

APPENDIX C
PROFILES OF SFSP SITES

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is remarkably diverse. It feeds children through age 18 in many different settings in low-income neighborhoods or in enrolled or camp programs targeted to low-income children. To provide a sense of how the program works, this appendix presents portraits of a range of SFSP sites. The nine sites described here are not intended to be representative or “typical” SFSP sites; rather, they have been selected to illustrate the program’s range. Although the portraits include some background information on each site’s sponsor, the details are limited to protect confidentiality.

The nine sites are highly diverse. Despite their differences, however, they all shared some characteristics. In general, the sites served equal numbers of boys and girls, and they did not serve seconds. They served 80 percent or more of the meals that had been prepared or delivered. Meals were not observed being taken off site. Site supervisors at most of the sites did not report any capacity constraints that prevented children from being served. The site supervisors also reported that the sites had never run out of food. Exceptions to these findings are noted in the portraits.

A. SCHOOL-SPONSORED SITES

Three school-sponsored sites are described. One is a small rural site, one is a large suburban site run by a medium-sized school district, and one is a large urban site run by a large school district.

1. Open School Site, Small School Sponsor

A small school sponsor on a Native American reservation in a remote rural area ran one open site. The sponsor had run the program for several years at the site, using a single staff member. The program was publicized in the school at the end of the year and by driving around the area in a car that carried a sign advertising the program.

The site offered lunch at the single elementary school in the area and served about 30 children per day. Meals were prepared and served in the cafeteria. No activities were available. The program was open 5 days per week for 8 weeks. In the sponsor survey, the woman who ran the program (and who also was the site supervisor) commented that the program could not increase the number of days of operation because she was “... the only staff person. I need a break and interest begins to wane by August.”

Of the children attending the program at this site, one-sixth were preschool age, one-half were elementary-age, and one-third were middle-school age. The site supervisor estimated that about 90 percent were Native American, and that the remaining 10 percent were white. She reported that lack of parental motivation was a problem in getting children to the site; all the children walked to the school by themselves, although older children sometimes brought their younger siblings with them.

On the visit day, 35 children were fed lunch. The meal consisted of an all-beef hotdog on a bun (mustard and ketchup packets were available); choice of canned pears, fresh apple slices, or fresh orange slices; nacho cheese tortilla chips; and choice of chocolate or white milk (both

2 percent fat). Little plate waste was observed: 1 child out of 10 left the hotdog and tortilla chips untouched, but on all the other plates, only 1 or 2 bites of food were uneaten. Although the sponsor's application listed the site as using offer versus serve (OVS), a policy that permits children to refuse parts of the meal in order to reduce waste, all the observed children received full meals. The supervisor reported that leftovers were stored but were not served the following day (for reasons unknown).

2. Enrolled School Site, Medium-Sized School Sponsor

A public school sponsor ran about 20 enrolled sites in 2001, including this suburban site in an elementary school cafeteria. Both the site and the sponsor have offered the SFSP for a few years. However, the sponsor operated fewer sites in 2001 than in 2000.

The site was open from Monday through Friday for about 4½ weeks. In addition to meals, it offered educational activities and supervised free play. Meals were prepared by the sponsor at a central kitchen and were transported to the school in a refrigerated vehicle. Once at the school, they were heated (if necessary), served, and eaten in the cafeteria. According to the site supervisor, the school worked with other organizations to publicize the program. She considered the publicity to be adequate but believed that sending out flyers also might be useful. She estimated that about 220 breakfasts and 230 lunches were served to children on a typical day. She reported that all leftover meals were discarded.

The children who attended the meals were almost evenly split between preschool and elementary-school ages. Sixty percent were Hispanic; the others were African American. According to the site supervisor, almost all children receiving meals attended the program 5 days per week. More than half were transported to the school by school bus. Others walked, rode their bicycles, or were driven to the site.

The day of the site visit was sunny and humid, and the temperature was 73 degrees. Ten staff members served and supervised breakfast, which was served early to 199 children. Breakfast was a standardized meal served in a food pick-up line and consisted of sweetened, ready-to-eat cereal; 100 percent fruit juice punch; apple juice; a package of two apple-cinnamon graham crackers; and a choice of 1 percent white milk or 1 percent chocolate milk. Five out of 10 meals observed for plate waste contained uneaten cereal, and 6 out of 10 had leftover fruit punch. In addition, on six plates, all the graham crackers remained uneaten. Some portions of milk and apple juice were left as well.

