



## Indiana SFSP/SSO Policy 2026-02

### Site Proximity Considerations for Summer Meal Programs

#### Purpose

To outline proximity requirements when participating in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). The policy provides specifics in establishing sites in rural versus urban areas, distances allowed between sites, steps for site approval, and exceptions when sites are in close proximity to each other. This policy also assists sponsors in ensuring integrity of SFSP operations and avoiding duplicate meals being served to children when sites are in close proximity to one another.

#### Scope

Sponsors and school food authorities (SFA) currently participating in the SFSP/SSO or new institutions applying to participate in the SFSP/SSO.

#### Description

For SFAs that are participating in the SSO, 7 CFR 210.34 requires compliance with the SFSP regulations found at 7 CFR 225. [7 CFR 225.6\(h\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#), [SP 09-2017](#), and the [Summer Food Service Program Administrative Guide](#) outlines the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) responsibility to ensure that SFSP and SSO meal sites do not serve the same meal to the same children as other summer meal sites in the same area or exceed the daily maximum of allowable meals. Under [7 CFR 225.2](#), a site means the place where a child receives a program meal. A site may be the indoor or outdoor location where congregate meals are served, a stop on a delivery route of a mobile congregate meal service, or the distribution location or route for a non-congregate meal service. Both the SSO and the SFSP offer the opportunity for congregate and noncongregate meals. Under [7 CFR 225.16](#), meal service times are established by the sponsor/SFA and are approved by IDOE as the designated times that meals are served to participants. Meals served outside of the approved meal service time are not reimbursable, unless an unanticipated event outside of the sponsor's control occurs and this information is relayed to the State agency without delay.

To ensure program integrity and prevent the duplication of meal services by sites located within close proximity to each other and operating on the same day for the same meal type(s), **IDOE defines close proximity between sites as:**

- For rural congregate meals: 0.5 mile
- For rural noncongregate meals: 10 miles
- For urban congregate meals: 0.5 mile
- For noncongregate adjacent to urban area: case by case

## Approving Sites Within Close Proximity

IDOE must use the regulatory priority system in approving multiple applicants to operate summer meal sites that propose to serve the same area or the same enrolled children. Pursuant to [7 CFR 225.6\(b\)\(5\)](#), priority is as follows:

1. Public or nonprofit private SFAs;
2. Public and private nonprofit organizations that have successfully operated the SFSP in a prior year;
3. New public agencies; and
4. New private nonprofit organization operators.

If two or more sponsors meet the same qualifications listed above, IDOE must determine on a case-by-case basis which sponsor(s) will be approved to serve the needy children in the area.

IDOE may evaluate an applicant's available resources and capabilities, the submission date of the completed site application, and the site location agency director's preference when making site approval decisions.

A site application may be denied based on the above priority system. Per [7 CFR 225.13](#), denial of a site application is an appealable action. A copy of the SFSP appeal procedures is available [here](#).

## Exceptions

In situations where sites are situated close to one another and such placement is needed to ensure adequate meal access for children, IDOE may authorize these sites to operate in close proximity. Examples include:

- Sites appealing to specific groups of children such as:
  - Specific age groups, such as when a site at an elementary school attracts primarily young children, while a site at a nearby teen center attracts primarily teens; or
  - Children with special dietary requirements, such as kosher or halal meals.
- Sites separated by physical conditions that limit program access such as:
  - A busy highway that cuts through a neighborhood;
  - A lack of sidewalks; or
  - Other physical barriers that may prevent a child from safely accessing the meal site.
- Sites operating under certain time restrictions such as offering the same, short meal service times to reduce the possibility of children traveling between sites.
- Sites operating as different site types, such as a camp or closed-enrolled site operating in close proximity of an open site where the children cannot access the meals at the open site.
- A rural site adjacent to an urban area due to limited site availability.
- A site might be required to operate closed-enrolled if other sites are in close proximity.
- Limited capacity of a closed-enrolled or restricted open site that prevents it from serving the community at large.

## **Sites Operating Within Close Proximity Without Exceptions**

Sponsors and SFAs should work with their communities to the maximum extent possible to ensure all eligible children have adequate access to meals and to prevent the duplication of services. IDOE recognizes there are circumstances where sponsors may unknowingly apply for a site in close proximity to another. In the case that SFAs/sponsors are found to be operating sites in close proximity where IDOE did not previously approve an exception, IDOE will notify the SFA/sponsor(s) operating the sites and allow three operating days to submit a written request for an exemption. The request must be submitted via email to the SFSP specialist or the assigned field specialist and must provide sufficient detail on the measures used to ensure no site distributes more than the two permitted meals per participant per day.

If a sponsor or SFA fails to provide an exemption request within the required time frame or the request provided does not adequately demonstrate how the site(s) prevent duplication of service, IDOE will adhere to the priority system described above, and may terminate a site found to be operating in close proximity to another site. Per [7 CFR 225.13](#), termination of the participation of a site is an appealable action. If a terminated site is vended, IDOE will notify the food service management company providing meals to the site of the site's termination within 48 hours of termination. 7 CFR 225.11(f)(4).

Scope: School Food Authorities, Sponsors, Institutions, Facilities, Responsible Parties and Responsible Individuals participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO).

## **Resources**

7 CFR 225.6(b)(5), 7 CFR 225.6(h)(1)(ii), 7 CFR 225.13, 7 CFR 225.16, 7 CFR 210.34, SP 09-2017