

Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

Adult Participation and Meal Pricing

The school meal programs funded by the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act are expressly meant for the health and well-being of children, but school staff members are allowed and encouraged to eat school meals. Staff member participation in the school meal program is an excellent way for adults to model healthy eating habits for children.

Because the school meal programs are meant for children, federal reimbursements, children’s payments, and other non-designated nonprofit food service revenues cannot subsidize adult meals. Adult meals are considered nonprogram meals. At a minimum, your adult meal prices must be equal to or greater than the sum of the federal assistance received for student meals. (USDA FNS INSTRUCTION 782-5 REV. 1)

Why are schools operating under SSO this year?

SSO allows all students to eat at no cost. This eliminates the need to track National School Lunch Program (NSLP) eligibility categories and to collect student payments. This helps reduce contact and potential exposure to COVID-19 and facilitates the implementation of other safety protocols.

Why is the required adult meal price higher?

Adult meal prices must be calculated based on the sum of the federal assistance of the program in operation. Also, traditional and Community Eligibility Program (CEP) schools operating under SSO are receiving more federal reimbursement than usual. This year, the USDA is reimbursing SSO meals at the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) *Rural or Self-prep Sites* reimbursement rate. Generally, this SFSP reimbursement rate is about 11% higher for breakfast and 15% higher for lunch than the NSLP and SSO reimbursement rates. The USDA expects the additional funding to help offset the cost of COVID-19 related safeguards like personal protective equipment and extra packaging for food.

Why is the adult meal price changing in the middle of the year?

SSO and SFSP are summer programs. The SFSP reimbursement rates are updated on January 1. The update is usually months ahead of the SFSP’s kickoff date, so it does not cause mid-year price increases. This year, SSO is operating all year and the SSO reimbursement rate is tied to the SFSP reimbursement rate. Since adult meal prices must be calculated based on the reimbursement rates of the program in operation, your adult meal prices are tied to the SFSP reimbursement rate increases as well. Your adult meal prices should be equal to or greater than the sum of the SSO federal assistance: SSO [SFSP *Rural or Self-prep Sites*] Reimbursement Rate + USDA Commodities Rate. Over the past five years, the average adjustment to the SFSP reimbursement rate has been 10 cents for breakfast and 17 cents for lunch. When the SFSP rates increase in January, your adult meal prices should reflect the increase. If your adult meal prices do not meet the current SSO minimum rate, you need to raise them as soon as possible keeping the January update in mind. Please see the chart for the current rates.

Adult Meal Prices Must Be ≥ Total Federal Assistance for Student Meals

Breakfast	Current SSO Rate [SFSP Rate]	Anticipated SSO Rate After January 1st
USDA Reimbursement Rate +	2.47	2.47 + January Increase
USDA Commodities Rate =	.2600	.2600
Total Federal Assistance for Student Meals	2.73	?
Minimum Adult Meal Price Required	2.73	
Lunch	Current SSO Rate [SFSP Rate]	Anticipated SSO Rate After January 1st
USDA Reimbursement Rate +	4.32	4.32 + January Increase
USDA Commodities Rate =	.2600	.2600
Total Federal Assistance for Student Meals	4.58	?
Minimum Adult Meal Price Required	4.58	