Lunch was served early; it began at 10:55 a.m. and ended at 11:45 a.m. Fourteen staff served and supervised the meal, which 204 children attended. The standardized lunch consisted of a hamburger on a white bun, accompanied by ketchup and mustard packets and a half teaspoon of mayonnaise; roasted potatoes; pickle spears; a choice of 1 percent white milk or 1 percent chocolate milk; and a jello-fruit salad served in cups. Five out of the 10 plates observed contained some discarded hamburger, and 4 out of the 10 contained about half the potatoes; almost all the plates contained uneaten pickles. Some milk and jello-fruit cups were uneaten.

3. Open School Site, Large Urban School Sponsor

A public school district in a large urban area operated more than 100 open sites in the summer of 2001. Most of the sites served food prepared on site, but some smaller sites that were not at schools received food from a local school. The sponsor has run the program for many years. The site that the interviewer visited had been open for longer than 5 years.

The site was located in the cafeteria of an elementary school in a densely populated urban area. It was open 5 days per week for 6 weeks. The SFSP meals consisted of breakfast and lunch. Most of the children whom the site served were elementary-age students attending summer school in the building. The site also served small numbers of preschoolers and older children from the community who came only for meals. Some of these children were accompanied by a parent or older sibling. Most of the children were African American; some were Hispanic. All the children arrived on foot or by bicycle from the surrounding neighborhood. The supervisor estimated that the site typically served about 75 children at breakfast, and about 185 at lunch.

On the day that the interviewer visited, the afternoon temperature was over 100 degrees. The cafeteria was not air-conditioned, but it had large fans. Food was prepared on site by a staff of four. Two custodial staff and a security guard also were present during the meals. According to the supervisor, if some of the meals were not served, some parts were discarded, and some were stored and then served the following day.

On the visit day, 79 children were served breakfast. The staff asked children arriving for summer school who did not stop to get food, "Have you had breakfast?" They then encouraged those who had not had a meal to eat the breakfast provided. Children who were not in summer school sat on the opposite side of the cafeteria from the summer school students.

Children were offered a choice of boxed, ready-to-eat cereals; orange juice or apple juice; a choice of four flavors of low-fat yogurt; and a small, individually wrapped banana loaf. Although several types of milk were available, all children observed who took milk chose whole white milk. The sponsor indicated on its application that it would use OVS for sites located in schools; 1 out of 10 observed plates lacked juice, and 3 lacked milk. Little cereal, juice, or yogurt were wasted. About half the milk remained in most cartons. (The children typically poured half their milk on the cereal but did not drink the rest.) The banana loaf was left untouched on about half the plates but was completely eaten on others.

The site served lunch to 109 children. This number may have been lower than usual, as the heat was oppressive, and some classes held parties that day, with food, to celebrate the last day of summer school. As at breakfast, children attending summer school sat together at one end of the cafeteria, with their teachers offering some supervision, while those from the community sat on the other side of the cafeteria.

Lunch was more standardized than breakfast; milk was the only part of the meal for which several choices were available. The lunch consisted of a chicken patty with honey mustard flavoring on a roll, canned corn, a watermelon wedge, a bag of chocolate chip cookies, and a choice of milk. All children observed had whole white milk or 1 percent chocolate milk,

although lower-fat white milk was available. All the children observed took all the lunch components. On about half of the 10 plates observed for waste, most of the sandwich remained uneaten; however, little other waste was observed. A few bags of cookies were slipped into backpacks when staff were not looking.

B. GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED SITES

Most government sponsors are municipal parks and recreation programs, but they also include public housing authorities and social service agencies. This section describes sites run by each of these types of agencies.

1. Open Outdoor Site at Housing Project, Small Government Sponsor

The public housing authority in a small city operated three open SFSP sites at its housing projects. The sites served only lunch, which was provided by a local school food program, under contract. The sponsor had operated for longer than 5 years but reported operating fewer sites in 2001 than in the past. The sites received funding for staff and some activities from a drug prevention program.

The site that the interviewer visited was outside, in the courtyard of a housing project. All the children attending the program lived in the housing project. All were Hispanic, and, although they ranged in age, most were elementary-school age. The site supervisor and the two other site staff were teenagers. Limited recreational activities (sports and arts and crafts) were available at the site. If it rained, the children would sit on the porches of their buildings to eat. The site was open 5 days per week, for 8 weeks. The supervisor reported that the site advertised by handing out flyers and by having recruiters walk around the housing project to explain the program.

Meals were delivered in a cooler brought by a nonrefrigerated vehicle, and leftover meals were picked up after lunch. About 35 children were served on the day of the visit, but the supervisor reported that usual attendance was twice that number; the data available do not explain the discrepancy. The temperature was 75 degrees. The standardized lunch was a turkey sandwich, which consisted of processed turkey roll on toasted wheat bread with lettuce and tomato; a bag of nacho cheese tortilla chips; and a pint of 2 percent chocolate milk. Ten plates were observed for waste; 6 children were observed to eat only 1 or 2 bites of their sandwich, and 6 did not eat their chips. Nearly all the chocolate milk was consumed.

