



State Elected Leaders Can Be Champions for Summer Meals

During the school year, 22 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 Meal Programs. Throughout the Nation, States with elected leaders and legislatures who have expressed strong support for Summer Meal Programs have shown increases in participation.

In 2015, over 190 million meals were served during the summer months. 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. Here are some suggestions on how elected leaders can promote Summer Meal Programs, expand participation, and make a difference in the lives of children. By working together, we can ensure no child is hungry this summer!

Here's 10 Ways to Start:

1. Use your visibility to draw attention to Summer Meals by participating in the Annual National Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Week. Events held during this week attract media attention, which helps spread the word to families that free meals will be available in their community.
2. Empower your State and 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 media and newsletters or other publications, thereby gaining free press for Summer Meals and ensuring more families know Summer Meals are available for their children.



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Summer Meals Toolkit

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3. Work with your legislative colleagues and let them know expanding Summer Meals is a priority for you and you are available to work with them to increase access for low-income children.
4. Establish a Summer Meals workgroup in the Legislature with colleagues and stakeholders in your State who have a vested interest in the health and safety of low-income children in the summer. Creative partnerships can lead to real change!
5. 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 Summer Meal Programs.
6. Work with the Governor and State Superintendent to keep schools open in low-income areas to provide Summer Meals. Schools serve as ideal locations for Summer Meal Programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food. As you know, many children are hungry in the summer when they lose access to school meals.
7. Ensure that State agencies are engaged in supporting Summer Meals. 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.
8. Promote Summer Meals through human service agency newsletters, newspapers, public service announcements, and public speaking events.
9. Consider providing funding to programs that provide summer enrichment activities. These are shown to reduce the achievement gap, ensure children are ready to learn when they return to school in the fall and improve student test scores statewide. While USDA provides funding for meals and the administration of the meal programs, many of these vital programs need additional assistance to fully serve the children in your State.
10. Make it competitive! Start a “Challenge” to encourage healthy competition among your legislative colleagues to increase participation in their communities.

USDA Resources

- **Power Up for Summer Fun!**

- English:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/Summer_Flyer_En_508.pdf

- Spanish:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/sp-Summer_Flyer_508.pdf





- **Feeding More Children During Summer Months**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/SNAPandSFSPmap.htm>
- **USDA National Hunger Hotline**
1-866-348-6479
- **Email Updates**
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new>
- **FNS Regional Office Contacts.**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

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