



Outreach to Teens

The good nutrition of Summer Meals is for children of all ages, including teenagers! Here are ideas and resources to help sponsors, sites, and partners connect teens with Summer Meal Programs.

Go to [Resources](#).

“Teen Only” Events and Targeted Programming

Hosting events is a great way to encourage teens to participate in Summer Meal Programs, and an effective way to boost attendance if participation lags mid-way through the summer. Ask partner organizations that work with teens for their advice on increasing attendance. Inviting local figures admired by teens, such as professional or collegiate athletes, performers, or radio personalities is another way to build excitement around your program.

Special site activities can also increase participation among teens. Consider incorporating the following ideas into your Program:

- **Open mic sessions** provide a stage for teens to recite poetry, sing, or act during the meal service;
- **Talent shows** attract some of the teens to perform, while appealing to others to serve as judges of young performers;
- **Summer playlists** allow teens to choose their favorite artists to listen to during the meal service, which can be compiled and released at the end of summer; and
- **Summer public service announcements and videos** bring out teens' creativity to promote Summer Meals, giving them experience as scriptwriters, directors, actors, and videographers.



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Involving Teens as Volunteers and Interns

Creating volunteer opportunities is another good strategy to ensure teenagers have access to the summer food they need to stay healthy. Teen volunteers provide youthful energy and familiar faces that younger children look forward to seeing every day!

Summer Meal sites that offer internships, either paid or unpaid, can involve teens in a variety of Program activities, including meal services, volunteer recruitment, site activities, and clean-up. Through internships, teens learn the importance of communication, organization, commitment, and conflict-management – valuable skills they can add to their resumes and apply to their future careers.

Providing teens with leadership roles creates an important youth development opportunity for all Summer Meal participants. Teens enjoy constructive volunteer experiences that help them gain practical, career-readiness skills, and become role models for younger children participating in the Program.

Success Stories!

Camden, New Jersey

For teenagers in the city of Camden, the Summer Meal Program provides an opportunity for more than a free meal. Youth as young as 14 can apply for a part-time Summer Food Service Program job, earning \$8.50 per hour. The position, Youth Recreation Aide, is coordinated by the city's Office of Youth Service, and is designed to instill a sense of confidence and boost self-esteem among teenage employees.

Charleston, West Virginia

Teen involvement has been essential to the successful Summer Meal partnership that the Kanawha Charleston Housing Authority, Human Resource Development Foundation, and Partnership for African American Churches (PAAC) have formed. This partnership relies on high school aged "peer mentors" to provide younger children with enrichment activities, mentorship, and supportive summer role models. Local support provides funding for the Peer Mentor Program, which also serves Afterschool Meals during the fall, winter, and spring.





Marketing Summer Meals to Teens

Promoting your Summer Meal Program to teens requires creativity, innovation, and a fresh perspective. What appeals to younger children Summer Meal participants will not appeal to an older crowd! When creating your outreach materials, consider the participants' ages, the information they need to know, and the type of message they would find appealing.

Remember, teens rarely stop to read long, text-heavy fliers. Keep it short, simple, and visually exciting.

If possible, ask a teenager from the community for help in drafting outreach materials. "Teen Ambassadors" can provide honest feedback about your marketing strategy, and may have ideas for effective, attention-grabbing messages that will appeal to their peers. They may also be willing to act as a spokesperson, a voice to represent your Program, either in person or through social media networks.

Targeting Teens through Social Media

Social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are popular among teens and may be useful platforms to advertise your program. Use buzzwords and hashtags like #SummerMeals #Lunchtime #FreeFood and #SummerFoodRocks to promote sites and build excitement around your program. Encourage teen participants to join in on the fun by posting updates, pictures, and tweets from their favorite Summer Meal site.

Sites can get creative and competitive on social media! Consider hosting a monthly Instagram Summer Meal photo contest for teens or creating Facebook pages for area sites to see which of them receive the most "Likes" from the community. The winners may be featured on the local news or receive a site visit from a local celebrity.

Here are posts and tweets that can be used to publicize any Summer Meal site. Generally, the more local information you can share about your site, the better! Consider creating your own posts and tweets to promote your Program, and don't forget to update your social media pages regularly once the summer has begun.





Sample Facebook Posts

Summer means food, friends, and fun! Teens can get FREE meals all summer long at sites across the community. Text [SHORTCODE] to 877-877 to find a site near you or to learn more, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX or visit: WEBSITE.

School is out – but food, friends and fun are still in! Teens can get FREE healthy meals during the summer in a fun, safe place. Text [SHORTCODE] to 877-877 to find a site near you or to learn more, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX or visit: WEBSITE.

FREE food, friends and fun! Many sites in the community offer fun activities so kids and teens can eat a healthy, free meal while staying active and spending time with friends. Text [SHORTCODE] to 877-877 to find a site near you or to learn more, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX or visit: WEBSITE.

Teens can stay active and eat right this summer! FREE meals are served at Summer Meal sites in the community – and many also offer fun activities! Meals are FREE to everyone ages 18 and younger. Text [SHORTCODE] to 877-877 to find a site near you or to learn more, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX or visit: WEBSITE.

Sample Twitter Posts

The @USDA Summer Food Service Program provides meals to hungry teens when school is out! #SummerFoodRocks!

@USDA funds Free #SummerMeals 4 kids & teens! Find a site near you by calling 1-XXX-XXX-XXX or visiting WEBSITE.

Free #SummerMeals help make sure teens get food they need 2 stay healthy in the summer. Details: WEBSITE.





Resources

USDA

- *Using Media*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/2015-summer-meals-webinars>
- *Engaging Youth Volunteers in Summer Meals*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/engaging-youth-volunteers-summer-meals>

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

Engaging Teens and Parents

http://frac.org/conf_call_audio/sfsp/2014_july_summer_engage_teens_parents_sfsp.mp3

Share Our Strength

Sponsor Center Outreach Tactics

<http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/outreach-tactics>

Coalition Against Hunger

Flyers and Posters: Free Summer Meals

<http://www.hungercoalition.org/summermeals/outreach-materials>

Just Harvest

Summer Food Volunteer and Internship Opportunities

<http://www.justharvest.org/get-involved/volunteer/summer-food-volunteers/>





For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal funds.

