

## What is the purpose of the study?

Participation in the summer foods program by children and sponsors has fluctuated over the course of the program's history, often in response to national-level policy changes.

Obtaining a solid understanding of how the summer foods program operates at the state, sponsor, and site levels, as well as describing participant characteristics and examining the differences and factors that affect participation by sponsors and children across states, is vital to improving policies that influence the effectiveness of the program and ultimately helping the USDA better serve our nation's youth by providing for those in need of a supplemental nutrition program during the summer.



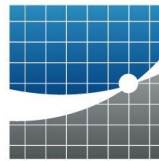
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**United States Department of Agriculture**



**OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS GROUP LLC**

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## Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Participant Characteristics Study



**Sponsored by The United States  
Department of Agriculture, Food  
and Nutrition Service**

## Who is conducting the study?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has contracted with Optimal Solutions Group, LLC to conduct the study.

## Which objectives will the study meet?

- Describe how the SFSP operates at the state level.
- Describe how the SFSP operates at the sponsor level.
- Describe how the SFSP operates at the site level.
- Describe the characteristics of SFSP participants.
- Examine the differences in participation in the SFSP and factors that affect participation by sponsors and children.
- Examine changes in the SFSP since the 2003 study.



## How will the questions be answered?

This study will collect surveys from a census of state agencies that administer their states' summer foods programs and a stratified random sample of sponsors and sites. In addition to the surveys, a qualitative study will be administered by conducting interviews with parents/caregivers of SFSP participants and interviews with parents/caregivers of SFSP-eligible non-participants. A sub-study of high- and low-participation states will also be conducted to understand meaningful differences in participation between states.

## Why participate in this study?

Participation ensures the accurate description of SFSP participant characteristics. Participation allows the U.S. Department of Agriculture to understand the impact of policy changes on participation in the summer foods program. This information will ultimately better serve states, sponsors, and sites in their efforts to serve children in need of supplemental nutrition during the summer.

## Which results will the study provide?

The study will provide insight into how the SFSP operates at the state, sponsor, and site levels and identify barriers to and facilitators in participation by children and sponsors.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will receive a detailed report tabulating and analyzing the data collected.

## Research Assurances

No information that identifies sponsors, sites, and parents/caregivers will be released to the U.S. Department of Agriculture or to the public.

Results will be presented at aggregate levels in all reports.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved this study for all data-collection activities under OMB # <insert OMB #>.

The study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board.

## Timeline

- Winter–Spring 2015: Recruit state agencies to participate.
- Spring–Summer 2015: Administer survey and sponsor/site and recruit parent/caregiver participants.
- Fall 2015: Conduct interviews with parents/caregivers and submit final report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture