



Increasing Summer Breakfast Participation

The federal Summer Nutrition Programs provide funding to serve two meals a day at most sites (with some types of sites being able to serve three meals), but far too many provide just lunch or lunch and a snack. Summer breakfast serves just over half the number of children served summer lunch. Increasing the number of children participating in summer breakfast is an important strategy to reduce hunger during the summer.

Detailed below are promising practices that can help increase the reach of breakfast during the summer, including serving breakfast later in the morning, providing breakfast on weekends, promoting breakfast participation, incorporating activities for children, and maximizing economies of scale. Implementing these strategies will increase participation in breakfast and ensure that children have access to the nutrition they need all day long when school is out.

Serve Breakfast Instead of a Morning Snack

Serving breakfast instead of a morning snack provides children additional food and better supports the financial viability of the program by providing significantly higher reimbursement than the snack reimbursement. Many sites that serve breakfast early in the morning report low participation. However, sponsors have the flexibility to serve breakfast throughout the morning, making it an effective way to increase breakfast participation.

- The city of Denver served breakfast at all of its sites to ensure that children had access to both breakfast and lunch in the summer. Last summer, the city prioritized increasing breakfast participation and worked with its sites to develop a breakfast program that would appeal to children. First, it worked with site coordinators to determine when children usually arrived at sites, and what menu items they enjoyed most. Second, Denver extended the service time for breakfast so that children who arrived at sites later in the morning still had the opportunity to eat breakfast.

Provide Breakfast on Weekends

The Summer Nutrition Programs provide federal funding for meals served on any day of the week at eligible sites, including those served on weekends and holidays. By serving breakfast — in addition to lunch — every day of the week during the summer, sponsors can better meet

children's nutritional needs. Youth-serving and faith-based organizations often run programming on weekends, which can be an easy way to begin breakfast expansion.

- Community Renewal Team (CRT) provided breakfast at 58 sites across the state of Connecticut. Through a referral partnership with a statewide faith-based organization, CRT was able to engage faith-based organizations that were interested in serving breakfast on weekends before their program activities began for the day.
- The Detroit Parks and Recreation Department served nutritious breakfasts and lunches during the week at sites across the city, and then expanded to provide breakfasts and lunches on the weekends during programs and events. By hiring a staff member to cover weekend monitoring, they were able to ensure that children had access to the nutrition they needed all week long.

Promote Breakfast Participation Among Sites

Sponsors that promote breakfast see greater child participation at sites choosing to participate. Including information about breakfast in all communications and outreach is an easy and effective way to increase awareness.

- Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) encourages all sites in Maryland under their sponsorship to serve a summer breakfast, and they work with sites to successfully

implement it. MCPS also leads a countywide workgroup that identifies underserved areas, barriers and challenges, and brings together partners to increase participation working on expanding both breakfast and lunch during the summer.

- The City of Seattle's Human Services Department works closely with Seattle Public Schools to sponsor summer meals at more than 100 sites, and actively promotes serving breakfast during site recruitment and training. The City of Seattle works with its nonprofit partners to help spread the word about the Summer Nutrition Programs to potential sites and the various ways to get involved, including serving breakfast during the summer.
- Maryland saw a large increase in the number of children who received a breakfast during the summer as a result of outreach efforts by sponsors and anti-hunger partners. To maximize meal service and bring in additional reimbursement, sponsors focused part of their expansion efforts on summer breakfast. Successful strategies for increasing breakfast participation included encouraging sites to expand their meal service to include breakfast and to be more flexible on when they offered breakfast. Maryland Hunger Solutions — an initiative of FRAC and a statewide anti-hunger group working to expand participation in the federal nutrition programs — also encouraged youth-serving programs to serve breakfast in addition to lunch or supper in all of its summer meal outreach and promotion efforts.

Incorporate Activities

Many summer sites provide educational enrichment and recreational activities, along with meals, which help children continue to learn and stay safe when school is out. The combination of meals and activities acts as a magnet to draw children to sites and are important when a site provides two meals. Sites without structured programming or summer school can work with community partners to incorporate such free or low-cost activities at sites.

- New London Public Schools (Connecticut) found that sites with programming and enrichment activities saw greater breakfast participation. As a result, the school district used an AmeriCorps VISTA and other volunteers to lead taste tests and other activities at sites that lacked summer school or other structured programming. They also spread the word about programming through additional outreach.

- Colorado Springs School District partnered with outside organizations to run free programming and host book giveaways at meal sites. Sites serving both breakfast and lunch saw greater participation throughout the entire summer.
- Recognizing that good programming is a magnet for children and that it has a large impact on summer nutrition participation, Huntsville Public Schools in Alabama targeted their breakfast expansion to sites that offered structured morning programming and encouraged those that did not have any programming to add free or low-cost activities.

Maximize Economies of Scale

Operating cost-effective Summer Nutrition Programs is an important part of expanding their reach. By serving two meals a day at every site, sponsors increase the number of meals reimbursed and create a better economy of scale that sets programs up for success.

- The Family League of Baltimore City's vendors delivered lunch, along with breakfast for the next day. By delivering both meals at the same time, they were able to cut back on per meal transportation and staff costs. Family League works with their sites to ensure they have adequate storage for milk and fruit.
- To run a more efficient program, the Capital Area Food Bank (Washington, DC) works to reduce food waste by serving child-friendly meals, such as French toast, cereal, fruit, and milk. By working closely with sites to see what meals are well received, and getting accurate counts, the sponsor is able to run a financially viable program. Sites are also able to store and reuse certain menu items if there were fluctuations in participation on a certain day.
- The Pittsburgh Department of Parks and Recreation worked closely with Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) as a vendor to provide breakfast to more than half of the school systems' summer sites. Every day, the school district delivered lunch and breakfast for the next day — an effective way to reduce transportation and staff costs. The two organizations worked closely with sites to ensure they had the proper warmers and storage needed to provide nutritious meals.