

**[BOILERPLATE RELEASE]**

**Will the Children in Your Community Go Hungry This Summer?**

For many children, school breaks are not fun and joyous. They signal a time of loneliness, boredom, and even hunger. For children in low-income neighborhoods, playing outside can be unsafe, watching television fills their day, and skipping meals becomes routine.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) can reverse these conditions and make school breaks a healthy and fun experience for all children. The program can even prepare them for the coming school year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began the SFSP to fill the nutrition gap for children from low-income areas. Many children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals during the regular school year do not have access to these meals during school breaks. Children in an eligible area can go to their school, a park, or another approved SFSP site, and receive a free lunch throughout their school break.

When coupled with a physical and/or academic activity, the site can also provide children a safe and supervised learning environment. Even without an organized activity, children can still benefit from the opportunity to meet with friends or make new ones under responsible adult supervision.

Unfortunately, the program only reaches a small percentage of the children that qualify for the program. During the regular school year, more than 15 million children receive a free or reduced-price meal through the lunch program. In contrast, only 2 million of these children participate in the Summer Food Service Program.

Parents, school administrators, and community organizations are needed to increase awareness of the program and to ensure that qualified communities are being served.

To learn more about this program, concerned community members should call [State Agency name and phone number].

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**EDITOR: Many children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals during the regular school year may continue to receive free and nutritious meals while school is closed for vacation. The Summer Food Service Program fills this widening nutrition gap, but many people are unaware of its availability. Please help us in publicizing our site(s) or with gaining new sponsors in your area.**