

# 47 Ways

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**to Promote the  
Summer Food Program  
in Your Community**



## **Acknowledgments**

Two years ago, California Food Policy Advocates prepared the first edition of “47 Ways to Promote the Summer Food Program in Your Community.” It clearly has filled a long-felt need for easily accessible and practical suggestions with which to expand participation in this very valuable — yet underutilized — child nutrition program. In fact, in 1995, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reprinted the complete text of “47 Ways” and distributed it all over the country.

The response to “47 Ways” has been extremely gratifying, and the continuing requests for copies call for re-publication. This also is a good time to incorporate some of the best new outreach methods SFSP sponsors have told us about since the first printing appeared.

Many people have made major contributions to this edition of “47 Ways.” Special thanks to the other California Summer Food advocates: Sharon Eghigian at California-Nevada Community Action Association, Christy Porter and Frank Tamborello at Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition, and Annette Jewell of Orange County Community Development Council. Cleo Davis, USDA, and Ronna Jakobitz and the new Summer Food team at the California Department of Education’s Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Division have offered valuable suggestions. We always rely upon the key support offered by Mike Haga at Food Research and Action Center and the amazing work of Linda Stone and our other colleagues at Washington Food Policy Action Center. Timothy Feder and Mark Mazziotti have guided Public Media Center’s predictably skillful consultation and design work.

Everyone at CFPA assisted in the preparation of this guide. Claudia Concha-Martinez, Suzy Harrington and Kenneth Hecht were the principal authors of this revision.

## **The Summer Food Program**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is one of the best kept secrets in California. This federally funded child nutrition program provides reimbursement to local sponsoring agencies and organizations which furnish free meals to low-income children when they cannot get them at school. Because it is an entitlement program, there are funds available for sponsors to serve as many eligible children as apply.

Unfortunately, the program is severely underutilized. While more than 1.78 million California children received free and reduced-price school lunches in 1995, no more than 159,084 (only about nine percent) of these same children participated in SFSP. Literally millions of needy children across the state, then, are missing out on good, free meals which they need no less during vacation than when they are in school.

More and more communities are realizing the importance of offering exciting and enjoyable programs — which include Summer Food meals — to their youngsters when they are not in school. Whether these programs feature sports, computers, recreation, mentoring or other valuable experiences, they help children grow and develop in healthy and constructive ways while they are “off track.”

Often, these programs combine the talents and facilities of several agencies in the community — each one doing what it does best. In Salinas, California, for example, the Food Bank for Monterey County is the Summer Food Program sponsor, and the Alisal Union Elementary School District is vending (preparing and delivering) the food. The meals are being served at sites where summer programs are operated by the Salinas Department of Parks and Recreation and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Salinas Valley, two organizations well experienced in providing excellent academic and recreation programs for children in the community.

Whatever program your community chooses, Summer Food Program meals should be built into the early planning so that the kids and their parents can count on appealing and nutritious food as part of the summer — and, thanks to the federal reimbursement, there is no added cost to the community. Summer Food truly belongs in every summer program.

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This short pamphlet, consisting of promotion techniques successful in communities like yours, has been compiled to help you get the word out to all the children in your community who can benefit from the Summer Food Program. It contains a set of suggestions to help you let the right people — children, their families and those who serve kids — know about the program.

This publication will not tell you very much about how SFSP operates; there are other materials that do that. If you want a guide that more fully describes the program, contact California Food Policy Advocates and ask for “School’s Out...Let’s Eat.”

The single purpose of “47 Ways” is to show you that it is possible to let a lot more people know about the Summer Food Program and to help do some good community organizing in the process. The materials mentioned in this pamphlet (a great flyer, a poster, some PSAs, press packets and other items) are available by contacting California Food Policy Advocates. Also be sure to call the resources listed at the end of this pamphlet with any questions or requests for help. Finally, please let us know about any valuable promotion techniques we haven’t included.

We hope this will assist you in reaching the children and families you want to attract to your summer food program. Call us if we can help. Good luck.

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## PERSON-TO-PERSON OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Without question, the most successful form of outreach occurs when friends tell friends directly about a well-run, successful summer food program. This very simple technique should not be overlooked in developing your summer food promotion strategy. Awareness of the SFSP through word-of-mouth can be fostered when you create a popular program, make the program run smoothly and encourage the participating children and their parents to tell as many friends and relatives as they can about your program.

