



State 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 meals 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 16 percent of the eligible children.

As an elected leader in your State you have the opportunity and ability to make a real contribution towards the success of the summer meals programs. Throughout the nation, State elected leaders and legislatures that have expressed strong support for the summer meals programs have shown increases in participation. In 2013, 168 million meals were served during the summer months, representing a \$550 million Federal investment in local communities. State leaders play a critical role because they are trusted sources of information and possess a clear understanding of the specific needs of their communities. Below are simple steps that you can take as an elected leader to promote the summer meals programs and expand participation within your State. USDA also has many resources that can help. By working together, we can ensure no child goes hungry this summer!

- Use your visibility to draw attention to summer meals by participating in the 4th Annual National Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Week, taking place June 2-6, 2014. Events held during this 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 your colleagues and let them know expanding summer meals is a priority and you will work with them to increase access for low-income children.
- Establish a summer meals workgroup in the Legislature with your colleagues and local organizations that have a vested interest in the health and safety of low-income children in the summer. Creative and innovative partnerships can lead to



real change!

- Reach out to anti-hunger groups and the social service network to identify those areas that have the most need and work with them to educate their clients and the community about where they can participate in the SFSP.
- Work with the governor and State superintendent to keep schools open in low-income areas to provide summer meals. Schools are ideal locations for summer meals programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food.
- Ensure your other State agencies are engaged in the summer feeding effort. Departments of Education, Human Services, Agriculture, Housing and others that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources and can share information about summer meals with their clients.
- Promote summer meals through local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, public service announcements and public speaking events.
- Make it competitive! Start a “Challenge” to encourage healthy competition among your fellow legislators to increase participation in their communities.

USDA Resources

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service offers many resources to assist States and sponsors in administering USDA summer meals programs. Some current resources include:

- **Summer Food Rocks!** Download and distribute program flyers throughout your State.
 - English:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf
 - Spanish:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sp-SFSP_Promotional_Flyer.pdf
- **Economic Benefits of Summer Meals.** Find specific information on state participation rates and how increases in participation can boost Federal financial support for your State.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/get-involved/feeding-more-children-during-summer-months>



Summer Meals Toolkit

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

- **Participate in the 4th Annual National SFSP Kick-Off Week.** Taking place June 2-6, 2014, Kick-Off Week helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community.
- **National Hunger Hotline.** Ensure your State registers their summer sites with the National Hunger Hotline by calling 1-866-348-6479.
- **The FNS Website** has a subscription feature for any new guidance that is issued related to the SFSP:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new>
- **FNS Regional Office Contacts**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>



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