



Governors 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 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.

Governors have the ability to make a real contribution towards the success of the Summer Meal Programs. Throughout the Nation, States with governors who have expressed strong support for Summer Meal Programs have shown increases in participation. By increasing participation, you are not only enhancing efforts at ending childhood hunger in your State, but also accessing additional Federal dollars for your communities in the form of combined reimbursements for meals and administrative costs. In 2015, over 190 million meals were served during the summer months. USDA's Economic Benefit Tool will show you the financial impact Summer Meals can make in your State.

Around the Nation, governors are demonstrating their commitment to ensuring that eligible children receive nutritious Summer Meals in a number of ways, including dedicating staff to retain and recruit Summer Meal sponsors and sites, working across agencies to reach participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other programs for low-income families, and working jointly with State partners and community organizations to engage children and families.

To further support these efforts, we've included some actions you can take as governor to promote the Summer Meal Programs and expand participation in your State. USDA also has many resources that can help, and our Regional Office that serves your State is ready to assist. Here are some suggestions on how you can make a difference. By working together, we can ensure that no child is hungry this summer!



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Here's 10 Ways to Start:

1. Use your visibility to draw attention to Summer Meals by participating in the Annual National Summer Meal Programs 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. Encourage local leaders in rural areas and other parts of the State with areas of high need to promote Summer Meals in their communities. Let them know that USDA Summer Meal Programs can bring additional Federal funds and new jobs into their communities. Consider providing State funds to provide transportation for children in rural areas.
3. Work with your executive team and let them know expanding Summer Meals is a priority for you and you will work with them to increase access for low-income children. Ensure that they are able to fully utilize the available USDA resources to effectively administer the programs.
4. Establish a State Summer Meals workgroup, with staff from your office, and other agencies in your State 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!
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 Meals.
6. Work with your State superintendent to keep schools open in low-income areas to provide Summer Meals. Schools are ideal locations for Summer Meal Programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food.
7. Ensure your other 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 State and local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, public service announcements and public speaking events.





9. Empower your community organizations to champion Summer Meals! Contact both large and small groups and let them know the State is ready to partner with them to ensure the community is aware of Summer Meal sites. Highlight their efforts in media or State newsletters, thereby gaining free press for the Summer Meal Programs and ensuring more families are aware that nutritious Summer Meals are available for their children.
10. 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.

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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