

Summer Food Standards of Excellence

Quality, kid-friendly food attracts children to meal programs and makes them more likely to consistently participate throughout the summer!

There are three levels of quality that can be achieved:

- **GOLD LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 22 of the 24 best practices
- **SILVER LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 20 of the 24 best practices
- **BRONZE LEVEL:** Sites and sponsors master 15 of the 24 best practices

Food Quality

- Children are offered choices of meal components (for example, children are offered a choice between yogurt and a cheese stick, or an apple and a banana)
- Site offers children additional servings of fruit and vegetables (above and beyond USDA required amounts)
- At least two sites have held food tasting events or surveyed children to find out what foods they would like to have served during the summer
- Four different entrees or meat/ meat alternates are offered throughout each week
- No entrée or meat/ meat alternate is offered more than two times within each month on the main lunch menu (including food offered as a substitute meal for children with special dietary restrictions)
- Three different fruits and five different vegetables (may be canned, fresh, or frozen) are offered each week in the lunch menu
- Fresh fruits or raw vegetables are offered five days a week in the lunch menu
- Whole-grain foods are offered three or more times a week
- Local fruits and/or vegetables are offered once per week (local specified on the menu)
- Meals are served in an appetizing way (no items are crushed, soggy, frozen, or damaged; fruits and vegetables are ripe and in good condition)

Environment

- **Sponsor operates for the entire summer, leaving no gap between the beginning and end of school meals and summer food (with the exception of one week before and after the academic year)**
- **Site is able to maintain steady participation rates throughout the summer**
- **At least two sites offer nutrition education two times a week**
- **At least two sites offer opportunities for physical education every day**
- **If the site has vending machines, children at the site do not have access to them at any point during the day**
- **The site has created a “sharing table” where children can place non-perishable food components they do not want for other students to take**
- **Sites provide daily feedback to the sponsor**

Outreach Efforts *(most applicable for open sites)*

- **At least one site has conducted outreach specifically targeted to older, low-income children**
- **The staff and/or volunteers from at least one site have walked around the surrounding neighborhood, or canvassed the community to tell children and families about the free summer meals program**
- **The sites are listed with widely-used community hotline service (such as 211) as a place that children can receive free meals throughout the summer**
- **The site or sponsor has used media (radio, newspaper, community newsletters, social media) to promote the program**
- **Site or sponsor has worked with local school to expand outreach**
- **Sponsor convenes end-of-summer meeting with sites to review successes and challenges**

For more information, contact Rebecca Mitchell

Child Nutrition Initiatives Specialist

rmitchell@hungerfreevt.org

802-231-0698