



Rural Programs

There are special challenges involved in operating the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in rural areas. During the school year, children in rural areas are frequently bused to schools which draw attendance from a large geographic area. When school is not in session, it is far more difficult to transport these children to central locations in rural areas for summer meals.

Because rural sites frequently have problems assembling a large number of children, financial difficulties arise from relatively low attendance at sites. That is the primary reason that per meal administrative rates for meals served at rural sites are slightly higher than rates for meals served at many other Program sites to recover/supplement some of those costs. Nevertheless, sponsors of rural sites often find that this rate adjustment does not sufficient to cover their higher costs unless they take steps to address the special challenges they face.

There are two keys to success for rural SFSPs:

- Solving the transportation problem; and
- Maintaining participation at a high enough level to hold down per unit costs.

Placement of Rural Sites

Naturally, you want a site to be in an eligible area with the highest concentration of children. Although there are some successful rural sites that do not have activity programs, a rural site is much more likely to succeed if it is tied to a program that provides interesting activities for the children.

• **Where is the need?** Although school data may be useful, an analysis of census data set is frequently more accurate in identifying concentrations of low-income children in rural areas. Rural schools generally draw children from a much larger area (sometimes, an entire county) than you will serve at your SFSP site. Your State agency is able to help you identify rural areas with high concentrations of unmet need.

• **Find out where there are existing programs that attracts children.** Check area organizations' and facilities' plans for summer activities for children. Organizations which already plan to run activity programs could be approached to either offer SFSP meals or provide activities at your meal site.

Organizations that Might Operate a Summer Activity Program

- Libraries
- Schools
- Religious Organizations
- 4-H
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Town, Village, or County Recreation
- Community Action Agency
- Public Housing Authority / Resident Councils
- Other Civic Organizations

For more information on how to operate a Summer Food Service Program site please visit:
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Managing.htm