



## Letters to School Principals

Dear:

We are writing to urge you to take action on an important issue affecting children in your community. Childhood food insecurity remains at unacceptable levels across the country and children are most acutely at risk during the summer, when they do not have access to school meals. The Nation's principals have the lead role in caring for students and helping them achieve and excel during the school year. Your leadership can also help to ensure that those same children do not go hungry in your community this summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates summer meals programs to address this problem, and we are requesting your help to make access to and participation in summer meals a priority.

The USDA Summer Meals Programs include the Summer Food Service Program as well as the Seamless Summer Option in the National School Lunch Program. These programs operate as a partnership between the Federal government, State agencies and local organizations to serve free meals to kids age 18 years and younger. The USDA provides reimbursement for meals, State agencies administer the program and local organizations, including schools, non-profits, parks and recreation departments, libraries and faith-based groups serve the meals.

In 2013, about 3.5 million children received summer meals – far fewer than the 21 million children who receive free or reduced price lunches through the National School Lunch Program during the school year. This means that during the summer we are not reaching the vast majority of children who rely on school meals to meet their nutritional needs. You can help change this by:

- **Providing children in your community with summer meals at your school this summer.** Local schools are the best sites for summer feeding efforts. Children and parents are familiar with local schools and schools are known for providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Even if your school will not be offering summer programming, it can serve as a summer feeding site and fill the meal gap for your students this summer so that they are ready to learn when they return to school.
- **Encouraging teachers and staff to share information about summer meal sites, whether the sites are at your school or at other locations in your community.** Schools communicate regularly and effectively with the families of children in your community. You can help reach out and connect these families with summer meals before the school year ends and continue to make a difference in the lives of your students even after the school year ends.

You can learn more about the USDA Summer Meals Programs by visiting [www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov).

These programs need champions. Please help us feed more children in your community when school is not in session by becoming a champion for summer meals. Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children.

Sincerely,



**Summer Meals Toolkit**  
*USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*