

# 2024 OKLAHOMA AFTERSCHOOL MEALS REPORT

## SCHOOL YEAR 2022-2023







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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was made possible by the generosity of The Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Inasmuch Foundation, Morningcrest Healthcare Foundation, Sanford and Irene Burnstein Family Foundation, and the Tulsa Foundation.

Treasure Standeford, Katie Raymond, Aisosa Udoh, Alissa Snider, Sarah Smith-Moore, Richard Comeau, Doug McDurham, and Melissa Marshall, with support from the Hunger Free Oklahoma team, prepared the text of the report on a foundation built from seven years of afterschool meals outreach and research. This report is modeled after the 2022 Oklahoma School Breakfast Report and was designed by Tina Fincher.

Data was processed by Gia Chow with support from Richard Comeau. We are thankful to the data department at the Oklahoma State Department of Education for their assistance.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

This report celebrates Oklahoma’s success in advancing afterschool meals while also recognizing we have additional work to do to reach more kids and teens across the state. Afterschool meals help fill the gap by ensuring that children 18 years old and younger receive a meal or snack after school at no cost.

OKLAHOMA CHILDREN NEED SUPPORT ►

Almost one in four Oklahoma children<sup>1</sup> are food insecure, meaning they do not receive the meals they need to learn and grow. Increasing access to Afterschool Meal Programs helps ensure they receive both meals and a safe space to go during out-of-school times.

AFTERSCHOOL MEAL PARTICIPATION IS HOLDING STEADY TO PRE-COVID NUMBERS

According to the latest report<sup>2</sup> from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Oklahoma is above the national average in serving children afterschool meals, reaching 8.5 out of every 100 eligible children. Additionally, Oklahoma was one of only six states in 2020<sup>3</sup> that increased supper participation by more than half when comparing October 2019 to October 2020. However, afterschool meal participation has declined in the following years showing the need for increased flexibility for afterschool meals.



OKLAHOMA IS ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE reaching 8.5 out of every 100 eligible children

62 OUT OF 77 COUNTIES had afterschool meal sites

4.3 MILLION meals were served

38,550 AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION

THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In the 2022-2023 school year, 62 out of 77 counties in Oklahoma had active afterschool meals sites. In total, 4.3 million meals were served, and Average Daily Participation was 38,550, a decrease of 46.8% and 51.5% from the previous year, respectively. While most sites are hosted by school districts, organizations such as nonprofits, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, and YMCAs can also participate. In this report you will learn more about afterschool meals and opportunities to increase access to them in your community.

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Increasing access to afterschool meals is not the sole responsibility of communities across Oklahoma. Policymakers can make afterschool meals more accessible for sites and families. Three ways legislation can help include passing an updated Child Nutrition Reauthorization, streamlining both Summer and Afterschool Meal Programs, and improving area eligibility requirements.



“The At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of CACFP requires healthy meals and snacks be served to children and teenagers who participate in afterschool programs in low-income areas. The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federally funded, state-administered program that provides funding to those organizations.”

– OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## INTRODUCTION

### PROVIDING AFTERSCHOOL MEALS IS A PIVOTAL OPPORTUNITY TO FEED CHILDREN OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY.

Twenty-three and a half percent of Oklahoma children<sup>1</sup> struggle to receive the meals they need to grow and learn. While we are making progress in increasing access to afterschool meals, there is still room for improvement.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 4.3 million afterschool meals were served. Those meals spanned 624 sites across 62 of Oklahoma's 77 counties.<sup>A</sup> According to the most recent report<sup>2</sup> from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), 8.5 out of every 100 eligible children participated in afterschool meals in October 2022. While this is higher than the national average of 6.3, there is still significant room for growth.

Data analyzed by Hunger Free Oklahoma from the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) shows that while afterschool meal Average Daily Participation (ADP) dropped from an all-time high of 239,276 in 2019-2020, during the height of COVID-19, to 38,550 in 2022-2023, participation has settled back to close to pre-COVID-19 levels.<sup>A</sup> Nationwide waivers allowed for program flexibilities that helped make sure students could still receive afterschool meals while ensuring social distancing to keep communities safe during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is important to understand that while these flexibilities proved extremely helpful, there are additional needs that afterschool programs meet by providing a safe space to go after school, to connect with peers, and provide additional

academic enrichment. Our goal is to identify practical ways to modernize the Afterschool Meal Programs that better meet site and sponsor capacities while still providing safe places and nourishing meals for students.

Hunger Free Oklahoma conducted an Afterschool Meals Survey to sites and sponsors across the state in 2022. In total, there were 79 responses from nonprofits, Tribal organizations, out-of-school program sites, and schools and school districts. We thank all who participated in this survey as your participation helped shape this report. Hunger Free Oklahoma hopes this report can serve as tool to help sites and sponsors get started or grow their programs.

This report builds on the research and resources from FRAC, No Kid Hungry, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Afterschool Meals Survey distributed by Hunger Free Oklahoma. It includes practical tips on how to get started or grow an Afterschool Meal Program, success stories from sites and sponsors maximizing the program in their communities, and data showing how impactful the Afterschool Meal Programs are for children and families across the state.

Find a digital version of this report with hyperlinks and access to the county data set by going to [HFOK.org/Afterschool2024](https://HFOK.org/Afterschool2024).



## WHAT ARE THE AFTERSCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS?

These are USDA programs administered by OSDE.

### THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

The At-Risk component of CACFP allows eligible afterschool programs to offer reimbursable meals and snacks to participating children and teens. Afterschool meals and snacks can be served to children and teens participating in educational programs or enrichment activities outside of school hours, including evenings, weekends, and school breaks during the school year.

