

Mayors and Local Elected Leaders Can Be Champions for Summer Meals

During the school year, 21 million children receive free and reduced-price meals through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (NSLP). But when school is out, many low-income children relying on these school meals go hungry. To fill this gap, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides federally funded meals through the summer meal programs, including the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the NSLP Seamless Summer Option. These programs provide free, nutritious summer meals to children at approved sites in areas with high concentrations of low-income children. Unfortunately, these summer meals reach only about 15 percent of the eligible children nationally.

As an elected leader in your community, you have the ability to make a real contribution towards the success of the summer meal programs. Throughout the Nation, communities with elected leaders who have expressed strong support for the summer meal programs have shown increases in participation. Local leaders can play an important role because they are trusted sources of information and have a more clear understanding of the specific needs of families in their communities. Below are simple steps that you can take as an elected local leader to promote the summer meal programs and expand participation in your community. USDA also has many resources that can help. By working together, we can ensure that no child is hungry this summer!.

What You Can Do to Make a Difference

Below are **10 simple steps** that you can take as an elected leader to promote the summer meal programs and expand participation in your community. USDA also has many resources that can help. By working together, we can ensure that no child is hungry this summer!

Use your visibility to promote summer meals now and throughout the summer through speeches, visits to local programs, and other events, such as community festivals and health fairs.

Participate in the 3rd Annual National Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Week, taking place June 10-14, 2013. Events held during this special week attract media attention, which helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community.

Empower your community organizations to champion summer meals! Let these groups know that Federal funds are available to support their efforts and that the city is supporting them as well. Highlight their efforts in local media and city newsletters or other publications, thereby gaining free press for summer meals and ensuring more families know summer meals are available for their children.

Work with public agencies in your city, such as the parks and recreation department, the public housing authority, and the city libraries, to ensure that children participating in their summer programs are receiving summer meals. Let them know that Federal funds are available to provide the meals, leaving more resources for summer activities.

Work with local agencies active in your community to ensure they are engaged in your summer feeding effort. Local housing authorities, human services offices, and other city agencies that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources that can be shared and can share information about summer meals with their clients in your community.



Summer Food Rocks!

Work with school officials in your city to ensure that schools in low-income areas provide summer meals. Schools are ideal locations for summer meal programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food. Remind school officials that many children in their schools are hungry in the summer when they lose access to school meals.

Establish a City Summer Meals Workgroup with staff from your office and other local agencies and organizations with a vested interest in the health and safety of low-income children in the summer. Creative and innovative partnerships can lead to real change!

If your city is a part USDA's Let's Move challenge, collaborate with the city team working on the initiative, as well as other obesity prevention groups, to promote summer meals.

Contact the Director of the SFSP and NSLP State agencies and let them know that providing summer meals in your community is a priority for you and you will work with them to increase access for low-income children.

Publicize summer meals through constituent mailings, local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, PSAs, and religious bulletins.



USDA Resources

The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service has many resources to assist States and sponsors in administering USDA Summer meal programs. Some current resources include the following:

- **Summer Food Rocks!** Download and distribute Program flyers throughout your city.
English: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf
Spanish: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/library/sp-SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf
- **Economic Benefits of Summer Meals.** Find specific information on State participation rates and how increases in participation can increase Federal financial support for your city.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/SNAPandSFSPmap.htm>
- **3rd Annual National SFSP Kick-Off Week.** Taking place June 10-14, 2013, Kick-Off Week helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community. For more information or for help planning a local event, contact Jeff Greenfield at the Food and Nutrition Service at jeff.greenfield@fns.usda.gov.
- **National Hunger Hotline.** Publicize the National Hunger Hotline to your community. Families use the hotline to find summer meal sites.
<http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood>
- **SFSP Outreach Toolkit.** The USDA SFSP Outreach Toolkit includes webcasts, free radio public service announcements, templates for promotional items, and resources in Spanish.
<http://www.summerfood.usda.gov/Outreach.htm>