



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

April 2018



Scott Gryder
Kendall County Offices
111 W Fox Rd
Yorkville, IL 60560-1621

Dear Scott,

The countdown to summer break can be exciting for Illinois schoolchildren but it can also lead to increased food insecurity. Many children rely on free and reduced priced meals during the school year but do not have access to healthy meals when school is out for the summer. In Illinois, for every 100 children who receive meals through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (NSLP), only 11 have access to meals over the summer.

The Summer Food Service Program steps in to help fight hunger during the summer months. To help our communities close the meal gap, we'd like to share information about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program, also known as "Summer Meals," which is administered by the Illinois State Board of Education. You can help fight hunger in your community.

What can you do?

- **Become a sponsor.** Government entities (such as municipalities, townships, park districts, or library districts) can receive training, apply for the program, and receive the meal reimbursements.
- **Provide a feeding site** (such as parks, community centers, and police or fire stations). You may also want to consider providing police officer engagement at existing feeding sites.
- **Help identify potential not-for-profit organizations** that can become sponsors and/or feeding sites.
- **Help promote** the program and hotline information. Call or email us to request bookmarks and other marketing materials.

Thank you in advance for considering what you can do to increase the number of eligible Illinois children receiving healthy nutritious meals during the summer months. If you have questions regarding Summer Meals, please contact the Summer Food Service Program at ISBE by calling (217) 782-2491 or (800) 545-7892, or by emailing Amy Bianco at abianco@isbe.net and Megan Kuchar at mkuchar@isbe.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark R. Haller".

Mark R. Haller, SNS
Division Administrator
Nutrition and Wellness Programs

How You Can Support Summer Meals in Your Community

1. Use your visibility to promote summer meals now and throughout the summer. Post information on your website and newsletters. Find sites by calling (800) 359-2163 or text “FoodIL” to 877877. For information on the program or how to become a sponsor, call (800) 545-7892 or (217) 782-2491 or email Amy Bianco and Megan Kuchar at abianco@isbe.net and mkuchar@isbe.net.
2. Empower your 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 local media, city newsletters, or other publications, thereby gaining free press for summer meals and ensuring more families know free summer meals are available for their children.
3. Work with public agencies in your city, such as the parks and recreation department, the public housing authority, and the city libraries, to ensure that children participating in their summer programs are receiving summer meals.
4. Work with local agencies active in your community to ensure they are engaged in your summer feeding effort. Local housing authorities, human services offices, and other city agencies that provide services to low-income citizens may have resources that can be shared and can share information about summer meals with their clients in your community.
5. Work with school officials in your city to ensure that schools in low-income areas provide summer meals. Schools are ideal locations for summer meal programs because they are recognized as safe places that serve nutritious food. Remind school officials that many children in their schools are hungry in the summer when they lose access to school meals.
6. Publicize summer meals through constituent mailings, local human service agency newsletters, local newspapers, PSAs, and religious bulletins.

Summer Meals Resources

- **Free Summer Meals Flier** (and other materials): Download and distribute program flyers throughout your city. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Summer-Food-Service-Program-Resources.aspx>
- **Economic Benefits of Summer Meals:** Find specific information on state participation rates and how increases in participation can increase federal financial support for your city. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/SNAPandSFSPmap.htm>
- **Summer Meals Texting Hotline:** Post and share the texting hotline information – Text “FoodIL” to 877877 (Spanish “ComidasIL”)
- **Summer Meals Hotline:** Publicize the National Hunger Hotline to your community, (800) 359-2163. Families can use the hotline to find summer meal sites.
- **SFSP Outreach Toolkit:** The USDA SFSP Outreach Toolkit includes webcasts, free radio public service announcements, templates for promotional items, and resources in Spanish. To access the Toolkit, please visit <http://www.summerfood.usda.gov/Outreach.htm>.