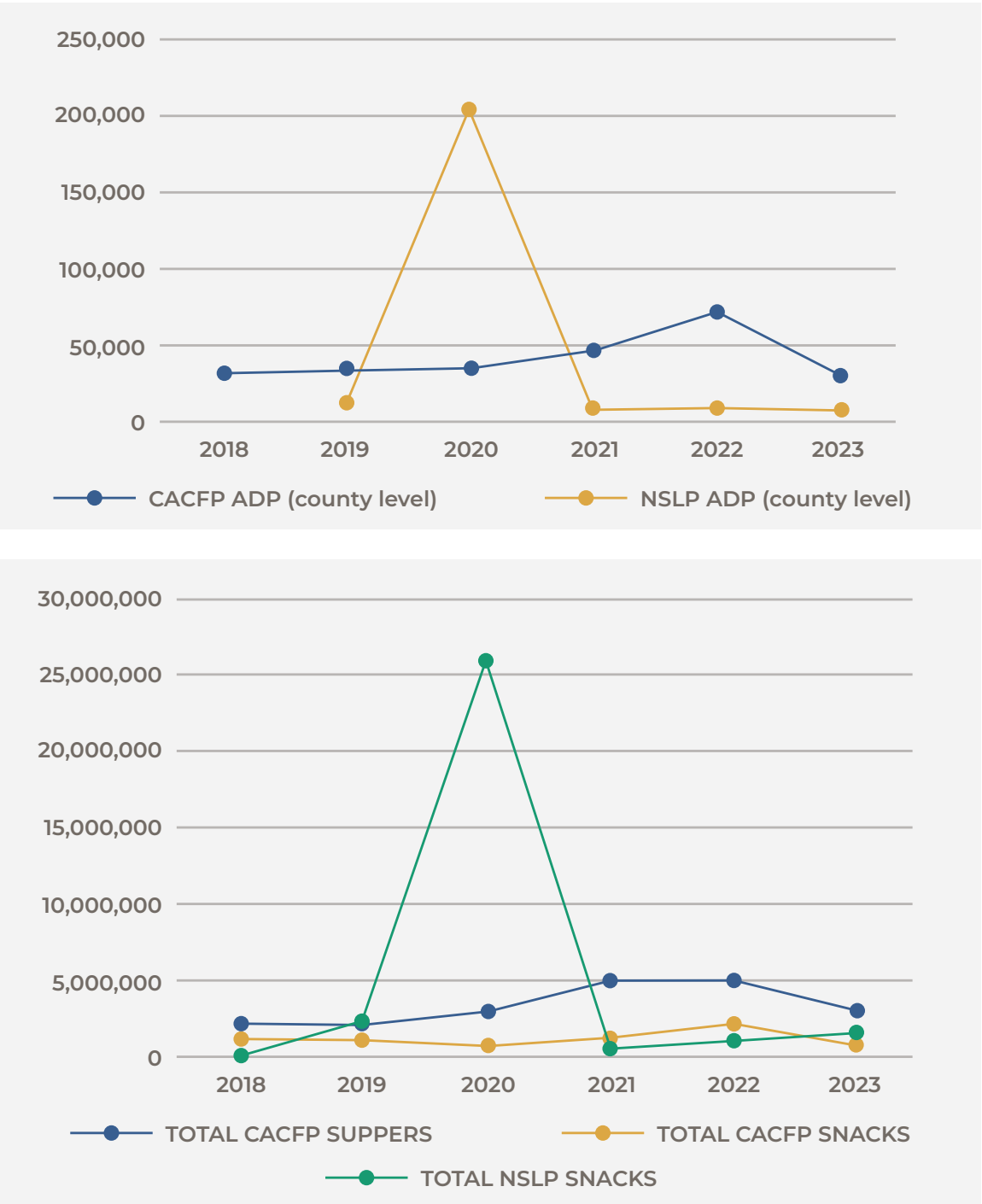
### THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)

The NSLP Snack Service allows participating schools to offer reimbursable snacks to students attending afterschool programming on regular school days.

For a closer look at how these two programs match up, there is a comparison table on page 8.



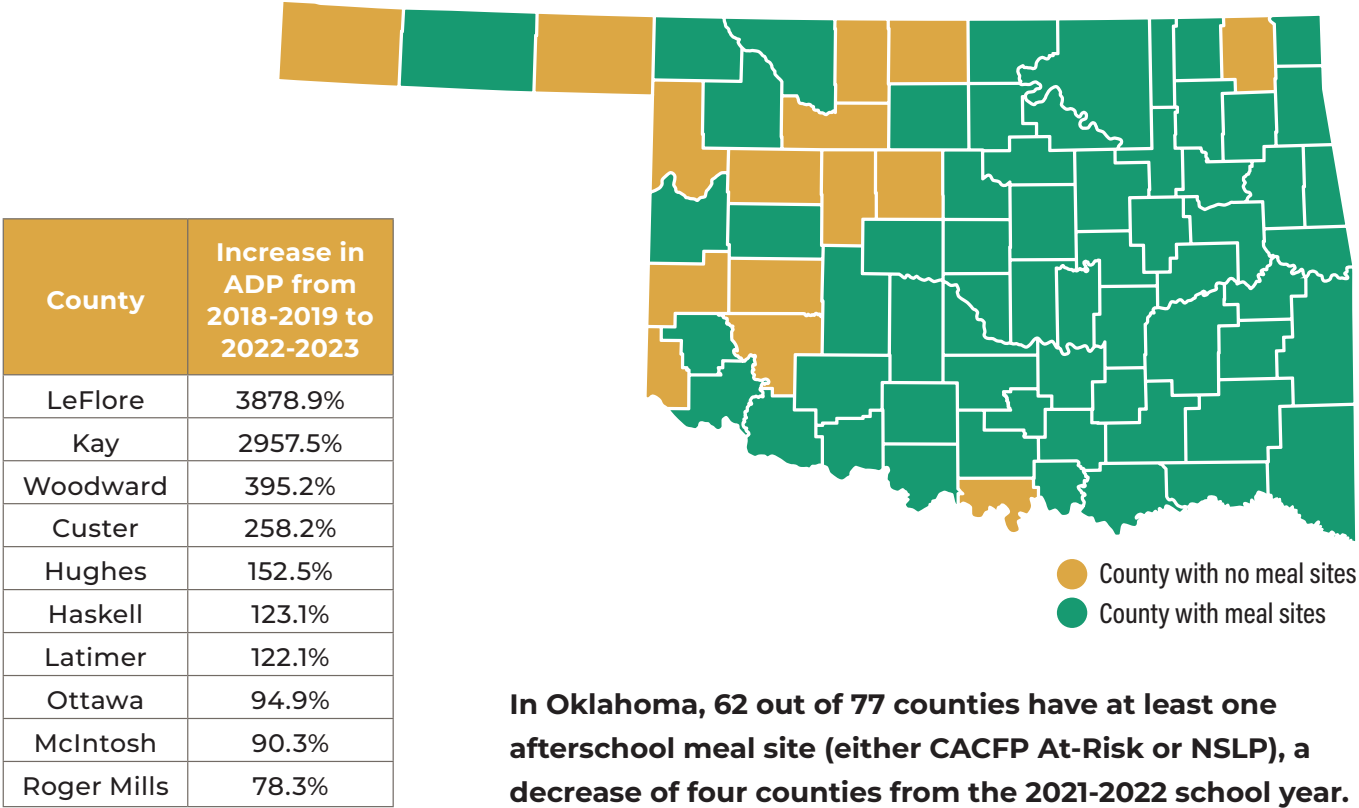
AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PARTICIPATION



