



*The Afterschool Meals Program*  
**A GUIDEPOST TO SUCCESS**  
*for School Districts*



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## THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM IN FLORIDA

The Child and Adult Care Food Program, At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program (AMP), is a federal nutrition program that offers reimbursement for meals and/or snacks served at school-based or community-based, public, non-profit and some for-profit afterschool enrichment sites. Snacks, breakfasts, lunches, and suppers are available through the program, including on weekends and school holidays. [Program sites must meet certain eligibility criteria](#) and be located in an area served by a public school in which at least 50% of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. At these sites, meals can be served to any child age 18 and under at no cost to the children or family.

Through the AMP, children and youth are able to receive a snack (which includes two items such as an apple and milk) and/or a meal (which includes five items, such as a turkey sandwich, an apple, carrot sticks, and milk) in their out-of-school-time program during the academic year. This program is funded by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) and is administered in Florida by the [Department of Health, Bureau of Child Care Food Programs \(DOH CCFP\)](#).

Since 2000, the USDA authorized states little by little to pilot the AMP through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), but this list did not yet include Florida. During this time, afterschool providers in Florida and in other states across the country that were allowed to serve snacks, but not full meals, reported that the smaller snack was not enough to get their participants through the afternoon. This was especially true for teenage participants and those who providers worried might not get another meal until school the next day.

For some years, Florida Impact, community advocates, and local leaders worked with our members of Congress to bring the Afterschool Meal Program to our state. With the passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in December 2010, we saw the fruit of that advocacy when the full 5-item meal was authorized nationwide!

## A GUIDEPOST TO SUCCESS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

While schools and non-profit organizations in Florida were able to begin serving the AMP meal since 2010, it took some time to work through certain regulations and to get the word out to qualifying agencies. One of these barriers was the additional paperwork required of school districts to apply since it is administered through CACFP and a different state agency, even though they had proven record of administering the school nutrition programs with success. In 2013, the USDA granted a **STREAMLINED APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS** so that the requirements aligned more with the National School Lunch Program.

Still, as of September 2017, only 24 of 67 school districts in Florida were participating in the AMP. Florida Impact sent a survey to the 43 non-participating school districts to find out why. Twenty-six districts responded, and here are some of the key findings:

- Nearly half of the respondents (11 of the 26) did not know about the program.
- 5 of the 15 districts that knew of the AMP did not know about the streamlined application.

- Only 3 of the 15 districts that knew of the AMP had attempted to apply for the program.

Some of the common barriers and concerns expressed by these districts of small, medium and large school district population size were the following:

- Extending staff hours and meeting the labor requirements for paperwork and food distribution.
- Unsure of the benefits, especially if the district is already serving National School Lunch Program snacks.
- Lack of knowledge that the program existed and how to get started.
- Concern about the length of the application process.
- Not enough afterschool programming to serve children before they leave school.

The following will provide some insight from fellow school districts in Florida to offer information on how to successfully implement the program, as well as encouragement to see the value of the Afterschool Meals Program for the district, the students and the community.

## WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM (AMP)

Through interviews with Florida school districts that have been successfully operating the AMP, Florida Impact learned that the motivating factors for getting started were the need for more substantial meals for children and youth after school, as well as the economic sustainability of the program.

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. School food and nutrition departments and afterschool program staff recognize that the program supports working families, gives students more energy, and even boosts afterschool program attendance.

**TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF THE SNACK AND SUPPER/MEAL AMP OPTIONS USING CCFP MEAL PATTERN\***

MEAL	MEAL COMPONENTS	RATE PER MEAL SERVED
<b>Supper/Meal "Power Snack"</b>	<b>Select 3 items:</b> (if using offer versus served) - Milk - Vegetables - Fruits - Grains/Breads - Meat or Meat Alternative	<b>\$3.46</b>
<b>Snack</b>	<b>Select 2 Items:</b> - Milk - Vegetables - Fruits - Grains/Breads - Meat or Meat Alternative	<b>\$0.88</b>

\*School districts have the option to follow the CCFP or the NSLP meal patterns.

## HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN FLORIDA GET STARTED

Most school food and nutrition departments in Florida have the autonomy to determine which services to offer; therefore, in most cases, the decision to begin serving the AMP is at first an internal one. Approval from the school board is, in general, a step along the way. Florida Impact found that it was also critical for many participating food and nutrition departments to **SEEK GUIDANCE FROM NEIGHBORING OR SIMILAR-SIZED DISTRICTS** that had already started their Afterschool Meals Program. Furthermore, once the streamlined application process became available, it was easier to apply and be approved by the Florida Department of Health.

Another key method for starting the new program is to begin with **PILOT INITIATIVES**. Some districts choose to begin serving cold meals at first, and then, gradually introduce warm meals. Some selected a few schools with the most robust afterschool programs while others began with elementary schools, serving a younger student population to start. One of the most important aspects of implementing the AMP is the **COLLABORATIVE EFFORT** that is involved with running a successful program. At each school, it takes a working partnership between the food and nutrition department, school administration and the afterschool program coordinators. Often times, principals are the gateway to begin the AMP at a given school.

School food and nutrition departments offer the AMP at extended day programs, 21st Century or other school-sponsored and non-profit afterschool programs, during study halls, clubs or other enrichment opportunities for students. Some school food authorities even choose to become an AMP sponsor of unaffiliated sites, which are located off school grounds, out in the community. A major difference in implementing afterschool meals, as expressed by currently participating districts, occurs with the difference in the grade levels at the school – elementary, middle or high school. Due to the various types of activities offered after school at each level of education, the delivery of the Afterschool Meals Program must take on different approaches.

With any new program, **NEW MENUS AND PROCEDURES MUST BE ESTABLISHED**. In general, more staff hours and storage were required, depending on the facilities. Some school districts found that preparing afterschool meals during the school day made it possible to keep additional staff hours to a minimum until the program grew enough to cover additional staffing costs. One school

### CASE STUDY: *Miami-Dade County*

#### *Coordination with Afterschool Program Staff*

At Henry M. Flagler Elementary, the afterschool program manager works with the food service manager to select a menu that offers nutritious food options and has the approval of the student population. The afterschool program manager knows what the students like to eat and what they tend to push to the side. They especially like the strawberry fruit cup, grilled cheese, croissant sandwich, and yogurt-to-go.

“The program is very important because the kids have long hours at school and they need appropriate food [after school]” - Afterschool Program Manager.

The program manager advocates for the students to try new foods and parents are happy that their children receive that meal and even try new and different foods. The program manager wants the best for the students and makes sure that they enjoy the food and that they are full and nourished under her watch.

district also chose to use a vendor to provide cold meal items in order to minimize additional staff time at the beginning. Utilizing partnerships with the afterschool program staff also cuts down on the food and nutrition staff time that is required to serve the meals. To address custodial staff time concerns, many districts were able to negotiate an adjustment in the scheduled cleaning time so that the same service would occur later in the day.

## HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN FLORIDA EXPAND THE PROGRAM

### CASE STUDY: *Orange County*

#### *Creative Marketing – Go Where Students Go*

At Orange County Public Schools, the food and nutrition department utilizes a golf cart equipped with both cold and hot containers that can hold up to 150 meals. The middle and high school campuses are large, so the golf cart can easily move to meet students wherever they are participating in qualifying enrichment activities on campus. There is an electronic point of sale device so that the department can easily track reimbursable meals.



**MARKETING** is critical to expanding the Afterschool Meals Program. Using a press release to publicize each new program site not only increases participation at that particular school, it also prompts interest at other schools that may not have heard about the program or its benefits. The AMP is also a helpful marketing tool to increase enrollment in the out-of-school-time enrichment program.

Food and nutrition departments distribute letters and handouts to principals, parents and afterschool program staff to market the availability of the program. They use posters, automated *robo-calls*, social media, a user-friendly website and special branding to highlight the program. Some food and nutrition departments have an internal staff person who supports marketing initiatives, and some partner with the district public relations department to facilitate this aspect of the program.

Finally, the **QUALITY OF THE MEALS** and the program delivery are natural promoters of the district's Afterschool Meals Program. Many districts receive input from students through focus groups or communication with the afterschool program staff.

