

Local Governments and Elected Officials Can Help Feed Hungry Children During Summer



THE PROBLEM: When school lets out in the summer, millions of low-income children lose access to the free or reduced price school breakfasts, lunches and afterschool snacks they receive during the regular school year. Many families face financial struggles to provide enough nutritious food for their children during the summer months. Children that experience hunger in the summer are more likely to suffer from health problems and “summer learning loss” which interfere with academic success.

WHAT IS THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP) (IN ONE SENTENCE): The SFSP is a federally-funded program administered by the States that reimburses local government agencies, community organizations, schools, parks, and nonprofits that serve free meals to low-income children 18 and under when school is out.

HOW YOU (MAYOR, COUNCIL MEMBER, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, ELECTED OFFICIAL) CAN HELP:

1. Encourage and work with your local government agencies and schools to become SFSP sites or sponsors.

Sponsors enter into an agreement with the State to take on the fiscal and administrative responsibilities for serving meals. **Sites** are the physical locations where kids go and eat the free summer meals.

Sponsors are responsible for identifying and recruiting sites where meals can be served and then making sure the meals are delivered to those sites. A sponsor is reimbursed for operating and administrative costs.

In many communities, Parks and Recreation departments, city and county health departments, schools, libraries, and neighborhood service agencies participate as sites or sponsors. For example, a city park or county library could be a site where meals are delivered and served to children. However, a school or local agency could become a sponsor and prepare meals on site or enter into a contract with a food vendor and then deliver meals to various sites in the community. These are just a few examples of how your local agencies and schools can be sites and/or sponsors.

2. Use your influence in the community to reach out to nonprofits, anti-hunger organizations, and other community leaders to:
 - a. Recruit more sites and sponsors.
 - b. Promote summer feeding sites in the weeks before your schools lets out.

(See page 2 on reverse side for more details)

Use Your Influence to Connect with Summer Food Champions in Your Community



1. Learn more about what's going on in your community.
 - Contact your State agency administering the SFSP (www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm)
 - Helpful questions to ask:
 - a) Is my community in an area of need?
 - Your State agency can tell you if your city or town experiences childhood hunger. They can tell you where the pockets of poverty are in your community.
 - b) Are there existing summer feeding sites or sponsors in my community?
 - Your State agency knows all the sponsors and sites that operated in the previous summers and the ones reapplying this summer. By getting this information, you will have a better picture of summer meal operations already in place.
 - c) Who are the Regional and State advocacy groups in my community?
 - There are likely established anti-hungry coalitions operating in your State, including Food Banks, Food Policy Councils and Anti-Hunger advocates. Your State agency has strong relationships with these organizations with whom they can connect you with.
2. Reach out to existing Sponsors including nonprofits, schools, and faith-based and community organizations.
 - Convey interest in promoting summer meals with them and see how you can collaborate.
 - Identify their barriers and challenges that your office can help overcome.
 - Help the sponsors identify and recruit new locations for summer feeding sites.
 - When school is about to be let out for summer work with sponsors, sites, schools, and local media to advertise summer feeding sites to parents and students.
3. Reach out to local and State advocacy groups.
 - Consult with these advocacy groups to develop a broader understanding of childhood hunger needs in your community. See how your office can get involved in their planning and activities.
 - Find additional sources of funding (such as grants) and partnerships that can help more organizations become sites and sponsors.
 - Obtain assistance in identifying and contacting organizations that are good candidates to become sponsors and sites.
 - Work with these community organizations and local celebrities/champions to promote summer feeding sites to families in need.
4. Check out our website (www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/Outreach.htm) for valuable resources including training videos, radio PSAs, toolkits, templates for flyers and door hangers, and key contact information.