As shown in Figures 1 and 2, afterschool meals participation peaked in 2020 due to waivers for the NSLP snack program. Since then Oklahoma has seen a steady decrease in total meals served. There are many likely factors for this decrease including the loss of COVID-19 waivers, supply chain issues, and staffing challenges. When comparing pre-COVID level participation in the CAFCP At-Risk and NSLP Snack programs with data from the 2022-2023 school year, the total number of meals and the number of kids who participate daily, has decreased. Average Daily Participation was around 38,500 during this period.<sup>B</sup>

TOP 10 COUNTIES WITH GROWTH IN ADP FROM 2018-2019 TO 2022-2023

While this data is disheartening, there are glimmers of hope. In the 2022-2023 school year, 51.7% of sponsors (109) increased their total meals served and 40.3% of counties (25) saw an overall increase in ADP. Through waivers, adaptability, and innovation seven counties saw growth of over 100% in the most recent school year.<sup>A</sup>



In Oklahoma, 62 out of 77 counties have at least one afterschool meal site (either CACFP At-Risk or NSLP), a decrease of four counties from the 2021-2022 school year.

QUICK FACTS:

<b>Average Service Days<sup>C</sup></b> 107.4 for CACFP At-Risk 134.2 for NSLP Snacks	<b>Total Meal Sites<sup>D</sup></b> 401 for CACFP At-Risk 237 for NSLP Snacks	<b>Type of Sponsor<sup>E</sup></b> 202 school sponsors 14 other organizations
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This data provides an overview of participation in Oklahoma. Visit our [interactive afterschool meals map](#) for more in depth data and to learn more about afterschool meals participation in your county.

CACFP At-Risk Suppers (2.8M)  
CACFP Snacks (482K)  
+ NSLP Snacks (1M)  
**TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS (4.3M)**

This data set was compiled using data provided by OSDE and cleaned and aggregated by Hunger Free Oklahoma.<sup>A</sup> Given the challenges and limitations over the past few years, Hunger Free Oklahoma realizes that this data alone might not paint a clear and accurate picture of afterschool meals sites across Oklahoma. We encourage you to review your data on the Oklahoma Afterschool Meals Map and to connect with Hunger Free Oklahoma to help us improve the accuracy of the data included. With input from sites and sponsors across the state, this mapping and database tool will continue to evolve and improve.





Despite the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, FRAC reports<sup>3</sup> that, nationally, Afterschool Meal Programs **served an average of 1.5 million meals a day** in October 2020. This represents an increase of 37,317 participants compared to October 2019, an increase of 2.6%. Looking at Oklahoma specifically, there was a total increase of about 30,000 meals, or about 7,000 meals a day, a 31% increase between October 2019 to October 2020. Even with the growth in the Afterschool Meal Programs, **nationally, only 1 in 12 children received afterschool meals compared to those who participated in school lunch**. This disparity was particularly pronounced among Black and Hispanic families, as indicated by a household food access survey<sup>5</sup> where 12% of those with children reported insufficient food in October 2020.

Looking ahead, addressing the increased need for Afterschool Meal Programs will require targeted investments and collaboration across all levels. Clear steps forward are necessary to expand the reach of these programs to better serve all families in need, especially as the effects of COVID-19 continue to unfold. Keep reading the report for ways to enhance access to afterschool meals and improve overall childhood food security.

## COVID IMPACTS

The COVID-19 pandemic brings unprecedented challenges to school meal programs across the United States. In response, the USDA issued nationwide waivers<sup>4</sup> to ensure access to afterschool meals. These waivers provided flexibility for schools and out-of-school time programs to adjust their operations safely during the height of the pandemic. However, with these waivers expiring in 2022, concerns have arisen regarding the accessibility of school meals for historically underserved populations now that these flexibilities are no longer in place.

### KEY NATIONWIDE WAIVERS ISSUED BY THE USDA AT THE HEIGHT OF COVID-19 RESPONSE INCLUDE:

#### Non-Congregate Feeding

This allowed meals to be taken home instead of requiring them to be eaten on site.

#### Area Eligibility

This allowed sites to operate in areas that may not have been eligible otherwise meaning more children and households could access afterschool meals than ever before.

#### Parent/Guardian Meal Pick Up

This meant the meal did not have to be served directly to the child, allowing more flexibility for the parent or guardian to pick up the meal when most convenient.



“During COVID, it was a challenge getting the meal to the students, but we worked together and got it served.”

– MARYETTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



# THREE MEALS A DAY

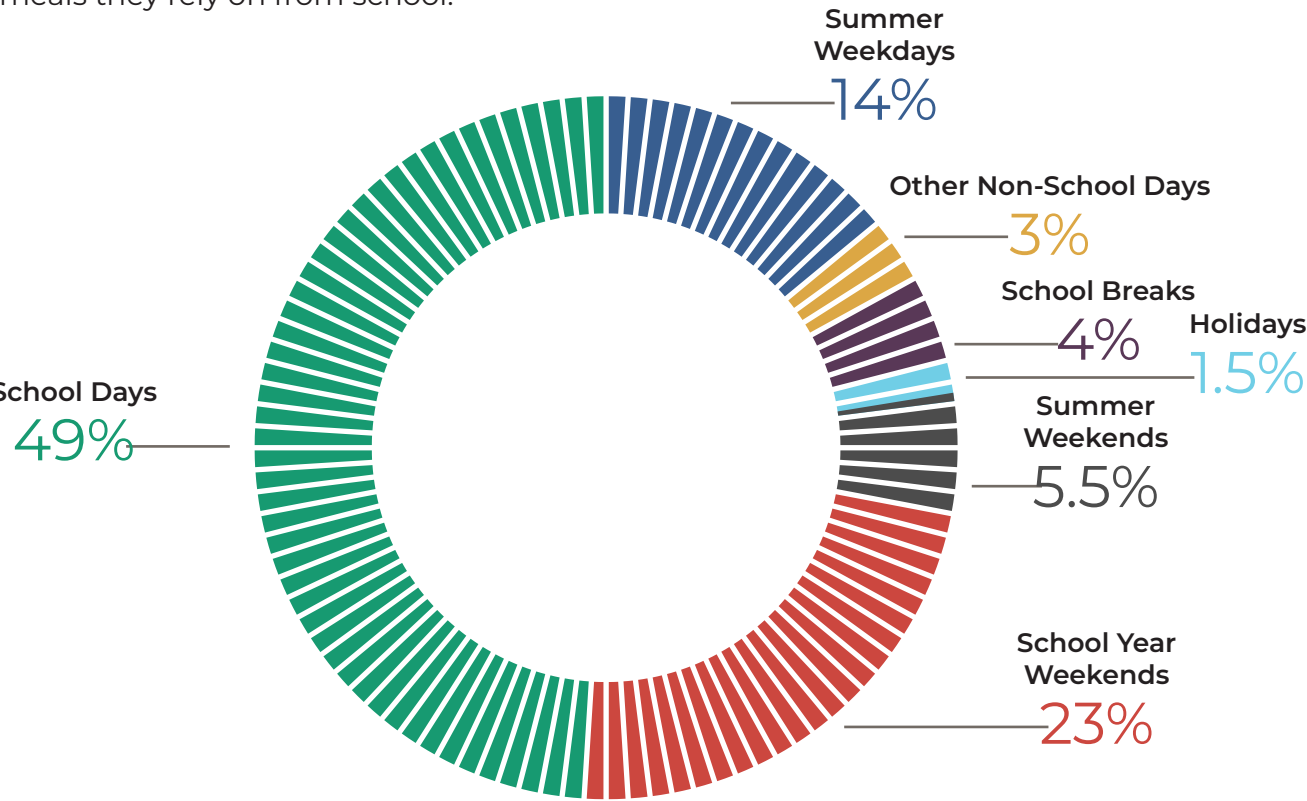
So often, we hear that “breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” Research does show that children who start the day with breakfast have better test scores,<sup>6</sup> increased attendance and graduation rates, improved behavior at school,<sup>7</sup> among many other benefits. Thankfully, there are ways that schools can ensure all students are nourished and ready to learn each school day. Check out the [2022 School Breakfast Report](#) for more information about school breakfast in Oklahoma.

School lunch is more readily accessible and available to students because it is embedded in the school day. The gold standard for food security advocates is to serve free lunches to all students,<sup>8</sup> and there are multiple ways to do that. The school meal form is a regular part of the enrollment process each fall, yet families often do not fully understand its significance in helping students connect to school meals and schools receiving accurate funding for the year. Hunger Free Oklahoma has an [on-demand webinar](#) with strategies to get the word out about the school meal form and boost the return rate.

But what about the other times of the year when school meals are not available?

## DID YOU KNOW THAT MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF THE YEAR<sup>9</sup> IS CONSIDERED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL TIME?

Weekends, holidays, winter and spring break, and other non-school days like teacher in-service days or unanticipated school closures for inclement weather or building maintenance add up to a significant number of school days that children do not receive meals they rely on from school.



Afterschool meals offer multiple benefits like keeping students healthy and learning. Because reimbursable meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards, research<sup>10</sup> shows that school-aged children have higher daily intake of fruits, vegetables, and key nutrients, such as calcium, vitamin A, and folate, on days they eat afterschool meals compared to days they do not. Additionally, Afterschool Meal Programs are required to offer education or enrichment activities alongside meals, which provide additional opportunities for children to participate in engaging activities in a safe and structured setting.

Afterschool meal sites in rural locations<sup>11</sup> could see additional benefits, like allowing small afterschool programs to stretch their budgets. When federal nutrition dollars are used for meals, program dollars originally meant for food can be used for other things like improving program quality. Rural afterschool meal sites can also support working families. Afterschool Alliance<sup>12</sup> reports that 72% of rural parents agree that afterschool programs – which are linked to Afterschool Meal Programs – help working parents keep their jobs.

Lastly, Afterschool Meal Programs<sup>10</sup> provide valuable help to families, especially for parents who work long or nontraditional hours, commute long distances, or are trying to get back into the workforce and need afterschool care for their children.

“We have been doing the third meal program for several years now. Our students have told us on several occasions how excited they are to be able to receive the extra meal at the end of the day.”

– HAILEYVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS





# AFTERSCHOOL MEALS AND SNACKS

Schools have the option to operate either NLSP or CACFP At-Risk. Community organizations, such as churches, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and libraries, can operate CACFP At-Risk. The table<sup>13</sup> below demonstrates the differences and requirements for each program.

PROGRAM	SPONSOR	SITE TYPE	AREA ELIGIBILITY	PROGRAMMING
NSLP Snacks	School Food Authority only	School offering NSLP only	Within the attendance zone of a public school with ≥50% free or reduced-price eligible students	Regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment
CACFP At-Risk	Private nonprofit organization	School or community organization including but not limited to libraries, youth development centers, etc.	Within the attendance zone of a public school with ≥50% free or reduced-price eligible students	Regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment
	Public institution			
	School Food Authority			
	Eligible for-profit childcare center/sponsor			

OPERATING DAYS AND TIME PERIOD	CHILD ELIGIBILITY	ALLOWABLE MEAL TYPES	TIME RESTRICTIONS	REIMBURSEMENT RATES
School days only throughout the year if school is in session (including summer school)	Through age 18 (as of the start of the school year)	Snack	After the end of the school day except for extended day/ expanded learning time schools	Free rate for all snacks served
	Persons with disabilities of any age <sup>aa</sup>			
Any day during the regular school year only (unless the program serves children attending year-round school)	Through age 18 (as of the start of the school year)	Snack and/or supper on school days	On school days, after the end of the school day except for extended day/ expanded learning time schools	Free rate for all meals and snacks served
	Persons with disabilities of any age	Any one meal (breakfast, lunch, or supper) and/ or snack on non-school days	Any time on non-school days with state agency approval	

Schools and community organizations must meet requirements to serve afterschool meals and snacks.

