

**Identification of Resources and Practices
That Increase Accountability in the
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
Snack Service Provided to Afterschool Care Programs**



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National Food Service Management Institute The University of Mississippi

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The purpose of NFSMI is to improve the operation of Child Nutrition Programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination. The Administrative Offices and Divisions of Technology Transfer and Education and Training are located in Oxford. The Division of Applied Research is located at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

MISSION

The mission of the NFSMI is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of Child Nutrition Programs.

VISION

The vision of the NFSMI is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in Child Nutrition Programs.

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**IDENTIFICATION OF RESOURCES AND PRACTICES THAT INCREASE
ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)
SNACK SERVICE PROVIDED TO AFTERSCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NSLP reimbursable snack service was established to provide nutritious snacks to children participating in qualified afterschool care programs. Participating school districts receive cash reimbursement from the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for serving snacks that comply with meal pattern requirements. Districts must also document attendance and the number of snacks served. The purpose of this study was to identify resources and best practices that can be used to assist school districts in increasing accountability in the NSLP snack service.

The research design used a case study methodology that included direct observation, systematic interviewing, and a review of school nutrition program records related to the NSLP snack service in afterschool care programs for the year 2004-05. Prior to a site visit, each participant was mailed a questionnaire to collect demographic information about the school district and the NSLP snack service to afterschool care programs. On-site data collection occurred during a one-day site visit in each school district. Data were organized, tabulated, and cross checked from each individual case study.

The case study districts had a combined total of 43 afterschool care sites. The number of snacks served in the case study districts ranged from an average of 74 to 750 per day. Thirty-

seven snack sites (86%) qualified to serve all snacks free to participating students. Snacks were most often served in either the classroom or cafeteria dining room.

Among the four school districts participating in the case study, two districts provided day-to-day management of the afterschool care programs, while Century 21 provided management at the other two sites. The afterschool care programs were sponsored by the case study districts and the school food authority provided the required oversight of the NSLP snack service.

Accountability for compliance with USDA regulations was a shared responsibility between the School Nutrition Program (SNP) directors and afterschool care staff. Job assignments for duties, such as maintaining attendance records, compiling snack counts, and documenting that students received mandatory snack components, varied from district to district. Afterschool care program coordinators were responsible for attendance rosters or sign-in sheets in all four districts. Only one SNP department maintained control of all activities related to serving and counting snacks. The afterschool care staff was responsible in the other three districts for documenting the number of snacks served, reconciling the number served with attendance, and providing the documentation to the SNP department. Each of the school districts had an established system for ensuring that only one NSLP snack per child was recorded and claimed for reimbursement.

The NSLP snack menu, along with production records, served as the documentation for meal pattern compliance in all of the case study districts. All afterschool program sites used cycle menus that could be modified if necessary. Two districts served only two meal components daily and children were required to take both components. One district served three meal components and although students were encouraged to take all three, the third snack component

was optional. The fourth district alternated between serving two and three meal components during the month of the site visit. Copies of all snack menus were maintained on file in each district office.

Participants in the case study were asked to rank six specific considerations important to producing and serving NSLP snacks for afterschool programs in their districts. Participants were asked to rank cost, labor, nutritive value, prepackaged product, need for refrigeration, and student preference, on a scale of 1 to 6 (where 1 = highest and 6 = lowest). Cost, nutritive value, and student preference ranked highest among factors listed. Refrigeration ranked lowest as a consideration.

Food safety was a high priority in all districts. There were strict procedures in place to ensure safe handling of snacks during transportation, storage, and service. Items such as milk and juice that required cooling were stored in ice chests or nearby coolers until ready for use. None of the districts in the case study elected to serve snacks that required heating.

All of the SNP directors participating in the case study provided training related to implementing the NSLP snack service in afterschool care programs to ensure accountability and improve program quality. Topics for training included food safety, USDA regulations, verification of meal components, and expectations for the afterschool care staff in maintaining accountability in the service of NSLP snacks.

A review of the NSLP snack service was conducted twice a year as required by USDA in all school districts in the study. The first review occurred during the first four weeks the snack service was in operation. The second review occurred at different times throughout the school year. All districts complied with review and monitoring requirements. Review documents were filed in the SNP district office.

The information in this case study research can be used to assist SNP directors when planning and implementing a NSLP service to afterschool care programs. The information will also be useful to SNP directors currently seeking to improve the NSLP snack service in their districts.

A section is included in the back of this report to help school districts improve the NSLP snack service in afterschool care programs by setting best practice standards. By completing the checklist and selecting the best practice to add or improve, the SNP director can make improvements and ensure a nutritious snack will be served to each child participating in the afterschool care program.