

# Vended Meals

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For School Nutrition Program operators, meal vendors are companies that prepare meals for purchase. Meal vendors deliver meals that meet the federal meal pattern requirements and are ready for service to students. Meal vendors must document menu production, maintain standardized recipes, child nutrition food labels/product specifications, and record the number of meals ordered and delivered (transport records).

School food authorities (SFA) contracting for vended meals, which are limited to preparation and delivery, may follow informal procedures of procurement or prepare either a written Invitation for Bid (IFB), or a written Request for Proposal (RFP), and provide the IFB and RFP to as many potential bidders as possible. SFAs should follow a competitive procurement process and may not bypass the competitive bidding process by entering into a contract because of dialog with only one vended meal contractor.

In order for an SFA to act as a meal vendor, preparing and delivering meals to another SFA, the SFAs must execute an interagency agreement when adding an unaffiliated school to their SNP Permanent Single Agreement with the California Department of Education (CDE). An unaffiliated school is one that is not under the SFA's administrative jurisdiction, such as a private school or a nonpublic school. An interagency agreement establishes the terms and conditions by which an SFA provides meals to and claims reimbursement for meals served to students in an unaffiliated school.

Even though an SFA may contract for vended meals, the SFA must establish a food safety program. There are many resources available to help you develop, implement, and monitor the food safety program for your operation. Many of these are located in the [Quick Reference Guide to Vended Meals](#).

If an SFA requires the meal vendor to provide staff to serve the meals, prepare the meals at the sponsor's facility, or other food service activities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines this as a food service management company instead of a vendor. Procurement for an FSMC requires the CDE to preview the bid process and approve the contract.

After you have reviewed the information in the Quick Reference Guide, try the [Apply Your Knowledge](#) self-check.

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Food service directors and administrators can utilize the School Nutrition Primer as a professional standards training resource. Reviewing the **Quick Reference Guides** with staff and administering the **Apply Your Knowledge** self-check quiz may count for a 15 minute training.

The training topic Vended Meals provides the following professional standards:

**Key Area:** Operations (2000)

**Training Topic:** Purchasing (2400)

**Learning Objective:** Develop and monitor contract(s) (2460)

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