AREA ELIGIBILITY

The site must be in an area where 50 percent or more of children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

MEAL SERVICE TIME

Meals must be served outside of school time and can include weekends, holidays, winter and spring break, and other non-school days like teacher in-service days or unanticipated school closures for inclement weather or building maintenance.



Interested in getting started? Contact Hunger Free Oklahoma.



Oklahoma Highlights:  
**CHICKASHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Chickasha Public Schools doubled their Afterschool Meal Program in 2023!*

Chickasha Public Schools (CPS) launched its first Afterschool Meal Program at Bill Wallace Early Childhood Center six years ago serving pre-k through second grade students nutritious dinners paired with enrichment activities. After seeing positive outcomes, CPS expanded the program to Grand Avenue Elementary.

Four staff members plan, purchase, prepare, and package the meals in the Chickasha High School cafeteria, and the meals are then distributed to the Afterschool Meals sites. “Chickasha is self-prep for all our meals, and our budget got a lot better when we switched from the food service management company and started planning and prepping in-house” says CPS Child Nutrition Director, Leslie Edwards. Keeping fresh fruits and vegetables along with nutritious snacks at the forefront of planning helped them develop a program that caught the attention of several CPS teachers and community members. They wanted to help promote and volunteer in the afterschool program. Four teachers at Bill Wallace and two teachers at Grand Avenue lead the afterschool programs, where they serve meals and implement the district’s Education Enhancement Component (EEC) portion of the program.

Both Bill Wallace and Grand Avenue schools have dedicated teachers who coordinate the programs afterschool activities alongside serving the afterschool meals. Planning, prepping, and distributing snacks goes smoothly as the Child Nutrition department has solidified training to help guide staff through the Afterschool Meal Program. Each school has their own afterschool program curriculum that students participate in, but the afterschool meals portion operates the same across the district for a unified process. In total, CPS serves around 85 students in their afterschool programs.

A great highlight to the afterschool program is that “it helps parents in the community have a place available for kids to go while they work” says Edwards.

Leslie Edwards gives thanks to all the Child Nutrition staff, teachers and administration who support the Afterschool Meal Program. Edwards hopes to expand their program in the future and shares that “Not only does this strengthen those who participate, it strengthens our entire community!”

**HOW THEY MAKE IT WORK:**



**Chickasha Child Nutrition department operates the CACFP At-Risk program**

**Chickasha Child Nutrition partners with school personnel and volunteers to serve snacks and meals**



**Meals are prepped and delivered by Chickasha Child Nutrition staff to distribution sites**

**Meals are paired with enrichment programming which boosts participation in both the meal and afterschool programs**



**They get feedback from the students, staff, and volunteers on what meals work best**



“A lot of kids come hungry to the afterschool programs, so providing this extra snack or meal is very important for the growth of our kids, as some don’t have the meal option at home.”

- LESLIE EDWARDS



## Oklahoma Highlights: SAPULPA LIBRARY

Sapulpa Library began serving afterschool meals in 2020, when COVID waivers offered meal service flexibilities such as non-congregate and grab-and-go meals that provided more convenience for families and allowed the library to better serve their community.

In 2020, families were able to pick up a week's worth of meals at one time and take the meals home with them. Since then, they have transitioned to providing in-person meals for youth visiting the library for programming. The library staff is making the most of this change and hopes that serving meals helps associate good memories with libraries and will lead to more participation in the future.

Sapulpa Library partners with the Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma to provide a mix of shelf-stable and prepared meals. Initially, the library had a tough time storing freshly prepared meals but have since found a system that works by adding some storage space. Sapulpa Library staff prefer the shelf-stable meals as they are more sustainable and easier to manage since they do not require refrigeration, are easier to store and serve, and require less clean-up after programming.

Families appreciate the program because it is not based on income. It does not come with a stigma or paperwork to complete, all children receiving a meal and enjoying the library amenities. Parents have brought other parents with their children to the library for meals causing the library to grow its programs. Youth have learned about the meal programs and will come on their own to ask about them. Now, Sapulpa Library sees the most participation in the afterschool meals on program nights.

Youth will come into the library, grab a meal and milk, then go participate in the program.

As an added benefit, while youth eat, parents and caregivers can access the internet, computers, books, and other resources that the library has to offer.

### HOW THEY MAKE IT WORK:



Sapulpa Library partners with the Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma to operate the CACFP At-Risk program

They receive a mix of shelf-stable and prepared meals delivered once a week



Library staff serve meals with enrichment programming which

boosts participation in both the meal and afterschool programs

They get feedback from the students who eat the meals



They manage food waste by offering a share self where students can place food items they do not want



“We consider it a blessing... they want the library to be a safe haven for the community, a shelter from the storm of your everyday life.”

- SAPULPA LIBRARY STAFF



Oklahoma Highlights:  
**PAULS VALLEY PARKS & RECREATION**

Pauls Valley Parks and Recreation is part of a county-wide coalition Allies for Better Living, with a mission “to create an environment that promotes a healthier lifestyle within the communities located in Garvin County.” This coalition brings together numerous organizations in partnership to serve Garvin County families at a much stronger level.

One of the many partners is Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma (RFBO). In 2015, Pauls Valley Parks and Recreation (PVPR) and coalition organizations partnered with RFBO, to bring resources to the community to start a summer program, Extreme Summer Fun! During this time, PVPR offered programming to keep kids active during the summer months in a safe, fun, and engaging environment that included free summer meals. The summer program was such a hit for children and families, they began receiving feedback about the need for an afterschool program.

This partnership continued to grow and in 2018 PVPR created its first ever Afterschool Program. Once again, partnering with RFBO to provide afterschool meals, PVPR became a Kids Cafe partner. While the Afterschool Program at PVPR center was fee based and families had to sign up to participate, they kicked off their first program with 50 kids. PVPR center partnered with the local schools to bus the kids to the program.

While collaborating with multiple partners like Frontline Family Solutions and the local Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust group, PVPR was able to bring in local teachers to help provide educational enhancement opportunities to the afterschool program, which included homework help, physical activity, healthy habits learning, and more. Now, this program begins each year in August right after the school year starts. The program stays full, serving around 60 students each year. Jennifer Samford, the Parks and Recreation Director, says “The real linchpin in all of the programming offered is the food that RFBO provides.” Jennifer also states that “RFBO has what they do down to a science and the

impact they have across their service area is unreal. Whether giving feedback about specific food items, going through site audits, or connecting RFBO with other partners in the community, the process is so easy and well designed.”

