



Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2008

Executive Summary & Implications for Maryland

Children need access to healthy meals that combat hunger and improve nutrition regardless of the month of the year. Unfortunately, when school lets out for summer vacation, the free and reduced-price school meals that millions of low-income children depend upon every weekday during the regular school year end, and children and their parents must figure out how to fill this nutrition gap.

The best solution is good nutrition at recreational, educational, mentoring and other summer programs for children. But, the two federal programs—the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)—that offer children from low-income families and neighborhoods the kind of nutritious meals and snacks in the summer that they receive during the school year are badly underutilized.

This annual Summer Nutrition Status Report is published by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) – Maryland Hunger Solutions is an initiative of FRAC.

Key findings from the report

National Data

- Nationally in July 2007, an average of 2.8 million children participated in the Summer Nutrition Programs each day (i.e., the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program combined).
- From July 2006 to July 2007 participation in Summer Nutrition grew by just 0.1 percent. While the increase in 2007 is a positive step, the Summer Nutrition Programs are still performing significantly below the 3.2 million children that were served five years ago, during the summer of 2002.
- In July 2007, 17.5 children received Summer Nutrition for every 100 low-income students who received lunch in the 2006-2007 school year, compared to a ratio of 17.7:100 children in July 2006.
- In July 2007 if every state had reached the goal of serving 40 children Summer Nutrition for every 100 receiving free and reduced-price lunches during the 2006-2007 school year, an additional 3.7 million children would have been served each day, and the states would have collected an additional \$222 million in child nutrition funding.

Maryland Data

- In Maryland, 21 percent of eligible low-income children in Maryland received summer meals. Participation slipped from the previous year,

falling from serving more than 49,000 children in July 2006 to nearly 43,000 in July 2007.

- Maryland also lost both sponsors of the program and sites to serve children. Compared to July 2006, there were 7 percent fewer sponsors and 36 percent fewer sites in July 2007.
- If Maryland was able to boost participation to serve 40 percent of eligible low-income children, the state would feed an additional 39,047 children and gain \$2.3 million in federal funds.

Recommendations

- Congress should ensure that adequate funding is available for summer programs so children are eating nutritious meals, while they are learning, safe, and physically active.
- USDA needs to ensure that states are taking full advantage of the potential of the new Simplified Program.
- Maryland should require a school district to offer summer meals if one or more of the district's schools has 50 percent or more of its students qualified for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Maryland can provide financial support to the Summer Nutrition Programs.
- Maryland should work to support the expansion of Summer Nutrition Programs to cover the entire summer recess.
- And, Maryland should partner with schools, advocates, and public officials to conduct broad and timely outreach.