

ENDING CHILD HUNGER IN COLORADO: THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM



Summer should be a fun and carefree time for children, but for many families in Colorado, summer is when food budgets are stretched thin and children are at a greater risk of experiencing hunger. When school gets out for summer vacation, most children lose access to the nutritious free and reduced-priced meals that they receive at school. For this reason, food banks report higher demand in the summertime and many studies show that hunger spikes in the summer.

WHAT IS THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM?

The Summer Food Service Program provides federal reimbursement to serve free meals and snacks to children aged 18 and younger when school is out of session. Schools, private non-profit organizations, the faith community and local governments can sponsor the program and serve summer food in camps, summer schools, places of worship, community and recreation programs, or anywhere else that children gather. If a program is located in a community where at least 50 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-priced school meals, children can receive free nutritious meals without filling out any paperwork. The food must meet federal nutrition requirements but can be vended from a food service company, a school district or prepared on site.

IS THE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM WIDELY USED IN COLORADO?

Unfortunately, only a fraction of children from low-income families have access to summer food in Colorado. In fact, in 2010, for every 100 children who ate free or reduced-priced lunch in Colorado during the school year, less than 6 children ate summer lunch. This is because not enough programs exist to meet the need and many families are unaware of available resources.

HOW CAN WE EXPAND ACCESS TO THE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM?

Hunger Free Colorado and partners aim to increase access to the Summer Food Program. To increase participation in the Summer Food Program, Hunger Free Colorado works with schools, local governments, faith and community-based partners to help start new programs and help existing programs expand the number of children they served. Outreach efforts include printed materials which advertise a website (www.summerfoodcolorado.org) and toll-free Hotline (877-93-HUNGER) informing families where programs are available.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Find out if your school, community center, or place of worship is eligible to serve summer food.
- Link summer programs such as literacy, sports, and enrichment activities to the Summer Food Program.
- Spread the word to children and families. Promote summer food with flyers, posters, PSAs, and events.
- Donate to help new summer programs cover start-up costs or expenses related to programming.
- Volunteer to help with the food or activities at a local summer food site.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM OR HUNGER FREE COLORADO, PLEASE CONTACT:

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