### **Some person-to-person outreach strategies include:**

- 1 Encourage kids to tell friends and teammates at camp, school, church, at the pool, in the neighborhood and in recreation centers about the SFSP.
- 2 Ask parents to spread word of the program by talking with other parents at work, in their community organizations, churches, neighborhoods and at their children's games as well as through relatives and co-workers.
- 3 Arrange for members of the community to go door-to-door in densely populated areas (apartment buildings and housing projects, for example) to tell parents directly about the benefits of the SFSP. CFPA has flyers and door hangers designed for this type of canvassing.

## SCHOOL-BASED STRATEGIES

School-based strategies are successful at reaching children and parents because information about the program can be communicated to them through a source they know and trust. Questions about how the program runs or the dates, times and locations of meal sites may be answered by teachers or school officials directly. Discussion of the SFSP during a school event leaves a lasting impression and encourages parents and children to start planning for summer. Children also may feel more comfortable talking to their classmates about the program once the subject has been mentioned to them all together.

### School-based strategies include:

- 4 Place notices about Summer Food on the monthly lunch menus that children bring home from school. The menus often sit on the family's refrigerator for a month and enjoy great visibility. CFPA and the California Department of Education jointly have distributed camera-ready menu templates to every school in the state, so they are there in your community, ready for whatever information about SFSP you want the kids in your community to have.
- 5 Send someone to the schools prior to their vacation break to speak to children about the Summer Food Program and about any recreational and academic programs with which it may be combined.
- 6 Have a representative speak at PTA and other meetings involving parents in order to encourage them to include the local Summer Food program in their children's summer. Include SFSP notices and articles in PTA newsletters. (The national PTA has passed a resolution supporting expansion of the SFSP and is keenly interested in the program's growth.)
- 7 Persuade a teacher to get his or her students to make eye-catching, colorful flyers and/or posters briefly describing the program, including the dates, times, and place(s) of the program you are sponsoring, appealing both to parents and children. Make it into a SFSP art contest. (Or contact CFPA and we will send camera-ready flyers to you.) Have children carry the flyers home from school just before classes end.

- 8** Ask your local schools to mail flyers directly to students' families.  
Or send postcards (use fluorescent colors) home with the children.
- 9** Display Summer Food Program flyers and posters at school.
- 10** Start or strengthen good academic and recreational programs with which Summer Food can be combined. In cases when the SFSP is attached to another academic or recreational program for children within a limited age range, be sure the outreach material clearly states the applicable ages.

## COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

Community-based outreach strategies provide sponsors with a wide variety of techniques and resources with which to reach large numbers of potential participants. A key advantage of community-based strategies is that, in many cases, the message can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the members of a particular community and provide more specific information as to the dates, times and locations of summer food sites. Additionally, some of these strategies are likely to be seen repeatedly and thus reinforce the message, further encouraging participation in the program.

### Some community-based strategies include:

- 11** Request the cooperation of the county social services department in stuffing a SFSP flyer into AFDC mailings. This will bring word of the program to the precise target group — low-income families with children — at very low cost. CFPA has SFSP flyers for this purpose, and they can be modified to include a local telephone number.
- 12** Put posters up and leave flyers available at such places as: unemployment, food stamp, WIC, legal service, and other public assistance offices, police athletic league facilities, county juvenile probation departments, child abuse prevention organizations, county health clinics, and other agencies serving youth.
- 13** Have speakers and materials describing SFSP at community events such as special library programs, health fairs, and police and fire community relations meetings.
- 14** Meet with the director and staff of the local social services office to discuss the SFSP and the need to promote it. Encourage them to train eligibility workers on referring clients to local sites. Leave with her/him a copy of SFSP sites in the community.
- 15** Display posters and flyers at apartment complexes and housing projects, as well as at laundromats and markets in low-income areas.
- 16** Discuss the program with church officials and ask them to post notices and mention the Summer Food Program during services, emphasizing that it is a positive influence and keeps kids off the street.

