be issuing guidance on how sponsors in good standing can participate in these waivers when applicable.

#### **2. How is a site determined to be in an eligible rural area?**

A site must be identified as being in a rural area using the [Rural Designation Map](#). A site located in a rural area must also meet area eligibility or participant eligibility requirements based on the type of site operated.

If you believe your site qualifies as a rural pocket designation, that is located within a non-rural area, please reach out to your assigned Child Nutrition Specialist. ODE CNP must seek approval from the Western Regional Office (WRO) prior to approval.

#### **3. Where is the current area eligibility data located?**

Area eligibility data is available in several formats under the Determining Program Eligibility section of the [ODE CNP Summer Food Service Program](#) Webpage. These include:

- [Free and Reduced Price Eligibility List – October 2023 Data](#) – sites must be located at or within the attendance boundary of a school with at least 50% Free/Reduced Price eligibility if using this option for area eligibility.
- [FNS Area Eligibility Map](#) or [FRAC Map](#) – sites must be located in a census block identified as eligible. Sites located in a non-eligible census block surrounded by eligible census blocks may use the [Area Eligibility Worksheet](#) to determine if the site may be eligible.

#### **4. My school is a CEP school. Does it qualify as an area eligible school?**

Possibly. Please refer to the [Free and Reduced Price Eligibility List – October 2023 Data](#) to determine if the school qualifies.

If your school completed a mid-year election for CEP, please reach out to your assigned Child Nutrition Specialist, to determine if it is area eligible based on school data. As a reminder, sites must use the individual sites Identified Student Percentage (ISP) x 1.6 to calculate the individual sites Free and Reduced Price percentage. Sites cannot use the district or group ISP to qualify a site.

**5. My site is in a rural area, but it is not area eligible. May I operate a non-congregate SSO or SFSP site?**

A non-area eligible site can participate through three different options to offer non-congregate meals:

- As a closed enrolled site which establishes the individual income eligibility of the children attending the site through household applications. At least 50 percent of the enrolled children at the site must be eligible for free or reduced price school meals in order to be claim all meals served at the site.
- As a conditional non-congregate site that is able to make individual eligibility determinations of the children attending the site and claim only eligible participants.
- As a camp if the site will offer regularly scheduled food service as a part of an organized program for enrolled children. Meals may only be claimed for eligible participants and non-congregate meals may only be served when there is no organized activity offered.

**Recordkeeping:**

**6. When are we required to use Actual Meal Count versus Head Count?**

Actual Meal Count is completing a meal count by participant's name. When serving meals non-congregate it is a best practice to use Actual Count versus Head Count (Daily Meal Count Form), however, it is not required when operating open or closed enrolled SSO or SFSP sites. Actual Meal Count is required if operating the home delivery model, conditional non-congregate model, a camp, or in instances where serving all participants, but only able to claim Free and Reduced Price eligible participant meals. If a sponsor is operating NSLP, sponsors are required to complete the meal count by name, unless approved to operate CEP or Provision 2 non-base year.

**7. Are sponsors required to maintain site eligibility and rural designation documentation?**

Yes. All sponsors are required to maintain site eligibility and rural designation documentation on file. A copy of these documents are to be submitted to ODE CNP with your meal distribution plan as well as a when adding new sites. Please include the date the information was retrieved on the document. Area eligibility and rural designation is good for five years. As with all records, these must be maintained for three years plus the current fiscal year.

**8. What are acceptable ways to ensure participants do not receive duplicate meals (double dipping)?**

Sponsors must have a process in place to ensure that only the allowable number and type of meals are claimed per participant per day. Best practices include using the actual meal count method, having a sign-up or registration system, limiting the number of meal service locations in a certain area, serving meals at the same time if there are multiple sites in an area, and signage

at the site to inform participants of the allowable number and types of meals each participant is eligible for each day.

Sponsors and site staff know their communities best and are best able to determine which practices will ensure program integrity.

**Meal Service:**

**9. Who is allowed to complete meal pick up?**

Best Practice for meal pick up is for parents/guardians to arrive with the child present. However, parents and guardians are allowed to pick up meals on behalf of their children. Guardians includes grandparents and siblings.

USDA has clarified that other adults other than the participants' parents or guardians may not pick up meals on behalf of children without that child present.

**10. Can Childcare Providers or Camp Counselors pick up meals?**

No. However, sponsors can work with child care providers, and camps to set them up as a site under the program, as long as the site is eligible. Non-Congregate meals may not be used to circumvent congregate requirements.

USDA states, Childcare providers who care for whole groups of unrelated children formally enrolled in their care are not considered guardians.

**11. ODE CNP mentioned collecting documentation on parents/guardian picking up meals. How does this look at an open site?**

This is a best practice, not a requirement. It is the responsibility of the Sponsor to ensure program integrity is intact, meaning, preventing duplicate meals, and that the meals received are for eligible participants. It will be sponsors policy to determine how to best manage meal pick up. Sponsors will document their policy in their written Meal Distribution Plan.