Pauls Valley Parks and Recreation Center is a huge resource to the community. Children are safe, well fed, receive tutoring, and get to spend time socializing with friends.

**HOW THEY MAKE IT WORK:**

**PVPR partners with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma to operate the CACFP At-Risk program as part of their Kids Cafe**

**Meals are delivered, stored, and prepared at PVPR**

**Meals are paired with enrichment programming which boosts participation in both the meal and afterschool programs**

**They get feedback from both the students and the parents to create a family-friendly environment**

**Local teachers partner with the afterschool program to enhance the educational component of the program**



“Our Pauls Valley Afterschool Program enables families to have peace of mind when it comes to afterschool care. We feed the students, help them in organized play time. This program is so beneficial to our community. Many parents have expressed their gratitude for our services. This would not be possible without the city of Pauls Valley allowing us to use the Donald W. Reynolds Recreation Center. We are also so thankful for our partnership with the Regional Food Bank and Frontline Family Solutions.”

- CYNDI RING  
Pauls Valley Intermediate  
Language Arts & Social Studies  
(8th year at afterschool)

- APRIL EUBANKS  
Pauls Valley Intermediate  
Special Education  
(1st year at afterschool)





## BEST PRACTICES

There are many ways to make an Afterschool Meal Program work for your community. These strategies<sup>14</sup> can help make sure you have a successful program.

### SERVE WHERE THE KIDS ARE

An important part of serving afterschool meals is meeting the children where they are, such as at schools, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, libraries, and other community spaces. Making it convenient for the parents and children can help ensure that they can get fed while participating in enriching activities, too.

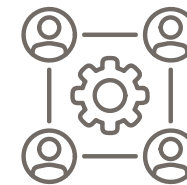
### UMBRELLA MODEL

The Umbrella Model<sup>15</sup> is based on the USDA guidance that free afterschool meals can be offered and actively promoted to all children and teens, including student athletes, if enrichment programming is available to everyone.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the best practices listed above, sites hoping to serve afterschool meals need to also consider programming, timing, administrative work, and more.<sup>16</sup>

01



### PROGRAMMING

Some programmatic considerations include staff training and an understanding of the program requirements. Gathering feedback from students and families after a new model is piloted will provide crucial information on where there is room for improvement and what is going well.

02



### TIMING AND PLANNING

Getting the application process started early with OSDE can ensure enough time for planning. If you have filled out an application previously, much of that information can be reused to save time. When planning the menu and enrichment activities, consider the time of the year, the foods that are more readily available or seasonal, and how to tie current events into enrichment.

03



### ADMINISTRATION

Feedback from the Afterschool Meals Survey indicated that keeping up with paperwork and recordkeeping is necessary. Completing paperwork and reporting in a timely manner, keeping all paperwork together rather than spreading across sites and sponsor locations, and using an online platform to collect all information are all methods used by Afterschool Meal Programs in the state.

04



### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Remember that you do not have to do this alone. Using the resources that are already established in your community can help enhance your Afterschool Meal Program. For more information about how to get a community partnership started, check out the “Enhancing Community Collaboration” page later in this report.





## OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH: AFTERSCHOOL MEALS

Based on results from Hunger Free Oklahoma's statewide Afterschool Meals Survey, respondents identified storage and infrastructure, menu variety and food procurement, and staff training as key areas for improvement.

Organizations and schools commonly struggle to secure enough freezer, refrigerator, and building space for food to serve students after school. They are creative and find donors to help them purchase commercial equipment or build space, but it continues to be a hurdle for prospective programs to offer afterschool meals to students.

Survey respondents report struggling to estimate the number of meals they need to package for students and ensuring they are not contributing to food waste and thus, dollars wasted. Students expressed that they would like a wider menu variety, fresh options, and larger portion sizes.

Organizations and schools have also struggled to find consistent staff throughout the year. Many have shared that navigating the CACFP sponsor application process is difficult and it takes a considerable amount of time for staff to learn recordkeeping and meal pattern requirements.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICS<sup>17</sup> FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS:



### MAINTAIN MEAL QUALITY

Determining when to serve hot versus cold food, specific menu items, and keeping food fresh and appealing are ways to get started. Surveying participants and conducting taste tests is another way to get feedback and build buy-in for the program and ensure culturally relevant meals.



### BRAND IT WELL

Branding can help set the right expectations for the meal or snack as well as help with awareness or buy-in. Evaluate different branding and messaging to find what works best for your program.



### PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

Spreading the word through school announcements, social media pages, news outlets, radio spots, and newspaper ads can all help build awareness and boost participation in Afterschool Meal Programs.



### FIND A GOOD SPOT

The meal site should be centrally located and easily accessible. Libraries, community centers, schools, and other places where children congregate are great options.



### TIME IT RIGHT

Selecting a time that is convenient can increase participation. For schools, that may be right as the final bell rings. For afterschool programs in the community, serving a meal or snack shortly after programming starts may ensure more students can eat since they may leave at various times.



### PARTNER FOR SUCCESS

Not everyone has to serve afterschool meals. Find other organizations that have a common goal to make sure students have the resources they need to thrive. Partners can help spread the word, connect to more resources, and more.



# HOW TO GET STARTED

Are you passionate about ensuring that children in your community have access to nutritious meals after school? Getting started is easy, thanks to the comprehensive resource “At-Risk Afterschool Meals: A Child and Adult Care Food Program Guide”,<sup>18</sup> provided by USDA. This serves as your roadmap to understanding program requirements, eligibility criteria, and administrative procedures.

