



THREE MEALS A DAY: A WIN-WIN-WIN

A Guide to Starting and Improving Your Afterschool Meals Program

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A GUIDE TO STARTING AND IMPROVING YOUR AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM



HOW AFTERSCHOOL MEALS CAN HELP YOUR DISTRICT

School Nutrition Directors know that they have to be savvy business operators to run a viable program. But at the heart of the matter, kids need nourishment every day. The Afterschool Meals Program can allow you to do both better than ever.

"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."

– Donna Martin, Georgia

THE NEED

59%

OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES SAY
IT'S HARD TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO EAT AFTER SCHOOL.

25%

OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WORRY
THAT THEIR CHILDREN DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT BETWEEN LUNCH AND BREAKFAST THE FOLLOWING DAY!¹

THE OPPORTUNITY

The At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), provides reimbursements to offset the cost of providing free, healthy meals to students participating in afterschool enrichment programs in low-income areas.

Benefits of offering Afterschool Meals in your school district include:

- Increased interest in afterschool programming, focused kids, and improved performance.
- Increased revenue to your program. The reimbursement rate for an afterschool meal is more than three times the reimbursement for a snack.
- Increased participation at lunch due to relationship building with the school nutrition staff after school.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

1. **Learn the basics.**
 - a. Call your State Agency to learn about the training and application process.
 - b. Look up the CACFP regulations and requirements.
2. **Assess the need and interest** at schools across your district.
 - a. Consider the free or reduced-price meal eligibility percentage at each school.
 - b. Determine whether snack is enough at schools already serving snacks.
 - c. Survey schools to find out what activities are already happening, like 21st Century Community Learning Center grantee programs.
 - d. Gauge schools' interest in offering low-barrier activities like tutoring or recreational sports to draw more kids.
 - e. Investigate afterschool transportation options.
3. **Assess internal factors**, like staffing, wages, kitchen equipment, storage space, and food transport.
4. **Convene stakeholders.** Partnerships are key, and a variety of people need to be on board, including the superintendent, principals, afterschool activity coordinators and coaches, and the school nutrition staff.

¹ No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices in partnership with APCO Insights (2014). "National Afterschool Meals Program Survey Findings." <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool/afterschool-meals-survey-findings>.

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Consider sponsorship options to maximize reimbursements while managing the costs and responsibility.
 - a. Sponsor schools within your district.
 - b. Sponsor schools and community sites.
 - c. Partner with an existing sponsor who can handle the administration so that you can focus on meals.
2. Determine the type of meals that work best based on your capacity and needs of the children served.
 - a. NSLP vs. CACFP meal patterns
 - b. Offer Versus Serve (OVS) vs. complete meals
 - c. Unitized meals vs. serving line
 - d. Hot vs. cold meals, or a combination of both
 - e. Hearty meals vs. light “super snacks,” like a string cheese stick, hummus, baby carrots, grapes, pita chips, and milk.
 - f. Central kitchen and satellite vs. cooking at each location.
3. Plan for logistics.
 - a. Consider having more frequent deliveries to manage storage space.
 - b. Determine whether additional equipment is needed.
 - c. Figure out the staffing model and number of hours needed based on your prep model and expected participation. Options include working preparation into the work day, adding employees, or providing additional hours or overtime.
 - d. Decide who will distribute meals. Volunteers or afterschool program staff could serve cold, unitized meals, but school nutrition staff is usually best for hot meals or OVS.
 - e. Establish the serving time based on the schedule of the afterschool activities, and plan for fluctuations based on the school and activity calendars.
 - f. Consider running a pilot or rolling out the program slowly across the district to streamline procedures and test menus.



ENHANCE THE PROGRAM

1. Promote the meals to additional afterschool programs and schools. Go to meetings with principals, afterschool program directors, coaches and athletic directors. Use these meetings to address challenges and needs.
2. Promote the meals to students, parents, and the community. Let them know that meals are available, even if kids choose not to participate in an activity.
3. Tweak the menu in response to performance, surveys, and taste tests.



“School nutrition professionals are understanding that they are the community-based champions for the children...It’s not a question of ‘will it work?’ but ‘how can we make it work?’ because the need is there.”

– Carolyn Thomas, Michigan



ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY

No child should go hungry in America, but 1 in 5 kids will face hunger this year. Using proven, practical solutions, No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger today by ensuring that kids start the day with a nutritious breakfast and families learn the skills they need to shop and cook on a budget. When we all work together, we can make sure kids get the healthy food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. [Join us at NoKidHungry.org](https://www.NoKidHungry.org).



ABOUT THE SCHOOL NUTRITION FOUNDATION

As the philanthropic sister organization of the School Nutrition Association, the School Nutrition Foundation is dedicated to securing financial resources for education, professional development, scholarships and research in school nutrition. The School Nutrition Foundation focuses on providing the resources that educate and empower SNA members to provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the nation to foster an environment where children achieve overall wellness and lifelong success.