2. Open Recreation Program in Park, Medium-Sized Government Sponsor

The recreation department of a small city (part of a large, urban area) sponsored more than 30 sites in 2001. The sponsor contracted with the local school food service for food preparation and served only lunch at its sites. The sponsor reported being “somewhat satisfied” with the vendor.

The visited site was an open site located at an urban park; it generally served lunch outside to roughly 80 children. It was open 5 days per week, for 9 weeks. A range of recreation

programs was offered at the site on a drop-in basis, including educational activities, arts and crafts, sports, swimming, and field trips. Staff included paid recreation workers and several volunteers. Most children walked or rode bicycles to the site. About half the children attended every day; the rest came a few days per week. Most were of elementary-school age, but some were younger, and some were older. About 90 percent were Hispanic. The site supervisor believed that the program reached all who were interested. She stated that “kids know about the program and tell others.” She also informed the interviewer that the site advertised through flyers, banners, and efforts to speak to parents about the program.

On the 90-degree day of the visit, 75 children were fed at lunch. Many were brought early by their parents to ensure they received the meal. Parents were asked to wait outside the serving area. The food was delivered in coolers in a nonrefrigerated truck. The site supervisor reported that food rarely was left over. She also reported that she placed any leftovers in the share box, and that “kids take it.” The supervisor reported a few seconds occasionally were served, but none were observed on the day of the visit.

The standardized lunch consisted of a turkey ham sandwich on a whole wheat bun, accompanied by a mustard packet; 1 percent chocolate milk; a small nectarine; a sealed packet of baby carrots; apple juice; and graham crackers. The baby carrots generally remained unopened (and were placed in the share box), and a few children did not eat part of their sandwiches, but there was little other food left on the plates.

3. Open Recreation Program at Playground, Large Government Sponsor

Another recreation program site was run by a city social service agency in a large city that has sponsored more than 100 open sites for longer than 5 years. Meals were provided by a private vendor.

The observed site was a playground. Lunch (the only meal offered) was served inside a small building on the playground. The site, which had offered the SFSP at that location for longer than 5 years, was open 5 days per week, for 12 weeks. A range of recreational activities was offered in a day camp program; after lunch, the children were taken to a nearby swimming pool. All the children walked or rode bicycles to the site from the surrounding neighborhood. The supervisor identified the quality of the food and the lack of safety in the neighborhood as factors that limited participation. He mentioned that the site had run out of food at some point, which is not surprising in a setting with fluctuating attendance.

Food was delivered in a refrigerated vehicle, and the number of meals ordered was adjusted daily. Any leftover meals were picked up by the sponsor. According to the site supervisor, about 22 children usually attended. On the day of the visit, however, the interviewer observed only 10 children eating lunch. The temperature that day was over 90 degrees, and the supervisor ascribed the low attendance to the heat. Two staff served the meals and ran the activities. All the children were African American. Although the site supervisor reported that all the children who attended were of elementary-school age, the interviewer observed that 3 of the 10 children served were preschoolers who were brought to the site solely in order to eat. When reporting on

the age of the attending children, it is likely that the supervisor had been thinking only of the children who came for the activities.

The site supervisor reported that the sponsor never asked for his opinion about menus; he believed the sponsor should provide food that would be more appealing to the children. He thought that children should be served more juice, instead of fruit, and more hotdogs or tacos, instead of cold sandwiches.

The box lunches consisted of a bologna and American cheese sandwich on white bread, served with a packet of salad dressing; a fresh nectarine; 2 percent white milk; and a fruit juice drink in a pouch.¹ The juice was consumed completely, but half the milk was untouched. Some plates contained small unconsumed amounts of the other items.

C. NONPROFIT AND CAMP SITES

Almost all nonprofit sponsors, National Youth Sports Programs (NYSPs), and residential camps are small programs. Nonprofit agencies are generally limited to 25 sites, and most NYSP and residential camp sponsors operate only 1 site. Because these types of sponsors represent small, but distinctive parts of the SFSP, we describe one example of each type.

1. Enrolled Day Camp Site, Nonprofit Sponsor, Small City

A private nonprofit social service agency in a small city ran two open sites and one enrolled site. The visited site was the enrolled site, a day camp program that was run out of the sponsor's headquarters. The sponsor has been operating for longer than 5 years and, because no vendors were located in the area, prepared food on site.

The sponsor contact, who was the nutrition director for the three sites, also completed the site supervisor interview. She believed that the main barriers to participation were parents' lack of awareness about the program, transportation difficulties, and parents' reluctance to accept a "handout." She has worked aggressively to spread the word about the sites by sending out flyers through the schools, erecting signs about the program in front of the social service agency's building, giving interviews on the radio and on television, and creating a short radio "spot" inviting children to attend the program. The sponsor also worked with a local youth program that provides volunteers to help with activities and food service.

