

Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2010

Executive Summary & Implications for Minnesota

The Summer Nutrition Programs, which provide nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children during the summer months, are in trouble and are falling far short of meeting the needs of low-income children. The recession not only has impacted families, it has severely strained state and local budgets, resulting in major cuts in summer schools and youth programs throughout the country. The erosion of programs where food can be served makes it difficult for the Summer Nutrition Programs to respond to the dramatic increase in need. Contrary to the overall trend in federal nutrition programs, in 2009 the Summer Nutrition Programs actually fed fewer children than in the previous year.

If low-income children are going to have access to the healthy food they need during the summer months, the Summer Nutrition Programs must be improved. The current Child Nutrition Reauthorization process gives Congress the opportunity to fix problems in the Summer Nutrition Programs (some of them created by previous congressional budget cuts), and to make targeted new investments that will increase the number of children who have access to nutritious meals during the summer.

This annual Summer Nutrition Status Report is published by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

Key Findings from the Report – July 2009 Data

National Data

- The Summer Nutrition Programs (i.e., the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program combined) only served lunch to 2.8 million children on an average day. The total number of children participating in Summer Nutrition fell by 73,000, or 2.5 percent, from July 2008 to July 2009.
- Only 16.1 children received Summer Nutrition for every 100 low-income students who received lunch in the 2008-2009 school year. The 2009 ratio was a significant decrease when compared to a ratio of 17.3:100 children in July 2008 and 21.1:100 in 2001.
- The story behind the overall numbers shows the impact of the recession on this program. In many states, budget cuts caused school districts to eliminate or reduce their summer programs, resulting in 102,000 fewer students being served by the National School Lunch Program in July 2009 than in the previous year. The losses in this program overwhelmed the gain of 29,000 children achieved by the Summer Food Service Program.
- If every state in July 2009 had reached the goal of serving 40 children Summer Nutrition for every 100 receiving free and reduced-price lunches during the 2008-2009 school year, an additional 4.2 million children would have been fed each day, and the states would have collected an additional \$289 million in child nutrition funding.

Minnesota Data

- In Minnesota, 32,505 low-income children received summer meals.
- In Minnesota, 14.6 children ate summer meals for every 100 children who ate lunch in school year 2008-2009. Minnesota ranked 27 out of 51 states.
- If Minnesota was able to boost participation to serve 40 percent of eligible low-income children, the state would feed an additional 56,786 children and gain \$3,910,273 in federal child nutrition funds.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization and Summer Nutrition – Recommendations for Congress

- Improve the area eligibility test so that more children from low-income families are able to participate;
- Expand to all states the Year-Round Summer Food Pilot, currently only in effect in California, which reduces paperwork and eases administrative requirements for community-based sponsors that serve children during both the summer and after school during the school year;
- Provide grants to sponsors for start-up and expansion costs and transportation of children in order to bring new sponsors into the program and allow existing sponsors to serve more children; and
- Restore reimbursement rates to prior levels before cuts, so that schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofit organizations are able to operate the program without losing money and can provide healthier food.