- 17** Contact your elected officials and their staff with basic Summer Food information to increase awareness of the program and to let them know where more outreach is needed. State and federal officials may have district or field offices in your community. These offices, as well as municipal and county offices, receive daily requests for assistance from families whose children can benefit from the program. Give them SFSP fact sheets, lists of local sponsors and sites, flyers and posters. Ask them to work with you to arrange a press event where the official can visit a site and voice support for the program. Also ask for help in landing a story about SFSP with the right reporters, papers and stations in your community.
- 18** Insert SFSP notices in community bulletins and newsletters.
- 19** Put up posters and have flyers available at recreation centers, libraries and swimming pools (both public and private).
- 20** Put up notices in day care and other child care centers, as well as women's shelters, and other agencies serving children and parents.
- 21** Put up notices in pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, SHARE sites, and other food distribution sites.
- 22** Talk about SFSP with medical managed care groups, doctors and at low-income clinics and ask the staff to talk to parents and children about SFSP, highlighting its contribution to good health and nutrition.
- 23** Ask the Dairy Council to advertise the program on the back of milk cartons, including a list of local sites or a contact number for more information.
- 24** Place outdoor ads for Summer Food at bus shelters, particularly in densely populated areas and along routes that go through low-income neighborhoods. Display bus cards on routes which go through low-income areas.
- 25** Speak to the manager of a local supermarket about distributing flyers in grocery bags or making them available at the check-out counter.

## ON-SITE STRATEGIES

The use of on-site promotion strategies builds enthusiasm in participants and encourages kids to keep coming back and to bring along their friends. The key to successful on-site promotion is to create a fun, enjoyable atmosphere, where the food program is tied into other activities.

### Some on-site promotion strategies include:

- 26** Distribute flyers to the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP) coordinators in each county to give to their clients. Mail notices directly to parents with utility bills or as a separate mailing.
- 27** Mail notices directly to parents with utility bills or as a separate mailing.
- 28** Pass out information, have a booth or sponsor an event at public and parochial school carnivals, fairs and fund raisers.
- 29** Put up a bold and highly visible sign or banner that will identify your location as a Summer Food site to people passing by. CFPA can help you with the banner design.
- 30** Give away promotional, recognition-building items, perhaps underwritten by local businesses, such as free T-shirts (with program logo and a colorful design), plastic cups with the SPSP sponsor's logo, buttons or prizes on the first day, both to encourage kids to show up and to tell their friends.
- 31** Tie the summer food program together with a summer academic or recreation program to make the lunch program more appealing, convenient and beneficial to parents, kids and sponsors. SFSP is always more successful when it is combined with other activities.
- 32** Kick off the program on the first day with a party involving the whole community. Schedule a pizza party, barbecue or another type of party every Friday to promote awareness of the program and to keep kids excited about coming there throughout the summer. Show a movie or videotape at the site.

- 33** ..... If there is no other organized activity at the site, at least have games available for the kids to play after lunch, so they think of the summer meal program as fun.
- 34** ..... Attract parents to come to the SFSP site for their own reasons, such as literacy training or presentations on nutrition education or household budgeting, and encourage them to bring their children with them.
- 35** ..... Reward kids who bring a friend, thus winning a free dessert, prize or other incentive to bring more friends along.
- 36** ..... Recruit parents to be Summer Food volunteers. This will encourage parents to bring their children to participate in SFSP, ease the children's fears and, at the same time, lower the costs of operating the program.
- 37** ..... Schedule an event at your site with a well-known local figure such as a sports player. Advertise the event with the media in the community.
- 38** ..... Persuade merchants or local farmers to donate free food, such as fruit which often is plentiful in California in the summer, to give away to the families of the kids who come to your site for household consumption. Hold lotteries and raffles with prizes donated by the merchants.
- 39** ..... Plant a small garden at the site for fun and as a device to stimulate nutrition education.
- 40** ..... Have favorite teachers present on the site the first day. This will help to ease the transition, particularly for younger kids.

Working with the media is not as hard as you might think. The SFSP is GOOD news, and many stations and papers are looking for more stories like these. Start with a few phone calls and some basic background information. You may get a lot of help from these folks. If you've never worked with the media before, at least try to get your feet wet. You'll probably be pleased with the results!

### Some media strategies include:

**41** **Radio and TV:** most stations accept written public service announcements (PSAs). It's usually best to keep these short, giving a phone number where people can call locally for more information. Also include the days of the week (for instance "weekdays") the program runs and mention the start and end dates (for traditional summer programs). A typical PSA might say:

*Did you know that kids can get a free, nutritious lunch each weekday while they are out of school this summer? For the location and hours of the Summer Food program nearest you, contact [insert name of local sponsor].*

If you have the resources to prepare a pre-recorded PSA on a cassette tape for radio or a video for television, contact local stations to see if they will run these for you. Your local radio or community television station, local high school or college may even be able to produce the PSA for you for distribution. PSAs should be addressed to the station's Public Affairs Director.