¹The fruit juice drink was described by the interviewer as "unknown percent juice." It was coded as "fruit drink," which is about 10 percent fruit juice. See Appendix E for further discussion of coding rules.

The day camp ran from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., 5 days per week, for longer than 12 weeks. It served breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack not covered by the SFSP.² The interviewer found the kitchen and dining area to be clean and nicely decorated. The visit was on a cool day (50 degrees). The nutrition director reported that about half the children attended the program every day, with the rest attending 3 or 4 days per week. Activities included arts and crafts, games, sports, swimming, field trips, and cooking instruction. Four staff planned and prepared the meals; two of the four worked part-time hours. All four worked for the program year-round, as the agency also is a Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsor. Six other staff, who worked as part-time help during the summer, supervised the children during the meals. On the day of the visit, 45 children ate breakfast and 56 ate lunch; these numbers were typical. The interviewer noted that seven other children were present at breakfast but did not eat, presumably because they had eaten at home.

The children attending the program were largely of elementary-school age, but a few middle-school children also attended. Most were white, but about 20 percent were Native American. Most were dropped off by car; about 10 percent were transported to the site by the program.

Both breakfast and lunch were standardized. Breakfast included a ready-to-eat cereal, a muffin made from scratch on site, canned applesauce, and 1 percent white milk. About half the children left some milk, and about half left a few bites of other food. Lunch was a sloppy Joe (ground beef in tomato sauce) on a bun, canned corn, canned fruit cocktail, and 1 percent white milk. About half the children did not eat any of the fruit cocktail, and a few did not drink the milk. The sandwich and corn generally were eaten.

2. Residential Camp, Rural Location

As is usual for camps, this Jewish residential camp, which follows kosher dietary laws, was the sponsor's only site. The camp is in a rural location, and the sponsor transported the children to it from a large, urban area for the 8-week session. The camp has participated in the SFSP for longer than 5 years. It offers a wide range of activities, including religious activities. Children attending the camp ranged in age from preschool-age to high-school age. The preschool children present on the day of the visit were children of the staff. Almost all the children were boys. The camp has a staff of 18 professionals, 35 counselors, 15 junior counselors, and 12 kitchen workers. The camp director reported that an average of 350 children attend. Meals were served indoors. According to the director, about 5 to 10 percent of meals served are seconds; on the visit day, a few seconds were observed.³ The director also reported that there never were any leftover meals.

²The SFSP provides reimbursements for only two meals or snacks. (Migrant sites and residential camp sites are the exception to this regulation.) Some sites served snacks without requesting reimbursement.

³The number of seconds claimed on the reimbursement form is unknown.

The interviewer observed only supper at this site, which was served to 312 children. Older children stood in a line to receive their food; the younger children were served family style. All the observed suppers included baked chicken (leg and thigh), brown rice, steamed carrots, two slices of rye bread, and lemonade. A few children also received coleslaw or canned fruit cocktail. No milk was served because of kosher dietary laws; kosher sites are permitted to omit milk when meat is served as long as they serve juice (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2002b). Overall, most food was eaten. About half the 10 plates observed contained a small amount of uneaten rice. Two or three children left small amounts of chicken, carrots, or juice, and one child left the bread untouched.

3. NYSP Site on College Campus, Large Urban Area

A public college in an urban area sponsors the SFSP in conjunction with the NYSP at one site. The program operates for 5 weeks and serves a morning snack and lunch. Food was provided by the local school food service. The program had been operating as an SFSP sponsor for longer than 10 years, and the number of children participating each year had remained about the same. The serving site was located in a campus church building, but program activities took place elsewhere on campus. Children arrived for the day on a bus provided by the program. The site supervisor believed that there was additional demand for summer meals in the area but commented that, as an enrolled program with a limited capacity, the program was unable to meet that demand.

Although the site supervisor reported average daily participation of about 250, only slightly more than 200 children were observed eating lunch on the day of the interviewer's visit. On that day, a group of children was late in returning from an activity. A few staff ate lunch as well. The children were of older elementary and middle-school age. Nearly all were African American.

The food was delivered in coolers brought by a nonrefrigerated vehicle. The site had a kitchen, with a refrigerator, and the supervisor reported that leftover food sometimes was stored there, to be served the next day, and sometimes was discarded. The largely standardized meal included chicken nuggets served with ketchup, fruit cocktail, choice of orange juice or grape juice, and choice of whole white milk or 1 percent chocolate milk. All the chicken nuggets on the 10 plates observed for waste were eaten. About three plates contained untouched milk, three had untouched fruit cocktail, and a few had a little juice left.