



The Florida Afterschool Meals Program

Making it Work in Parks & Recreation Centers



MADE IN THE SPRING OF 2020 WITH SUPPORT FROM



AND



INTRODUCTION

Florida Impact to End Hunger (FITEH) is dedicated to advancing health equity by ending hunger for all Floridians. We mobilize communities to maximize access to federal, state and local food and nutrition programs with a focus on Florida’s most vulnerable populations. Since 1979, FITEH has helped community leaders secure more responsive public programs and policies to address hunger by mobilizing communities to increase access to federal food, nutrition, and other economic support programs. This focus supported the statewide establishment of the School Breakfast Program when school is in and the Afterschool Meal and Summer Food Service programs when school is out.

Since the establishment of the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program (AMP) in our state, FITEH has worked with afterschool programs and providers to expand access to meals for at-risk youth. Part of this work has involved analyzing the administration of the AMP in our state, comparing alternative approaches from different states, and identifying solutions to program barriers. In our research, we identified municipal and county parks and recreation departments as a group that could greatly expand access to meals. This report describes the current administration of the AMP in Florida and details our 12-month study of meal programs at park sites around the state. This project explored common barriers to program implementation within parks and recreation departments and promising practices from “high performing” municipal parks and recreation departments that currently operate as AMP sponsors and/or sites.



ABOUT THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded, state administered nutrition program that provides funding to child and adult care centers and homes that serve healthy meals and snacks. The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the CACFP at the federal level. Since 2010, the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program (AMP) component of the CACFP has provided meal reimbursements for eligible at-risk afterschool sites in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Through the AMP, children and youth can receive a snack (which includes two items such as apple and milk) and/or a supper, sometimes referred to as a "Super Snack," (which includes five items, such as a turkey sandwich, an apple, carrot sticks, and milk). Under the federal regulations of the USDA, eligible afterschool programs do not need to be licensed to participate in the program, unless there is a state or local requirement for licensing. If there is no state or local requirement for licensing, then afterschool programs must meet state or local health and safety standards. The "At-Risk" element of AMP refers to the goal of supporting programs that keep kids in low-income neighborhoods safe and engaged after the school day ends or on weekends and breaks during the school year.

HOW IT WORKS IN FLORIDA

In Florida, the Department of Health's Bureau of Child Care Food Programs administers the AMP. To participate in the AMP, eligible afterschool programs must submit an application to the Florida Department of Health (DOH). To be eligible, an at-risk afterschool program must: (1) Be organized primarily to provide care for children after school or on the weekends, holidays, or school vacations during the regular school year; (2) Provide organized regularly scheduled education or enrichment activities (i.e., in a structured and supervised environment); and (3) Be located in an attendance area of a school where at least 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced price school meals. In addition to meeting federal eligibility requirements, sites in Florida are required to provide documentation of a child care license from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or Local Licensing Agency; a letter from DCF or the local licensing agency stating licensure is not required; or a Religious-Exempt Accreditation Certificate.



CURRENT PARTICIPATION

The Food and Research Action Center (FRAC) has identified a national goal of reaching 15 children with the Afterschool Meals Program for every 100 low-income children participating in the National School Lunch Program. The chart below from FRAC represents the Average Daily Participation (ADP) in the supper component of the Afterschool Meals Program compared to that of the National School Lunch Program. Florida has shown improvement and an increase in the ADP for AMP supper; however, we remain well below the national goal stated above.

FLORIDA AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP) IN AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM SUPPER COMPARED TO FREE & REDUCED PRICED NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

	October 2017	October 2018
Supper ADP	107,445	119,397
Lunch ADP	1,804,224	1,483,435
Ratio	6.0	8.0

Organizations can choose to participate in AMP as either a *sponsor* or a *site*. School districts and school food authorities, local government agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and certain for-profit organizations are eligible to operate as sponsors in the AMP. In School Year 2018-2019, there were approximately 93 sponsors operating across Florida. The sponsor takes on the administrative and financial responsibility of operating the program and receives federal reimbursement for meals served. A sponsor can provide meals to children at one or multiple sites in the community. Another word used for sponsor is "contractor." This term is commonly used when communicating with DOH.

Afterschool programs sometimes find it easier to participate as an AMP site and work with a sponsor to handle most of the administrative paperwork and reporting. An AMP site is the physical location of the afterschool program where meals are served to children through the AMP. Programs that do not have the financial or administrative ability to be a sponsor can operate under an approved sponsor as a site if such a sponsor is available in their area. DOH will assist with identifying an approved sponsor in a particular area of the state. In April of 2019, the DOH reported that there were **1,653** Afterschool Meal Program sites serving meals.

Below are examples of sites that, if qualified, serve as ideal locations for the AMP.

Types of sites:

- Public Schools
- Community Centers & Clubs
- Parks
- Family Resource Centers
- Community Health Centers
- Housing Authority Sites
- Libraries
- Churches

Florida Impact to End Hunger’s (FITEH) research in early 2020 revealed that across the State of Florida there are approximately 144 Afterschool Meals Program sites located specifically in recreation centers and/or parks.



**THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM
AT PARKS & RECREATION CENTERS PROJECT**

In the fall of 2019, FITEH began the AMP at Parks & Recreation Centers Project with an objective to understand the barriers to parks and recreation centers participating in AMP, as well as gain an understanding of how successful programs have managed to provide meals through the program. The goal of this report is to assist county and municipal park and recreation departments to implement this important meal program at their sites.

In order to better understand the barriers and assess participation in AMP, FITEH delivered an electronic survey to approximately 70 municipal parks and recreation departments. Of the departments that responded only about half of those that offered afterschool programs at their parks currently participate in AMP.

The next step of the project was to identify and interview a number of sponsors that have successfully implemented AMP at park and recreation sites. The interviews provided insight on the benefits of AMP and how to address some of the common barriers, which are preventing more widespread participation in the program.

The following four sponsors were chosen based on their success with implementing AMP at parks and recreation sites:

- City of Orlando Families, Parks & Recreation
- City of Miami Parks & Recreation
- FLIPANY (Florida Introduces Physical Activity and Nutrition to Youth)
- Kids Hope Alliance

High Performer Interviews

Organization	Number of Parks & Recreation AMP Sites	Number of AMP Sites Total	Year the Program Started
City of Orlando Families, Parks & Recreation	17	17	2014
City of Miami Parks & Recreation	9	12	2005
FLIPANY (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach County)	46	100	2011
Kids Hope Alliance (Duval County)	12	38	1999

Navigating the Licensing Barrier

Through both the survey results and the interview process, obtaining a childcare license (as well as maintaining the licensing standards) was identified as the number one barrier. Requiring government run park and recreation sites to be licensed as a child care facility in order to operate an after school program that can serve meals to at-risk children is an advocacy issue that Florida Impact to End Hunger (FITEH) has addressed in the *Expanding Afterschool Meals In Florida Through Local Recreation Programs* booklet you can find at www.floridaimpact.org/publications. FITEH has also supported legislation that would modify the regulations governing licensing for these types of sites. This issue, however, was not the focus of this project. Assuming the licensing regulations remain the same, FITEH wanted to provide helpful resources to park and recreation centers to implement AMP.

Tips from the Experts: Child Care Licensing

- Complete the DCF licensing questionnaire BEFORE moving forward with the process. This will help to identify possible deficiencies that sites may have as it relates to health, fire, safety and occupancy inspections.
- For budget purposes, prepare a cost estimate prior to entering into the licensing application process. Costs may include fees for food permits, staff training costs and capital improvements (such as hot water heaters, sinks, etc.) that may be needed to pass health inspections for licensing.
- Administration of the program can be time consuming when added to existing workload. A restructuring of department staff may be necessary to train and/or reassign specific staff to maintain recordkeeping and site inspections. Additional staff may also be necessary to meet the required staff ratios.
- Have a mentor organization to help guide the application and approval process and/or schedule site visits to licensed programs to see firsthand how other sites operate.¹
- Anticipate a minimum of six months to a year to get a site up and running due to inspections, budget, and staff training.
- Develop a relationship with DOH early in the process.² Reach out for assistance when preparing your budget to make sure that all costs are accounted for.



Happy kids getting their free and nutritious afterschool meal from a FLIPANY site

¹ Contact Florida Impact to End Hunger for assistance with identifying a mentor organization.

² All agencies surveyed indicated that the Florida Department of Health was helpful, gave good feedback and offered guidance during the set up process.

ADVICE FROM THE PROS

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO UTILIZE THE AFTERSCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM? WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION?

Our CEO gave us the support and guidance to move forward with the Afterschool Meal Program. FLIPANY has a holistic approach to offer children physical activity, nutrition education and healthy food access. Afterschool meals supports our mission and promotes access to balanced nutritional meals, including the ability to provide education during this process.

- Viktoriya Yudovina, Senior Program Manager, FLIPANY/South Florida

ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES OR INFORMATION YOU WISH YOU HAD BEFORE STARTING THE AFTERSCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM?

It would have been helpful to have a better understanding of the financial burden to operate sites and keep them in operation for budgeting purposes. Fulltime staff were assigned some monitoring and administrative duties, so more money than anticipated is being spent on administration and operation. We have learned, though, that reimbursement is higher for AMP vs NSLP snacks so we are now able to serve enough meals to cover these costs.

- Tyrica Young, Director of Out of School Time, Kids Hope Alliance/Jacksonville

HOW DO YOU INFORM PARENTS AND KIDS ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

We recommend, if possible, to plan on starting the Afterschool Meal Program at the beginning of the school year to avoid confusion of a mid-year start. It's easier and more effective to distribute program information to parents around the annual registration process, which is usually in the summer or early fall.

- Virginia Bentley, Parks & Recreation Services Coordinator, City of Miami Parks and Recreation

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS THAT ARE CONSIDERING SERVING AFTERSCHOOL MEALS?

