SUN MEALS TO-GO North Carolina

NON-CONGREGATE MEALS (NCM) MODEL OVERVIEW

PICK UP: HYBRID (WEEKEND BUNDLE)

SPONSOR SNAPSHOT:

FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN NC

- The Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina (CENC) reaches children in 34 of the state's 100 counties and works closely with several community partners to provide SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go.
- Summer 2025 was the Food Bank of CENC's first year operating non-congregate summer meals or SUN Meals To-Go. To ensure success and smooth operations, their team started with two sites in Vance County. They chose to operate two models: a walk-up distribution at Vance County Middle School, and a hybrid weekend bundle in partnership with the Henderson Family YMCA.
- The Food Bank CENC also operated 61 congregate meal service sites across the 34 county service area.

> We are ecstatic about how helpful the Grab-N-Go NCM model was this summer. We doubled our impact from previous years! We offered the hybrid model as a way to close the gap of food insecurity on the weekends. This model helped us serve more children by keeping them fed on the weekends along with receiving congregate meals eaten on-site during the week. The staff worked with many volunteers to help operate smoothly. We plan to offer this model for future summers.
>
> **KIONA THOMAS**
> DIRECTOR OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

A HUGE SUCCESS for their first year

serving SUN Meals To-Go for kids!

- Over *108,000 meals served*!
- 2x more summer meals than the summer of 2024.
- Factors contributing to their success:
  - Team work and flexibility
  - Frequent planning & communication

food bank CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS | SUN SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR KIDS North Carolina | CAROLINA HUNGER INITIATIVE

BENEFITS OF THE HYBRID MODEL

- **Lean On Congregate Successes:** If there is already a successful congregate model that operates during the week, the hybrid model may work well to ensure those children receive weekend meals.
- **Avoid Establishing a Completely New Site:** It may simplify the process to use a traditionally congregate site to also distribute non-congregate meals – as long as it is needed, approved, and meals reported accordingly. Using the same location to serve congregate and NCM can save time.

KEY TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Set Up in a Convenient Location:** To provide meals for the weekend, set up the meals near at the door so children and families can grab their meals on their way home. Additional signs can serve as helpful reminders for families as well.
- **Partner with Providers:** Make sure that community partners and staff are spreading the word about the hybrid meal program. Families may know their children eat while at summer camp, but they may not be aware of additional meals for the weekend. Ensure all staff and families are aware of this resource.
- **Maintain Clear Participation Records:** Students participating in these models likely participate in congregate summer meals for the majority of the week. Be aware and keep a record of which students participate in congregate and non-congregate meals to ensure integrity.
- **Remain Flexible:** When partnering with community partners and summer camps, be sure to remain open to schedule changes. Field trips may impact departure and location times for children.
- **Streamline Packaging for Families:** Since families are taking home multiple meals at once, package them in a way that is easy to carry, especially for children. Use sturdy bags with handles or small boxes. Select menu items that travel well and require minimal, simple preparation to ensure meal quality and make it convenient for families over the weekend.
- **Create a Simple Feedback Loop:** Attach a small card or flyer to the weekend meal bundles with a QR code linked to a brief, mobile-friendly survey. Ask simple questions about meal quality, variety, and convenience. This provides valuable, real-time feedback to improve the program and shows families that their opinions are valued, which can help build trust and increase consistent participation.
- **Site Selection:** Choose sites that have easy access, staff that are dedicated, and have volunteers who want to help. The combination helps teams work together more productively.