



May/June: Conducting Outreach and Navigating the Last Minute Scramble

As a sponsor...

Summer is finally here which means that you should be implementing your outreach plan and working out the kinks to your summer nutrition operations that naturally arise at the beginning of the year. Far too often, last minute budget cuts or logistical challenges can sometimes drive sponsors to drop out of the program or significantly scale back their number of summer meal sites a trend that is devastating to families and communities who were told that summer meals would be available to their children when school lets out. If you've made it this far, you are ready to begin your Summer Nutrition Program and it is important to reach out to your state agency or local advocates for assistance to overcome challenges that may arise.

Site Availability

Now is the time to double check that all of your confirmed sites still plan to participate under your sponsorship. If you find that some are rethinking their participation, address their concerns immediately and emphasize the need in the community for them to be summer meal sites. Confirm that the site supervisors you have trained are still willing to fulfill that role and establish with your sites whether they need your assistance in recruiting volunteers.

- **Are any of my sites no longer available?** In reality, some sites may no longer be available to participate for a variety of reasons. In this instance, you should prepare to conduct intense outreach to other potential sites to bring them under your sponsorship and to at a minimum maintain the number of sites you will manage that you have been planning for.
- **Are any of my school-based sites no longer receiving funding?** Many schools, especially in California, find out that they no longer will receive funding for summer school and drop out of the program at this time. Your community partners, anti-hunger advocates, and the California Department of Education may be able to help and should be contacted immediately. The advocacy community also may be able to help by working with the local school district to encourage them to keep certain schools open in very low-income communities that lack alternative sites. School districts also should take into account eligibility for summer meals when determining which schools will house a more limited summer school program.

Three Things to Do NOW to Develop Your Outreach Plans:

- Design and/or order your marketing materials.

- Decide how you will distribute your materials and if any local businesses and relevant organizations will help you disseminate your materials. Ensure schools will have the information they need to let families know about the availability of meals before the school year ends.
- Start marketing your sites with yard signs, door hangers, and flyers throughout the communities surrounding your sites.

Putting Your Outreach Plans into Action

Your outreach plan must now be in full swing to ensure that communities are aware of the availability of the Summer Nutrition Programs in your area and specifically that families are aware of your sites to bring their children to them.

- **How will I advertise my confirmed sites?** Will you have yard signs surrounding the site itself? Will you make local businesses and health centers aware of the nearby site to direct families to? Will you put ads in local newsletters that the sites are now open? The California Department of Education can supply you with individual banners advertising your sites.
- **Who will I distribute my outreach materials to?** Who have you partnered with and who is in their networks that materials could be distributed to? Are you working with the local schools to make families aware of your sites before school lets out for the summer?

As a supporter...

This is a critical time to be working with the sponsors in your community to implement their outreach plans, to finalize the logistical operation of their sites, and confirm that everyone is ready for the summer to begin. Without support, sponsors and sites that applied to the programs may not actually begin them, and communities may not be informed about the availability of summer meals in their area. Supporting this final stage can often ensure that the Summer Nutrition Programs are fully implemented in the communities in which you work.

Sponsor Participation and Site Availability

Assess whether any sponsors or sites are considering dropping out of the program at this time. Communicate with the state agency prior to the application deadline to identify sponsors that have not submitted their application. Reach out to them to determine the reasons causing them to reconsider running a summer nutrition program. Assess whether or not there is a way to provide the sponsor support to keep them in the program.

- **When sponsors cannot continue in the program, which sponsors will be able to fill in the gap?** Advocates especially should be prepared for schools that find out at this time that they will not be receiving funding for summer school that they may drop out of the program in whatever role they were going to fill, as a sponsor, site, or even a vendor. With targeted outreach and encouragement from the advocacy community, schools can be made aware of what roles they can play in the Summer Nutrition Programs even without summer school, such as sponsoring community-based sites or simply vending the meals and snacks to nearby existing sites. Schools can be vital to making the Summer Nutrition Programs have an impact on the needs of communities and should be strongly

encouraged to play a variety of roles for the local programs regardless of the availability of funding for summer school. Contingency plans must be in order to replace the needed services the school was offering the local summer meals operation. Site recruitment can be especially imperative at this time to ensure that all communities will be served by summer meal sites. Other sponsors may be able to take on additional sites at this time. Express to the sponsors you work with early in the planning process that you may be calling upon them to push their capacity a bit at this time to cover any sites dropped by sponsors now leaving the program.

- **Which sites are no longer operating and are there other locations in the community that provide meals?** Sponsors may now be discovering that some of their sites no longer wish to participate. If your efforts to keep these sites in the program are unsuccessful, assist the sponsor in finding new locations where sites can be located and getting these sites approved by the state agency as quickly as possible.

Putting Your Outreach Plans into Action

Your outreach plan must now be in full swing as you assist sponsors in advertising their sites and making your communities aware that the Summer Nutrition Programs are now available to their children.

- **Are the schools sending out information about site locations?** Schools are now required to provide information regarding available summer meal sites, both at the schools and located in the community, to their students before school lets out for the summer. Ensure that schools have accurate information on the nearby sites that will be open and plenty of materials to distribute to their families. Schools can add information to existing communication channels—backpack mail, robocalls, and email listservs. Request that schools do not wait until the very last day before summer vacation to disseminate this information and offer to answer any questions families may have about the sites nearest to their homes.
- **Are we offering community canvassing to sponsors and sites?** Enlist volunteers to go door-to-door handing out flyers and door hangers to surrounding areas of sites. Ask local businesses to hand out information to the customers who have children and may be interested. Make outreach materials available in several languages, depending on the ethnic composition of the area.
- **Will we host a summer food kick-off event?** Hosting a summer food kick-off event is a great way to make your communities aware that the Summer Nutrition Programs are now available. Including the entire family in the event with appropriate games and activities will help let parents know that sites will be a safe and fun place for their children to be throughout the summer months. Consider inviting elected officials to raise the visibility of the event in the media. Create a communication plan for how you will market the programs to any press that attend the event.