Districts also increase participation in the AMP by implementing **INNOVATIVE DELIVERY MODELS** as a way to improve access to the program. Some districts take the AMP out of the cafeteria to reach students where they are participating in various clubs and enrichment activities all over campus. Other districts market to the many activity groups and serve all of them in the cafeteria right after school lets out.

Afterschool meals are available to any student, as long as there is an enrichment program open and available to all students. For example, if there is an open study hall hour on campus, then any student may receive a meal. This is also the case with **SPORTS TEAMS AND ATHLETICS**; according to the USDA, competitive student athletes are able to participate in meal service as long as there is an overarching, open afterschool program on campus. See this [USDA fact sheet](#) for more information.

## FINAL WORDS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS CONSIDERING THE PROGRAM

Overall, the AMP is a triple WIN for school districts. It contributes to student performance in academics and enrichment activities, offers quality nutrition through a more substantial meal for children and youth, and provides a higher reimbursement to support the operations of the school nutrition programs. It does require a certain strategy to manage the budget and arrange procedures; however, in most cases, it is a beneficial opportunity that contributes to the financial viability of the department.

There are many resources to support school districts in their efforts to start an Afterschool Meals Program. *Appendix I* is a list of school districts currently participating in the AMP who can serve as mentors in the application and implementation process. In addition, [Florida Impact](#) 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 direct agencies to additional resources as needed.

Florida Impact created this report with sponsorship from Walmart through the Food Research and Action Center.

Florida Impact mobilizes communities to implement underutilized federal food and nutrition programs as a sustainable way to address child hunger. Our organization provides strategic program outreach, technical assistance, and advocacy to nonprofits working with at-risk children.

Since 1979, Florida Impact has helped community leaders preserve and improve these and other anti-poverty programs—including the School Breakfast Program when school is in, and the After School Meal ([www.FloridaAfterschoolMeals.org](http://www.FloridaAfterschoolMeals.org)) and Summer Food Service ([www.SummerFoodFlorida.org](http://www.SummerFoodFlorida.org)) programs when school is out.

### CASE STUDY: *Pasco County*

#### *Connecting Sports Teams to Study Hour*

At Centennial Middle School in Pasco County Schools, the food service manager approached the athletic director and asked if they would like to participate in the AMP study hall on campus. The team already had a 2.5-hour study hall offered once a week, and instead, they began joining the daily study hall on campus where other student groups participated. This allowed the players to keep up with their homework every day instead of playing catch up once a week, and they were able to receive a nutritious meal. Over the course of a year, the team's grade point average increased from 2.8 to 3.5. Seeing the benefit of this program, other sports teams, as well as the math, Spanish and Mumba clubs began participating in this afterschool meal and study hall.

Appendix I:

**LIST OF FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT FOOD & NUTRITION DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM (SEPTEMBER 2017)**

SCHOOL DISTRICT BY COUNTY	STUDENT POPULATION*	SIZE OF DISTRICT**
ALACHUA	29,485	MEDIUM
BAY	28,027	MEDIUM
BREVARD	73,446	LARGE
BROWARD	271,828	LARGE
CITRUS	15,338	MEDIUM
COLLIER	46,407	LARGE
ESCAMBIA	40,384	LARGE
FLAGLER	12,930	MEDIUM
FRANKLIN	1,332	SMALL
HAMILTON	1,688	SMALL
HERNANDO	22,298	MEDIUM
HILLSBOROUGH	214,402	LARGE
LEE	92,682	LARGE
LEON	33,954	LARGE
MANATEE	48,892	LARGE
MARION	43,040	LARGE
MIAMI-DADE	357,311	LARGE
MONROE	8,582	MEDIUM
ORANGE	200,667	LARGE
PALM BEACH	191,120	LARGE
PASCO	72,490	LARGE
PINELLAS	102,955	LARGE
SARASOTA	42,801	LARGE
VOLUSIA	63,100	LARGE

\*2016-2017 Florida Department Of Education Data

\*\*Category of school-district size based on criteria set by national organizations.

- Small School District – up to 5,000 students (per [Small School Districts' Association](#))
- Medium School Districts – 5,001 – 29,999 students
- Large School Districts – 30,000 students or more (per [FRAC's Large School District Breakfast Report](#))