**12. Can sites use a sign-up form and limit meal service to only those that live in a defined area?**

Yes, sponsors may elect to operate a closed enrolled non-congregate site and limit enrollment to those that live within a defined area such as a school attendance boundary. A sign-up form is an acceptable option for identifying participants for the closed enrolled site.

**13. Do participants have to sign up to receive non-congregate meals?**

This will depend on the type of meal distribution, site type, and sponsor policy. Sites providing non-congregate meal pick up to eligible participants are not required to have participants sign up for meal service, but are required to notify potential participants of the availability of non-congregate meals for equitable access. Sites providing home delivery for non-congregate meals are required to have parent/guardian permission prior to delivering meals. Additionally, site

types, such as closed enrolled and camps, have requirements for participant enrollment documentation outside of non-congregate meal service.

**14. Does home delivery need to be offered to all participants?**

No. Sponsor may develop criteria to determine which participants are eligible for home delivery and offer this meal distribution option only to those participants.

**15. What methods should be used to get parent/guardian permission for home delivered meals?**

Sponsors are required to obtain and document parent/guardian permission prior to serving non-congregate meals through the home delivery option. The method used to collect this information is up to the sponsor. Recommended methods include online or offline form, email, or documented record of phone conversation. Other methods may be used to meet the requirement, please work with your assigned Child Nutrition Specialist to determine if an alternate method is allowable.

An opt-out option is not an acceptable method to replace receiving parent/guardian consent.

**16. Can a site utilize offer versus serve (OVS) with non-congregate meal service?**

It depends, only School Food Authority (SFA) sponsors may utilize OVS at sites during non-congregate and congregate meal service. ODE CNP received a waiver for Non-SFA sponsors in good standing to utilize OVS during congregate meals service only. OVS must be approved by meal type in the site information sheet in CNPweb.

**17. Can a site operate a congregate and non-congregate meal service on the same day for the same meal?**

No, a site may only operate congregate or non-congregate meal service for the same day and meal type. A site may be approved to operate both congregate and non-congregate meals, but they must be served for different dates and/or meal types.

However, a site that is approved for congregate meal service may also be approved as a hub site for a non-congregate meal distribution route that originates from the site as long as non-congregate meals are only served at the approved route stops and not at the site where congregate meals are served.

**18. Can a site switch between congregate and non-congregate during periods of the summer?**

Yes, a site may switch between congregate and non-congregate during periods of the summer. This must be approved in advance and documented on the Meal Distribution Plan and CNPweb.

**19. Can non-congregate meals be served from a mobile distribution route or bus route?**

Yes, the location where meals originate from must be approved as a site in CNPweb and an approved Rural Non-Congregate Meal Distribution Plan (MDP) must include each stop along the route where meal pick-up from participants will occur. All meals served along the route will be consolidated and claimed under the originating site. SFSP Sponsors please work with your assigned Community Specialist. SSO Sponsors please work with your assigned SNP Specialist.

**20. Is there a minimum required amount of time for serving at a non-congregate site or mobile distribution route stop?**

There is not a minimum required amount of time that meals must be served at a non-congregate site. However, sponsors must ensure that enough time is provided to serve all participants that are present for meal pick-up.

**21. What is the difference between bulk meals and multiple days' worth of meals?**

Bulk meal items are specific food items provided in a larger quantity than required for a single meal service. For example, a loaf of bread and a package of luncheon meat may be distributed as bulk items instead of being pre-assembled into individual sandwiches. Items must still be able to be portioned into specific quantities in line with the applicable meal pattern requirements, to preserve the quality of the intended menu items and/or meals. Bulk meals can be served for up to 5 days.

Multiple days' worth of meals are fully unitized meals that are typically in a sack or box that signify one meal type with all the components included. Sponsors can serve up to 10 days' worth of meals through multiple day meal service.

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to ensure that no more than two meals or one meal and one snack are served per day. For example, a sponsor is approved to serve 5 days' worth of multiple meals, and they are approved for both breakfast and lunch, only 5 breakfast and 5 lunches can be served to the participant.

**22. How many days' worth of meals can be served at one time?**

Sponsors who are approved for multiple days of meals may be approved up to 10 days' worth of meals on a case by case basis.

Sponsors who are approved for bulk meals, may only be approved to serve up to 5 days' worth of bulk meals on a case by case basis. Reminder, only self-preparation programs are able to serve bulk meals.

For both bulk meals and multiple days' worth of meal, the number of days a sponsor may be approved to serve at once must align with when the site is approved to operate. For example, a site that operates Monday and Friday, a sponsor may be approved to serve 4 lunches on

Monday (intended for Monday- Thursday) and 3 lunches on Friday (intended for Friday- Sunday). Other combinations of days and amount may be used but must meet this schematic.

When considering serving either bulk or multiple days' worth of meals, sponsors should consider the "reasonable test" when considering length of time that they will provide meals for. Would a reasonable person have the space to safely store all meals for the length of time meals are served for? Would a reasonable person eat premade items, such as salad, or sandwiches made 5 days ago or longer?

