

Healthy Summer Meals

When children receive adequate nutrition in the summer months, they return to school in the fall healthy and ready to learn.



Summer Food Sites in Your Community

For more information on where and when Summer Food Service Program meals will be served this summer in your community, call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333 or visit www.meals4kids.org from the end of June through August.

Strategies for increasing the number of children eating summer meals

Food and fun! The best attended summer meals sites offer activities for students to enjoy in addition to healthy meals. Sports, arts and crafts, books, games, special guests, and field trips all make a summer program a nutritious, safe, and fun way for children to get healthy meals when school is out! High school and college students who lead activities draw children and youth to sites and make the sites cool places to spend the summer days. Parent and multi-lingual volunteers can also make the sites welcoming to all children.

More sites in your neighborhood! The closer a site is to a child's home, the more likely he or she is to participate. Sites at existing youth programs – as well as parks, pools, housing developments, and schools – are good places to capture children's attention and easily provide them with nutritious meals.

More meals at your sites! As many as two meals can be served at each site (breakfasts, lunches, snacks, and dinners). Children love hot food, barbeques, and multi-cultural meals. They also love to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, especially if they are locally grown. Variety is the spice of life, and menus that are diverse are well-received and appreciated.

More outreach to parents in your community! Most parents do not know that free meal sites exist in their community as an option for their children. Multi-lingual outreach in neighborhoods is critically important. Person-to-person contact with parents is the best way to encourage them to send their children to sites. Conduct outreach with your clients so they learn about the sites in their neighborhood. Partner with your Superintendent and principals and ask them to give out site information to parents in report cards, mailings, and voicemail messages. Enlist your local celebrities, cable and radio stations, newspapers, businesses, grocery stores, neighborhood markets, and employers in the effort to get the Summer Food Service Program site information to parents and students.



“When school is out for the summer, kids are too active to think about finding a place to eat a healthy meal. These food service sites located in Southbridge are places where children stop by to enjoy a nutritious meal and take part in some fun and entertainment.”

— Senator Richard Moore, Uxbridge

“The children...greatly enjoy their daily lunch and snack. Most important, we are providing an important resource for children in our community who may not otherwise have a healthy meal.”

— Joey Cuzzi, Piers Park Sailing Center, East Boston



145 Border Street
East Boston, MA 02128-1903
Tel 617-723-5000
Fax 617-248-8877
www.projectbread.org

Free Summer Meals for Kids



Summer Food Service Program

Children and youth age 18 and under can get **free, healthy meals** when school is out through the Summer Food Service Program. This federally funded program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Summer meals sites are located at schools, parks, pools, neighborhood centers, social service organizations, and other local sites throughout many cities and towns in Massachusetts. No registration or identification is needed in qualified areas. Most sites serve lunch, though some sites offer additional meals such as breakfast, snack, or dinner.

The benefits. . .

Many students receive free or reduced-price meals at school. However, when school is out during the summer months, families with tight budgets have difficulty absorbing the additional meal costs. As a result, many students experience hunger and malnutrition during the summer months and return to school at a disadvantage. Students who have access to nutritious meals throughout the summer return to school in the fall ready to learn, and the Summer Food Service Program helps make this possible.

How to get involved. . .

There are many ways to get involved with the Summer Food Service Program in your community.

1. You can become a program sponsor or vendor and provide food to meal sites. Sponsors get reimbursed for their costs by the Massachusetts Department of Education.
2. You can help start a new meal site at a location where children spend time during the summer.
3. You can volunteer at a site and lead recreational activities such as sports or crafts with the children.
4. You can help get the word out about the meal locations to parents and students.

In Massachusetts, only 22% of the children who eat lunch during the school year eat a Summer Food Service Program meal when school is out (Food Research and Action Center, June 2005). There is much more work to do to make sure as many children as possible are eating nutritious meals in the summer!

“The [Summer Food Service] program’s intent is to provide lunch to children who might otherwise not get it during the summer. Good nutrition is essential. When school gets out, those children should not go hungry.”

— Marina Bartley, Waltham
Partnership for Youth

“For two years in a row, we’ve seen a decrease in criminal activity and risky behaviors on the part of the kids participating in the [Summer Food Service] program. The program has created a safety zone—the meal was nutritious, and it offered the kids a social event where they could learn good behavior.”

— Chief Edward Cronin,
Fitchburg Police Department

How Project Bread Can Help You:

Grant money is available from Project Bread for capital expenses—including food preparation and distribution equipment, as well as books, games, arts and crafts materials, sports equipment, and other recreation supplies—to help new sponsors and sites get off the ground and attract children to the program.

Project BreadSM
Feeding people, Nourishing hope