**42** **Newspapers:** contact the 'Community Calendar Editor' at your local papers. Send them information on the SFSP, especially on any planned special events. This section lets readers know of activities they may want to attend. Sometimes the paper will run a slightly larger notice on this page. Ask them to do this with your notice about the SFSP. NOTE: the community calendar editor often wants a four to six week advance notice, so get them the information as soon as possible.

**43** **All Media:** watch for newspaper and television reporters who cover education, children's issues or community issues. If your television station has a "Kids First" or similar campaign, get in touch with the reporter who does most of those stories or with the Public Service

Director.

Call them on the phone and ask if you can bring them some information. For morning papers, the best time to call usually is between 10 a.m. and noon, for afternoon papers, after 2:00 p.m. For television and radio, it's usually best to call early in the morning — before 10:00 a.m. Don't bother after 2:00 unless you have a really hot news story.

When you meet with them, emphasize how photogenic children are. This should help you get a photo in the paper. After you've met with them or dropped off the media packet, make a follow-up call to encourage them to come to visit your site.

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Prepare or assemble a press packet, containing a Summer Food fact sheet, a report on the status of the Program in the state and the local community, a description of your program's operation, an editorial on why the Program is so good (contrasted with the consequences of hunger and a summer with nothing constructive to do), interviews with the kids and program workers, photos and more. CFPA can provide local statistics to include in this packet.

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Focus particularly on local, community-based newspapers, radio and television. These are likely to allow more space and greater detail regarding the program, and these papers are also likely to be read more by people involved in community activities who can further publicize the program.

## 46



Target foreign language newspapers, radio and television. The most common foreign languages in California are:

- |               |              |          |              |
|---------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| 1. Spanish    | 3. Armenian  | 5. Lao   | 7. Cantonese |
| 2. Vietnamese | 4. Cambodian | 6. Hmong | 8. Russian   |

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Appear on public affairs programs on radio and television in late May and June to discuss options for kids, including programs containing SFSP meals.

## RESOURCES

*The Summer Food Program in California is administered by:*

**California Department of Education  
Child Nutrition and Food  
Distribution Division**

560 J Street, Suite 270  
Post Office Box 944272  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720  
Phone: (916) 327-6465  
Fax: (916) 327-3427

*There are four food advocacy organizations in California ready to help you with outreach and promotion and anything else concerning the Summer Food Program:*

**California Food Policy Advocates**

57 Post Street, Suite 804  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
Phone: (415) 291-0282, ext. 107  
Fax: (415) 291-9130  
E-mail: hn6618@handsnet.org  
Hotline (800) 218-FOOD

**California-Nevada Community  
Action Association**

926 J Street, Suite 408  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: (916) 443-1721  
Fax: (916) 325-2549  
E-mail: hn0048@handsnet.org

**Orange County Community  
Development Council**

12640 Knott Street  
Garden Grove, CA 92641  
Phone: (714) 897-6670, ext. 3492  
Fax: (714) 894-5704

**Southern California Interfaith  
Hunger Council (IHC)**

155 N. Occidental Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
Phone: (213) 637-1600  
Fax: (213) 365-0033  
E-mail: hn0035@handsnet.org  
Hotline: (800) EAT-N-GRO

**Coachella Valley Office (IHC)**

1729 E. Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 212  
Palm Springs, CA 92264  
Phone: (619) 823-8381  
Fax: (619) 323-7541  
E-mail: hn6733@handsnet.org

*There is a national organization working to improve and promote the Summer Food Program:*

**Food Research and Action Center**

1875 Connecticut Ave., NW Suite 540  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
Phone: (202) 986-2525  
Fax: (213) 526-7559  
E-mail: hn0050@handsnet.org

**free lunch**



Kids can have free food and fun while school is out this summer with the Summer Food Program. For more information on how to join the program in your area, call the toll-free Summer Food Hotline **1-800-218-FOOD**. No certificate is required.

**free lunch**



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**Coma Gratis**



**¡Coma Gratis!**  
Los niños pueden obtener comida sin costo durante este verano en las escuelas del Programa de Alimentos Verano. Para más información sobre cómo recibir ayuda en su localidad, llame al número gratuito para Coma Gratis en Verano **1-800-218-FOOD**. No se necesita certificado.

Multilingual flyers and posters have been developed to help promote the Summer Food Program in your community.

To find out how to get your copies, call California Food Policy Advocates at

**1-415-777-4422**

or contact us at  
California Food Policy Advocates  
116 New Montgomery Street, Suite 530  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
[www.cfpa.net](http://www.cfpa.net)



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