



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

May 3, 2012

Dear Community Leaders:

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUMMER MEALS

Often the only nutritious meal a low-income child receives is provided at school. Once summer recess begins, access to those meals ends. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is an excellent way to ensure access to nutritious meals for our most needy students. I urge eligible organizations to join the SFSP and provide nutritious meals to these kids throughout the summer, so their growing minds and bodies will not be hampered by a lack of proper nutrition. Research shows children who fail to engage in high-quality summer learning have unproductive summers, are not physically active, and do not receive proper nutrition, all of which contribute to a phenomenon called summer learning loss. When these children, particularly low-income children, come back to school they fall even further behind their peers, contributing to a persistent achievement gap. This is part of the reason why I started my Team California for Healthy Kids initiative, designed to keep children active and properly nourished throughout each day, in and out of school.

How can your organization help?

The SFSP serves meals to children in geographic areas where at least 50 percent of students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals. The program works by reimbursing agencies that serve nutritious meals to children eighteen years and younger during school vacation. The SFSP operates when schools in a community are on vacation for at least 15 continuous school days or when year-round schools are off-track. The program benefits all children in accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, and is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Eligible sponsors or sites may include schools, camps, Indian tribal governments, private nonprofit agencies, and any municipal, state, county, or local government offices. Sponsors may prepare meals or obtain meals from another SFSP sponsor, public or commercial food vendor, or a school food service department. All meals must meet the USDA minimum meal patterns. Agencies interested in becoming SFSP sponsors must obtain training by California Department of Education (CDE) staff before their applications can be approved. These training sessions are available through mid-May.

To receive training information, learn how to access the online application, or learn how to become an SFSP sponsor, or an SFSP site under an existing sponsor, please visit the CDE Summer Food Service Program Information Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sf/sfspinfo.asp>.

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To find a summer meal site or locate a summer sponsor, go to our interactive map of California Summer Feeding Sites on the Summer Meal Services Sites Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites.asp>.

Still not sure if the SFSP is right for you? Agencies interested in becoming summer food sponsors or sites under an existing approved sponsor may contact any of the SFSP staff below for assistance.

SFSP Staff	Phone Number	Toll-Free Number	E-mail
Dennis Arena	916-324-9073	800-952-5609	darena@cde.ca.gov
Melissa Garza	916-322-5885	800-952-5609	mgarza@cde.ca.gov
Tanya McCrae	916-322-8323	800-952-5609	tmccrae@cde.ca.gov
Mary Thomas	916-327-2220	800-952-5609	mthomas@cde.ca.gov

For additional information, success stories, and tools for running a successful summer meal program, please visit our partners from the California Summer Meal Program Coalition at the California Center for Research on Women and Families Web site at <http://ccrwf.org>.

Thank you in advance for considering what you can do to increase the number of California's children receiving healthy, nutritious meals during the summer months.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

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