



Pitch a Story

If you would like to see a feature article or broadcast segment about your Summer Meal Program, with interviews with volunteers and participants, you should pitch a story!

Outreach to Media

It's very rare for the media to find you; usually you have to make the first contact. A successful community program is often a welcome break from some of the routine coverage, so you may be surprised at the reception you receive!

- Contact the media when you have a newsworthy story. Only call a reporter when you have real news such as your kick-off event, the announcement of a large donation or partnership, or a story about your new site opening.
- When working with media, be prepared. When you call a reporter, be prepared to answer questions. When you submit a news release or story pitch, make sure it is complete and free of grammatical errors. The easier you make an editor or reporter's job, the more likely your story will be covered.
- Getting a story covered takes work and follow-up. Just because you pitch an idea, doesn't mean the media will cover your story—no matter how great your program is. Pick up the phone and make a follow-up call and offer to help set up a visit.

Pitching Your Ideas

Write a letter to share your story idea. It's a good idea to start the letter with a quote about your Summer Meal site or another introduction that will catch an editor or reporter's attention. Keep it short and simple. Be direct about your story idea and offer to help.

- Put the most important information first—the five W's: who, what, when, where, and why.
- Always include contact information for a person who can be available anytime.
- Always offer to help set up interviews, arrange site visits, gather photos, and other tasks
- Try to have at least three story ideas in your letter. That way, if one concept does not work, you have more to offer.



10/31/16



Sample Pitch Letter for All Media

Date:
Contact:
Phone:
E-mail:

Dear [Editor or Reporter's Name]:

Each summer, children wait for the last bell of the school year. Summer is an exciting time for children to enjoy playtime with friends, a week at camp, a family vacation, or time at the pool. However, for many children who receive free and reduced-price meals at school, summer can mean hunger. Just as learning doesn't end when school lets out, neither does a child's need for good nutrition.

[Your organization's name] provides free meals to children during the summer as part of U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Meal Programs. This summer, meals will be served at [location] on [days] at [times]. There are no income requirements or registration. Anyone age 18 and younger may come to eat.

I encourage [media station or newspaper's name] to cover our Summer Meal site since many children in the community could benefit. [Include free and reduced-price meal statistics, if you have them.]

You may find the following list of story ideas helpful: [Include your own story ideas, based on your Summer Meal Program site. Here are some examples:]

- A general story about our site that includes interviews with our staff and volunteers;
- A day at [site location name] story that gives first-hand experience about your visit; or
- A profile of a family whose children come to the site for meals.

I am happy to help arrange a visit, set up interviews, or provide more information. Thank you for considering our story ideas.

Sincerely,





For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. Do you have more questions? Sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for answers. State agencies should contact their 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/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>

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