## KEY STEPS INCLUDED IN THE GUIDE:

- ☐ **Connect with OSDE:** Communicating with OSDE early and often will help you through every step of the way including the application, planning, and implementation processes.
- ☐ **Check eligibility criteria:** Whether you represent a school, local government agency, nonprofit organization, camp, or other site, you must meet area eligibility criteria.
- ☐ **Complete the necessary paperwork:** This paperwork includes application forms and agreements, all designed to ensure your organization meets the program’s standards.
- ☐ **Identify locations:** Serving meals to students should be accessible and welcoming to all. Examples of sites include schools, community centers, parks, libraries, or other places where afterschool programs are offered.
- ☐ **Spread the word:** Effective marketing can help draw students and families to your site. Utilize flyers, social media, and local newspapers to raise awareness of the afterschool meals available in your community.
- ☐ **Get creative with menu planning:** Design nutritious and enticing meals that meet USDA meal pattern requirements, ensuring children receive the balanced nutrition they need.
- ☐ **Train staff and volunteers:** To ensure smooth program operation, everyone involved should understand their roles and responsibilities and where to go to find information.
- ☐ **Monitor and evaluate your program:** Asking for feedback from staff, volunteers, and participants, then adjusting as needed helps to better serve your community. Stay informed about program regulations and requirements to maintain compliance and integrity.

By leveraging USDA’s resources<sup>19</sup> and following these steps, you can launch an Afterschool Meal Program that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families in your community.


# ENHANCING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Afterschool Meals sites and sponsors across Oklahoma gave feedback on the best ways for community members to collaborate and support their local Afterschool Meal Programs.

## HOW CAN YOU COLLABORATE WITH SCHOOLS AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS?


**SHARE INFORMATION AND STAY INFORMED:**

- Help with any resources
- Share resources with parents and caregivers
- Share any information published by schools or organizations
- Share information from social media, make posts on social media
- Gain knowledge and stay informed on the issues impacting children
- Share information on where families can find food
- Contact your legislators




**ATTEND OR HOST MEETINGS:**

- Join leadership groups and advocate on issues
- Attend district or wellness meetings
- Attend health coalition meetings and any community-based meetings




**VISIT SCHOOLS:**

- Meet with students and learn about how they live
- Volunteer in the school
- Speak with teachers and school parent officers
- Offer a cooking class to students



**DONATE OR VOLUNTEER:**

- Donate directly to schools
- Offer to help deliver food
- Print flyers and distribute them to schools and communities
- Donate to food banks



Together, we can empower communities and nourish the future.

Connect with Hunger Free Oklahoma for more information and for ways to get started.

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## ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Increasing access to afterschool meals is not the sole responsibility of communities across Oklahoma. Policymakers can make afterschool meals more accessible for sites and families. Three ways legislation can help include passing an updated Child Nutrition Reauthorization, streamlining both Summer and Afterschool Meal Programs, and improving area eligibility requirements.

### PASS AN UPDATED CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

Child Nutrition Reauthorization<sup>20</sup> (CNR) is a vital legislative process that updates and strengthens<sup>21</sup> federal child nutrition programs, intended to occur every five years. The last comprehensive CNR was the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and unfortunately, no further investments in Afterschool Meal Programs have been made since this legislation. This means it has been 14 years since Afterschool Meal Programs were reviewed or modernized. Hunger Free Oklahoma strongly urges Congress to pass an updated CNR that enhances child nutrition programs across various settings, including pre-school, school-based, and out-of-school time, to effectively address the current challenges faced by children in need.

### STREAMLINING SUMMER AND AFTERSCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Integrating<sup>17</sup> the Afterschool and Summer Meal programs would enhance their efficiency and accessibility. By simplifying the application process to a single, year-round submission, organizations could avoid the complications of managing two distinct applications.<sup>2</sup> This integration would also standardize eligibility criteria, reducing confusion and paperwork for sponsors.

A seamless system<sup>22</sup> would improve oversight and minimize administrative errors, ultimately increasing participation by encouraging more organizations to offer both programs. Children would benefit from consistent access to nutritious meals, without interruptions.

To achieve this integration, USDA could develop a unified application while Congress could pass legislation to align eligibility criteria and program requirements. Providing training and resources during this transition would further support a streamlined system.

### IMPROVE AREA ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The eligibility criteria for Afterschool Meal Programs present several challenges that limit their effectiveness. Currently, these programs rely solely on school data<sup>17</sup> to determine eligibility, while Summer Meals programs allow for more flexible criteria, including the use of census data and individual applications. This discrepancy means that sites serving the same children year-round may be eligible for Summer Meals but not for Afterschool Meals. Additionally, the area eligibility requirement does not align with the criteria for the 21st Century Community Learning Center funding, which is the primary federal funding source dedicated to out-of-school time programs.

To address these issues, lowering the area eligibility threshold from 50% to 40% and expanding the options for determining eligibility would better assist organizations in serving children, particularly in rural communities or smaller pockets of concentrated poverty that struggle to qualify based solely on school data. Allowing the use of census data would facilitate robust mapping efforts year-round to identify eligible areas and gaps in service. By implementing these changes, policymakers could significantly enhance the reach and effectiveness of Afterschool Meal Programs, ensuring that more children have access to nutritious meals outside of school hours.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS

Our leaders can make a significant impact within their areas of authority. The three options described above require federal action. The Oklahoma Congressional Delegation can create change include “increasing<sup>23</sup> access to and support for afterschool meals, allocating funding to encourage site expansion and support programming, requiring participation in high-need areas, and making changes to enhance administrative efficiencies.”

The landscape of child nutrition programs in Oklahoma, particularly afterschool meals, presents both challenges and opportunities for improvement. By advocating for change, we can work towards a more robust child nutrition landscape in Oklahoma.



# COMPREHENSIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE CHILD FOOD SECURITY

## HERE ARE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN.<sup>16</sup>

- Contact your local school to learn more about how to make [breakfast a part of the school day](#)
- Offer [free school meals for all students](#) to reduce stigma and increase opportunities for participation
- Provide [afterschool meals](#) to students in eligible areas to ensure they are getting three meals a day during the school year
- Offer [summer meals](#) to ensure that students and their siblings have access to nutritious food when school is not in session
- Connect students and caregivers to [grocery assistance programs](#)
- Visit Hunger Free Oklahoma's [School Resource Page](#) for more information and resources
- Visit Hunger Free Oklahoma's [website](#) for more ideas of how to plug into food security work in your area
- Check out Hunger Free Oklahoma's [free online store](#) for resources that can be sent to your location free of charge

# OKLAHOMA CHILDHOOD FOOD SECURITY COALITION

Formed in 2016, the Oklahoma Childhood Food Security Coalition (OK CFSC) seeks to improve education and health outcomes for Oklahoma's youth by increasing awareness of and access to nourishing meals in and out of schools. Partners from state agencies, school districts, food banks, youth development organizations, Tribal organizations, nonprofits, faith-based, and advocacy organizations collaborate to increase participation in nutrition programs across the state.



