



## SERVING AFTERSCHOOL MEALS TO STUDENT ATHLETES

Feeding sports teams can be a win-win for your afterschool meals program, boosting participation while providing high-quality fuel to student athletes. Since this is sometimes a source of confusion, these FAQs tackle the requirements and options available through the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program.

**Q. Am I allowed to serve athletes? I thought that competitive sports didn't qualify as an enrichment activity for the afterschool meals program.**

A. Yes, you can serve athletes as long as there are other enrichment programs or activities available to other students. According to the USDA's [fact sheet](#) on athletic programs and afterschool meals, student athletes can take part in the afterschool meal "as part of a broad, overarching educational or enrichment program offered by a school." Competitive sports *alone* does not qualify as an eligible afterschool activity.

**Q. What is a "broad, overarching educational or enrichment program"?**

A. There are many options for the types of activities. A "broad, overarching" program generally means that there is an open-to-all or drop-in activity available, like tutoring or study hall, or a wide variety of activities offered to all students. While selective or fee-for-service programs are potentially eligible to receive meals for their participants, they are unlikely to confer eligibility to athletes if those are the only other options available. If you are in doubt about a school's program, check with your state agency.

**Q. Do athletes have to participate in those other activities in order to get a meal?**

A. No, athletes are not required to take part in any of the offered activities, nor are any other students required to engage in an activity in order to receive a meal. There is no requirement to track the specific activities, if any, in which a student participates.

**Q. Do I have to track athletes' attendance?**

A. Yes, attendance records are required for all afterschool meals programs. These records must capture everyone who receives a meal, including athletes. Attendance records could be maintained separately for different activities or teams if that system works best for you and meets state agency guidelines. A master attendance record could help to ensure that it is comprehensive without counting students multiple times if they participate in multiple activities.

**Q. What if there are sports team practices on days when there isn't another activity offered?**

A. Then it would *not* be possible to serve meals to the sports teams on those days when there are no other activities available to other students.

For more information on starting an afterschool meals program in your district or at your school, visit [bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/programs/afterschool-meals/starting-afterschool-meals#schools](https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/programs/afterschool-meals/starting-afterschool-meals#schools).



**Q. Can I serve the meals to each sports team where they practice?**

A. Yes, according to question #5 on page 54 of the USDA's [CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals Guide](#), you can serve each activity group separately across the school campus. You may also serve meals in the cafeteria or other central location, like a commons area or courtyard, instead of or in addition to delivering meals to each team or activity group.

Goose Creek ISD in Texas used a No Kid Hungry grant to buy a golf cart that helps to deliver meals across the high school campus.

**Q. I don't have the staff to deliver meals or even supervise students as they come through the serving line in the cafeteria. Can I still make this work?**

A. Yes! Ask afterschool program staff, the athletic director, or coaches for help. The staff who already stay after school may be able to shift their schedule so that they can be present in the cafeteria to provide additional supervision. If you serve unitized meals, they may even be able to serve the meals themselves.

At South Rowan High School in North Carolina, School Nutrition Director Lisa Altmann leveraged the athletic director's support for the afterschool meals program into tangible assistance. Every afternoon, Athletic Director Angie Chrismon comes to the cafeteria to supervise the meal service so that the two cafeteria employees can focus on serving hot meals and taking meal counts. The presence of the athletic director builds buy-in for the meal among student athletes which in turn promotes participation among all students.

**Q. Can I provide meals to teams when they have an away game?**

A. Yes, you can serve the meal before students leave for the game if it is after the final school bell, or you could get it approved by the state agency as a field trip so that you can send the meals with the team to eat later. There should be adequate food safety controls in place, and you must also ensure compliance with daily record keeping requirements.

**Q. What about teams from other schools who come to our school for games. Can we feed them?**

A. Yes, you can serve student athletes from other schools or districts. Enrollment records and individual eligibility information are not required, so as long as you can track all of the information required by your state for students who are not enrolled at the school, you can serve them. If you usually rely on your POS system, you could have an additional hardcopy sign-in sheet and meal count record for students who are not in the electronic system.

During the spring 2019 track season, Springfield Public Schools in Missouri hosted three middle school track meets that included schools from other districts. The district's nutrition services team set up a tent with coolers in wagons to serve "super snacks" to all students and handed out nearly 200 meals during each meet. As an added bonus, Stephanie Hanning, the district's Registered Dietitian who had just run the Boston marathon, was available to student athletes for "Ask the Dietitian."

**Q. Who should I work with to promote afterschool meals to sports teams and athletes?**

A. Start with the athletic director. They can communicate with all coaches, provide their contact information, and put you on the agenda for coaches' meetings. The athletic director can also help you to understand each sport's season and schedule. Then, work directly with coaches to ensure smooth logistics, accurate paperwork, and timely schedule and count updates. Coaches can also encourage their athletes to eat and build time for the meal into their schedule. Finally, work with the boosters or parents of athletes to raise awareness and build support for offering meals.

Donna Martin, School Nutrition Program Director for the Burke County Board of Education in Georgia, says "This is an essential program in our district. The kids are willing to stay after school for tutoring because of the hot meal. The graduation rate has increased, and the athletes are gaining weight and muscle and performing better." In fact, the high school football coach directly attributed the team's first-ever state championship title in 2011 to the afterschool meals.