**23. Can bulk meals be served this year?**

Yes, self-preparation sites can choose to serve bulk meals in Summer 2024 for up to five calendar days at a time. Bulk meals require the following:

- Must meet the minimum amounts of each food component of a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack.
- Menus that clearly indicate the food items and portion sizes for each reimbursable meal
- Instructions for at-home storage and preparation
- All food items that contribute to a reimbursable meal are clearly identifiable
- Food preparation, such as heating or warming, is minimal

Bulk meals is not available for sponsors that use a vendor or Food Service Management Company (FSMC).

**24. Can sponsors that use a vendor or Food Service Management Company (FSMC) serve multiple days' worth of meals at one time?**

Yes, self-preparation and sponsors that use a vendor or FSMC may be approved to serve up to 10 days' worth of meals at one time. Sponsors that use a vendor or FSMC must provide these as unitized meals. Self-preparation sponsors may serve unitized meals or may also utilize the bulk meal option.

**Serving Summer School:**

**25. If we are operating Summer School as a closed enrolled site, do we serve our non-congregate participants at another site?**

Summer School (grade advancement or recovery) cannot be a closed enrolled site in SSO or SFSP. Summer school sites must be an open site to both the children enrolled in summer school as well as the community, or they must participate in National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

**26. Can a rural site operate a congregate NSLP meal service for summer school participants and concurrently operate a non-congregate SFSP or SSO meal service for non-summer school participants?**

Yes. Summer school programs may be operated as congregate meal service under the NSLP and the site may be approved as a SFSP or SSO site that operates a non-congregate meal service for children that are not enrolled in the summer school program. The sponsor must have an approved Meal Distribution Plan on file that describes the system in place to ensure that duplicate meals are not served to participants across programs.

**Serving Daycares:**

**27. Can we deliver meals to daycares in our area?**

Not under the non-congregate model, however, they can become a closed enrolled site under your sponsorship. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to verify that the daycare is not operating the CACFP.

**Partnerships:**

**28. Can sponsors partner with other organizations to distribute non-congregate meals?**

Yes. Sponsors are encouraged to form partnerships with other organizations to expand the reach of summer meals. Examples include partnering with libraries, school administrators, public safety officers, meal delivery organizations, and foodbanks. Partnering organizations may help through promoting summer meals, hosting site(s), or providing the transportation of prepared meals to meal sites or participant homes. Sponsors must ensure that all sites operating summer meals are eligible and approved by ODE CNP prior to starting operations. ODE CNP encourages sponsors to look for partnerships within their communities and surrounding communities to ensure Oregon children have access to summer meals in their area.

**Miscellaneous Questions:**

**29. Whom should sponsors contact with questions about non-congregate meal service for summer 2024?**

Sponsors with an existing Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) agreement should contact their assigned SFSP Child Nutrition Specialist. This information can be found at the top of the packet tab for the current SFSP fiscal year (FY) in CNPweb. A list of [specialist assignments](#) is also available on our ODE CNP SFSP Webpage. Organizations operating the SFSP may also contact [ode.communitynutrition@ode.oregon.gov](mailto:ode.communitynutrition@ode.oregon.gov) for assistance.

Current School Food Authorities (SFA) that operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may elect to operate the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). SFAs choosing to operate SSO should contact their assigned NSLP Child Nutrition Specialist. This information can be found at the top of the packet tab for the current NSLP fiscal year in CNPweb. A list of [specialist assignments](#) is

also available on our ODE CNP NSLP Webpage. SFAs operating the SSO may also contact [ode.schoolnutrition@ode.oregon.gov](mailto:ode.schoolnutrition@ode.oregon.gov) for assistance.

**30. Our sites do not qualify for rural non-congregate, but we want to serve non-congregate meals. We know that these sites would not be approved by ODE CNP, but we want to still serve meals, can we do this?**

Sponsors may choose to have sites that serve meals to the community, that are not claimed for reimbursement through Child Nutrition Programs, however, meals that are served that are not approved for operation under a Child Nutrition Program, nor meet regulatory requirements, cannot use funds from the Non-Profit Food Service account to pay for these meals. Sponsors that are offering meal sites that are not approved on Child Nutrition Programs must have a documented procedure that shows funds from another source were used or transferred to the non-profit food service account to reimburse the account for supplies, food and staff time. ODE CNP may ask sponsors for this information to ensure funds from the Non-Profit Food Service account are not being used.

**Non-Congregate Resources:**

**31. What resources are available for sponsors operating non-congregate meal services in rural areas?**

The USDA has a [Non-Congregate Summer Meal Service](#) webpage that contains guidance memos, Q&A's, and other resources for operating a non-congregate meal service in rural areas.

ODE CNP has the following resources available:

- [Non-Congregate Summer Meals in Rural Areas Training](#) – This training provides an overview of non-congregate summer meals for rural areas in Oregon. This is a required training for sponsors applying to serve non-congregate summer meals in rural areas.
- [SFSP Site Type Comparison Chart](#) – This chart provides high level information about the different site types, including conditional non-congregate, to assist sponsors in determining the site type(s) that may be operated.
- [SFSP Memos and News Announcements](#) – ODE CNP communicates with sponsors through guidance memos and the SFSP Corner monthly newsletter that are sent by email to sponsor staff listed in CNPweb. These communications are posted to the SFSP Memos and News Announcements webpage.