## MISSION:

OK CFSC works to expand access to nutrition programs for Oklahoma's youth by fostering networks and connections, sharing resources to build program capacity, and advocating for improved program policies.

## VISION:

All children, teens, and students in Oklahoma have access to nourishing meals, improving their health and education outcomes.

The coalition meets virtually and welcomes new voices and leaders into this space.

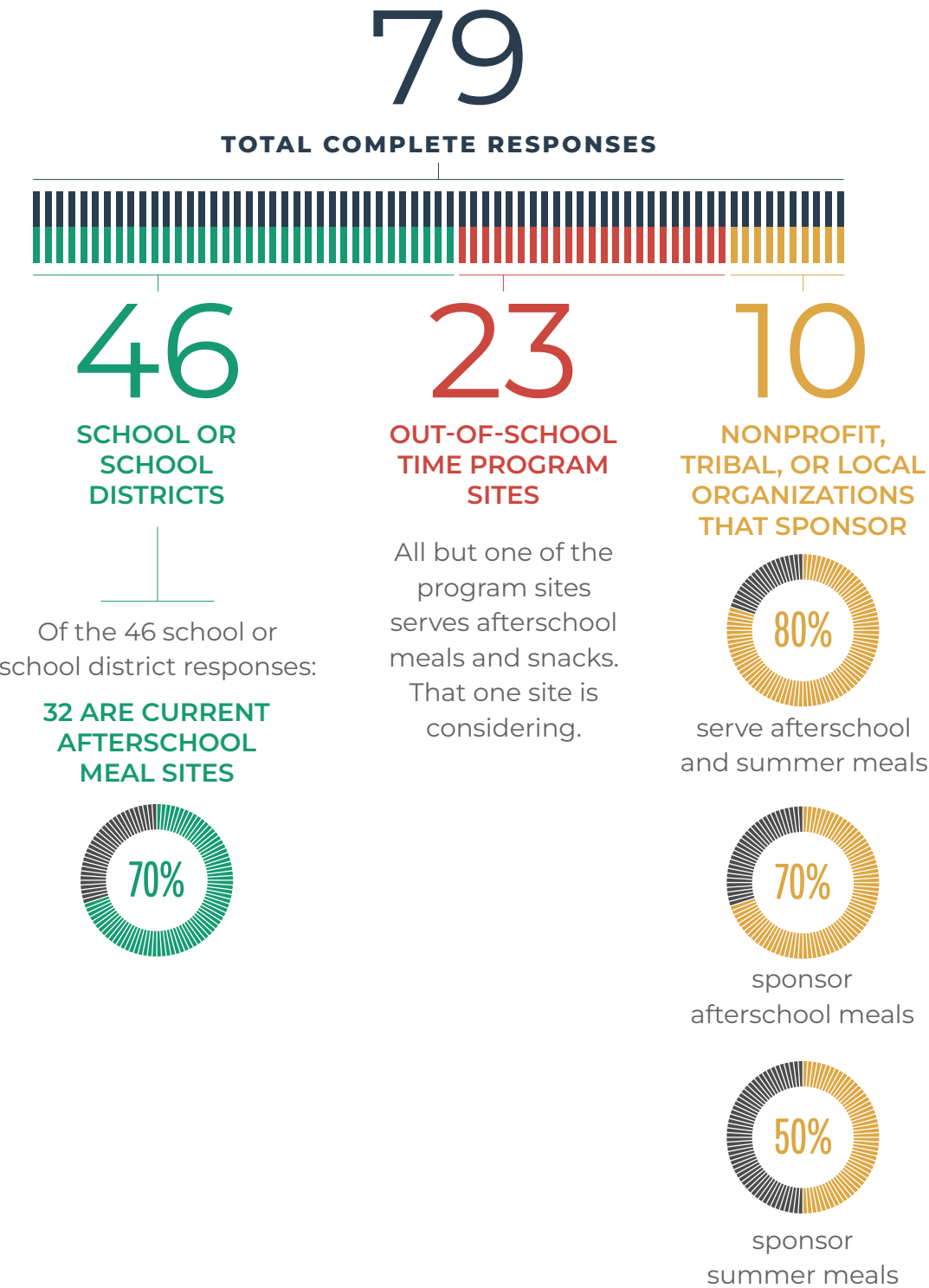


Learn more about  
OK CFSC and how you  
can participate.



# OVERVIEW OF 2022 AFTERSCHOOL MEALS SURVEY

The Oklahoma Afterschool Meals Survey was launched in 2022 to better understand child food security efforts and afterschool meals opportunities across the state.



# TECHNICAL NOTES

The data presented in this report reflects the most accurate and up-to-date information available at the time of publication. However, due to ongoing data collection and verification processes, the figures are subject to change. We strive to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, but some variations or discrepancies may occur as additional information becomes available. HFO acknowledges that data provided by OSDE reflects data reported by schools at the time of the data request and that schools and the state might revise those numbers at any time after that point.

# METHODOLOGY

**A – Calculation of Total Meals Served** includes At-Risk component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Suppers, CACFP Snacks\*, and (National School Lunch Program) NSLP Snacks between September and April of each year.

*\*In the original data provided by OSDE, CACFP is divided into AM Snacks and PM Snacks. This report only pulls from **PM Snacks** as AM Snacks are not covered under CACFP-At Risk.*

**B – Calculation of Average Service Days** are calculated by summing the total service days for each site in a county and dividing them by the total number of sites. Averages were calculated for each county with one or more sites.

**C – Calculation of Average Daily Participation** is calculated at a county level. ADP is calculated by summing monthly participation for all sites in a county and dividing by total service days for all sites in a county. Values were calculated for each county with one or more sites.

**D - Total Meal Sites** reflects the sum of meal sites across NSLP snacks and CACFP at-risk snacks and suppers.

**E – Categorization of Sponsor Type** - The data encompasses a diverse array of sponsors, including nonprofits, schools, tribal nations, and other entities.

Sponsors are primarily divided into two categories: “school sponsor” and “other organization.” Those classified as “school sponsors” are typically school districts or School Food Authorities (SFAs). All remaining sponsors, which do not fit into the school sponsor category, are designated as “other organization.” This classification aids in distinguishing the types of support provided and ensures clarity in sponsorship roles.



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## NOTES