I suggest that programs start by taking a look at their agency's infrastructure to determine if the agency has what it takes to operate and meet all the requirements. Small agencies may not have the personnel to support the program. Programs might consider starting with an AMP snack and growing in phases until full suppers can be served. Having a mentor and doing site visits to see how other programs operate and staff their afterschool meal program can be very helpful

- Alexandra Temes, Center Manager, City of Orlando Families, Parks & Recreation

WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM?

HEALTHY NUTRITION:

Each agency interviewed agreed that the benefits of the Afterschool Meal Program outweighed the barriers they had to overcome. There was also an overwhelming consensus of the need to serve their program participants' healthy, nutritious food after school and before heading home. Many of the children in these programs live in food deserts without ready access to nutritious food outside of school. When students eat lunch between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, they are in much need of a full-sized snack or meal to keep them alert and active through the remainder of the day. This is especially true if they are not picked up from the afterschool program until 6 p.m. According to a 2019 Food and Research Action Center (FRAC) Afterschool Nutrition Report: *"Afterschool programs provide safe and healthy places for children to learn and socialize. Adding afterschool suppers to programs is a win-win: It ensures that students have the healthy nutrition they need to succeed, supports working parents, and allows afterschool programs to reallocate the funding they were spending from other sources on food to improve or expand their programming."*



INCREASED ATTENDANCE:

There are a multitude of program benefits as well. Generally, according to the interviewed programs, participation in the Afterschool Meal Program sparked an increase in overall program attendance. This was especially apparent at sites where hot meals were served. Programs also experienced less food waste with hot meals. In addition to increased attendance, parents were more willing to allow their child to stay later and participate in a sports program or other enrichment activity knowing that they had a full nutritious supper. Another benefit that programs report is related to improved behavior. All sites experienced less referrals and behavior issues and found that children were better focused on activities. Overall there was an agreement that participation in the AMP enhances the quality of their afterschool program.

HIGH REIMBURSEMENT:

Another benefit of the AMP is the reimbursement rate. In fact, the AMP reimbursement rate is the highest of all the federal child nutrition programs. Three out of four agencies interviewed started slowly with offering an afterschool snack and then transitioned into providing a full supper or “super snack.” Once an AMP site is operating, it is important to continue to focus on increasing daily participation and help to boost reimbursement. The fiscal goal is to serve enough meals to be able to break even or some months to have a slight profit to assist with administrative and operational costs.

AMP REIMBURSEMENT RATES 2019-2020

Meal	Rate Per Meal Served*
Breakfast**	\$1.84
Lunch/Supper (5 components)	\$3.41
Snack	\$0.94

*This rate includes the value of USDA foods or “cash-in-lieu of commodities”

**Snacks, breakfasts, lunches, and suppers are available through the program, including on weekends and school holidays. One snack and one supper or lunch or breakfast are allowed per child per day.

RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

The high performing agencies interviewed for this report all recommend that parks & recreation departments who are committed to closing the gap on childhood hunger through the AMP, complete the DCF questionnaire FIRST! This will determine if a site(s) is in compliance with all mandated requirements.

The **Florida Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensure Questionnaire** can be found here: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/docs/Child%20Care%20Licensure%20Questionnaire.pdf?d=2020-4-17>

Please visit www.FloridaAfterschoolMeals.org (Florida Impact To End Hunger’s Afterschool Meal Program website) for these additional resources:

- Ways To Provide AMP
- Provider Eligibility Requirements
- Expanding AMP Through Recreation Programs

CONCLUSION

The Afterschool Meals Program (AMP) provides federal funding to serve healthy meals at afterschool programs in low-income communities. As many afterschool activities and programs already take place in municipal parks & recreation centers, they serve as a perfect location to provide this important nutrition program. When states fail to use these funds, children lose the opportunity to receive a nutritious meal, an opportunity they may not have again until school breakfast the next morning. Similarly, afterschool programs miss out on federal funding that would support their financial sustainability and help strengthen their programs. In April 2019, approximately 1.26 million children in Florida received a free or reduced-price lunch at school. In comparison, only 122,295 children received a meal through the Afterschool Meals Program. This gap represents a potential \$43 million in federal reimbursements left on the table each year (approximately \$238,000 each school day).³

MORE INFORMATION

Florida Impact to End Hunger and the Food Research and Action Center are statewide and national non-profit organizations available to provide technical assistance to schools and community-based organizations applying for and participating in the federal child nutrition programs and can refer to additional resources as needed.

Florida Impact to End Hunger would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all of the agencies that were interviewed in the preparation of this report. We are grateful for their valuable input and willingness to share their professional expertise.



Kids enjoying free, nutritious afterschool meals at a Kids Hope Alliance site

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³ This figure is based on the national goal of reaching 15 children with the Afterschool Meals Program for every 100 low-income children participating in school lunch, and calculates the estimated shortfall in terms of the federal dollars lost during the 2018-2019 school year by not meeting this goal.



learn more at

www.FloridaAfterschoolMeals.org



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