

## July/August: Maintaining Momentum in Summer Programs

### As a sponsor ...

After months of planning, you are now in the midst of your summer nutrition program. To ensure that your program will have the greatest impact on the children you are serving, you must maintain momentum throughout the summer months by effectively managing your sites, offering innovative programming, and ensuring that high quality meals are being served at your sites.

**Effectively Managing Sites** — As a sponsor, you are ultimately responsible for each of your sites and the meals they serve participating children. You will be held accountable and likely will not receive the reimbursement for meals served if your sites are not in compliance with program requirements.

- **How are my sites doing?** Analyze your participation data thus far to determine whether the number of children you were anticipating at each site was accurate. Assess whether there is a small change you could make to a site's visibility to increase participation at this time. Ask your monitors whether they are aware of any issues that have come up at the sites and if they think the site supervisors are effectively managing their sites. Review any feedback you have received from site staff or parents about the management of the site. Do any of the sites need additional training or support that you are not currently providing?
- **Are my sites visible and accessible to the community?** Have your sites gained the attention of their surrounding community? What is the daily participation at each site? Can I do anything to increase these numbers (allow more serving days, change serving times, etc.)? Have I asked the community how the site could better serve their children? Consider adding a highly visible game or activity, such as a moon bounce, to easily attract children to the site at this time.
- **Have I conducted my reviews?** Have I been following my original schedule for reviews or have I had to make changes? What were the results of the reviews? Do any issues need to be immediately addressed or resolved?
- **Am I collecting all of the paperwork from each site?** How are my reporting methods going? Does each site accurately report their meal counts and am I able to claim all of the meals they are serving for reimbursement?

**Offering Innovative Programming** — One of the best strategies for maintaining momentum over the summer months with the children who are participating in your summer nutrition program is by offering innovative programming and activities. While not a requirement of the Summer Nutrition Programs, activities that children want to participate in every day will encourage them to keep coming back to your sites.

- How is the programming going? Are the children enjoying their summer? Has there been some programming that's more popular than others? Have I based activities at the sites for the age and interest of the children who are attending?

**Ensuring High Quality Meal Service** — Serving high quality meals increases the likelihood that children will enjoy the meals they receive at your sites and that parents will be satisfied with the food you are offering their children. Once children and families are aware that they can receive high quality meals at your site, they are much more likely to participate throughout the summer months.

- **Is my vendor following the contract?** Have they followed my requests for higher quality meals? Have they successfully implemented any changes I made in our agreement from previous summers? Have they been flexible and reasonable with my sites in terms of number of meals requested and meal delivery times? Am I satisfied with their service?
- **Are the children enjoying the meals?** Are they talking about it with their friends and telling their parents how much they have enjoyed it? Are the menus interesting to them and are we offering them a variety of different foods they like? Are they trying any new foods and enjoying that experience?

### As a supporter ...

Advocates can greatly assist sponsors and sites over the summer months by helping maintain the momentum through continued outreach to make communities aware of the sites and ensure their children are coming to the sites, as well as any ideas for programming to make the sites interesting and fun for the children who attend.

**Maintaining Participation** — Maintaining participation at sites is imperative for the future of the programs in a community so that sponsors want to return year after year.

- **Are any sites being underutilized?** Assess any goals established during the planning process and whether individual sites can manage more children than are currently participating. Are there particular factors about those sites that are deterring participation? Is there anything I can do to help advertise those sites?
- **What other assistance can I provide to the sites to help maintain participation?** Re-engage your partners at the local and state level to share best practices and what is working best throughout other communities. Assist in events throughout the summer, such as establishing weekly themes for sites, offering raffle prizes to children at the end of each week, and securing volunteers from the community to present to the children, such as local fire fighters.

**Offering Innovative Programing** — Advocates can assist in programming by sharing ideas from other sponsors and sites they work with that the children seem to enjoy.

- Are there any programming ideas I can offer the sites? Advocates can help research innovative summer programming ideas happening around the country to implement locally.