

# School's Out...

# ...Who Ate?

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**A Report on Summer Nutrition in California**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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# **Executive Summary**

The federally funded summer nutrition programs ensure that low-income children who are accustomed to eating a free, nutritious lunch in school during the academic year do not go without that essential nutrition during the summer. In addition to providing a nutrition safety net for children, the summer meal programs also are a vital component of summer recreation and enrichment programs that keep children off the streets and in structured, supervised, and positive settings during summer breaks. The meals also help families stretch their food budget, a particularly valuable benefit now, with household budgets so strained by rising costs.

Unfortunately, participation in the summer nutrition programs remains chronically low. On any given day in July 2007, fewer low-income children ate a summer lunch than in July 2006. Only 28 percent of low-income children who ate school lunch during the 2006-7 academic year also ate summer lunch in July 2007. In addition to poor participation in these programs, approximately 50 low-income communities (defined, in this report, as school districts with greater than 50 percent of their student body eligible for free or reduced-price meals) around the state do not offer free summer meals at all, resulting in thousands of low-income children who lack access to this important nutrition resource.

Despite the statewide decline in participation, this report highlights a number of strategies in communities that saw an increase in participation and also describes how sponsors can best take advantage of the recent improvements to the Summer Food Service Program in order to expand access, increase participation, and improve meal quality. The report also provides a number of recommendations to policymakers at the federal, state, and local level, including actions for Congress to take as part of the 2009 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization.

Top policy recommendations include:

## Recommendations for Congress and USDA

- 1) Increase reimbursements and funding for local agencies operating summer lunch.
- 2) Lower eligibility requirements from 50 percent low-income areas to 40 percent.
- 3) Improve nutrition in SFSP.
- 4) Simplify summer nutrition administration.

## Recommendations for the California Department of Education

- 1) Target technical assistance and grants to areas without free, open summer meal sites.
- 2) Commend sponsors and vendors providing appealing *and* nutritious lunches.
- 3) Update materials and trainings to encourage optimal nutrition practices.
- 4) Resolve food safety restrictions.

## Recommendations for Local School Boards and Community Partners

- 1) Systematically distribute information with site locations to students and parents.
- 2) Expand role of local school boards to coordinate with local government to improve meal access.
- 3) Community advocates should target areas without sites to initiate summer lunches.

# **Summer Nutrition in 2007: What Do the Data Tell Us?**

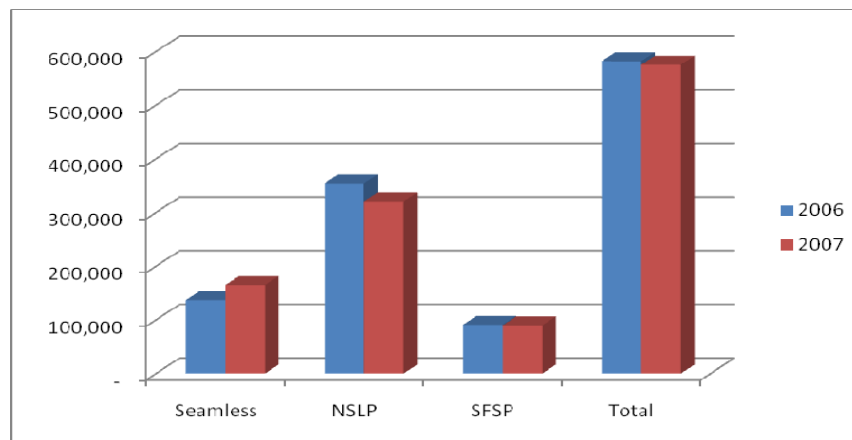
## *Summary*

During July 2007, an average of over 575,000 low-income youth ate a federal and state-reimbursed meal at a school or community site in California every weekday. This represents a slight decline from the previous summer. Although the average daily participation (ADP) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the 2006-2007 academic year by low-income students actually *rose* by just over one percent between the academic years of 2005-6 and 2006-7, the ADP in summer feeding programs *decreased* by just over one percent between July 2006 and July 2007. In other words, the summer nutrition safety net reached fewer children: the percentage of low-income youth who ate a school lunch during the regular academic year that also ate a subsidized meal during the summer fell from 29 percent in July 2006 to 28 percent in July 2007.

## *Details*

Although overall participation in summer nutrition programs fell, when the data are disaggregated, trends reveal programs and counties on divergent paths. Low-income youth are able to eat a federally subsidized meal during the summer through three programs: the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Seamless Summer Option (Seamless) of the NSLP, and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).<sup>1</sup> Although the overall, combined participation in these summer nutrition programs fell, participation in the Seamless program actually rose by over 20 percent while participation in NSLP and SFSP fell by 9.5 and 1.2 percent, respectively.

### **Changes in Participation in Summer Nutrition Programs between 2006 and 2007**



Similarly, individual county performance varied wildly. For example, in 2007, there was a 48 percent increase in participation in Amador County, but a 51 percent decrease in participation in Madera County. For some of the counties with a small low-income population, large annual variations are expected because the appearance or disappearance of a small number of sponsors or sites could dramatically alter overall participation trends. However, the three largest counties all saw a

<sup>1</sup> For more information on these programs, please refer to Appendix A.

reduction in participation last July. The combined summer lunch ADP of these three counties (302,327 in Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Bernardino counties, combined) represents over one-half of the total number of children served statewide (575,419). The combined decline in ADP for these three counties from July 2006 to July 2007 is greater than the statewide decline in ADP for the same period. This suggests that declines in these larger counties largely drive the overall statewide trends in participation and mask the improvements in participation achieved in smaller counties, such as Alameda, Imperial, Kern, Merced, and Santa Barbara.<sup>2</sup>

Even within counties, individual sponsoring agencies or sites may have experienced different trends from their overall county data. In order to provide local examples to accompany county and statewide data on summer nutrition, CFPA contacted summer food stakeholders from around the state to learn about their experiences while serving summer meals in 2007.

A number of factors contributed to the change in participation between the various summer feeding programs as well as between and within counties. Some of the observations include:

- 1) As schools operating on a year-round calendar convert back to traditional academic schedules with June-August summer breaks, participation in NSLP during the summer months also declines. Few of these students find their way to an SFSP site, so overall participation declines.
- 2) Congress made the Summer Seamless Option permanent in 2004. Because of the administrative efficiencies this option allows, more school-based summer food providers transitioned to this program over the past few years, moving their summer school populations onto NSLP Seamless.
- 3) As the cost of living has steadily increased in some areas, low-income populations shift from more expensive locations (such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego) to less expensive areas of the state, outside the urban centers. This shift may drive participation down in some areas and not necessarily up in others since families do not always automatically receive information about sites in their new community.
- 4) Concerted efforts in some communities to offer activities to attract kids resulted in increased participation. In other communities, sponsors coordinated outreach with local social service agencies.
- 5) In some communities, insufficient outreach activities to inform kids and their families about where to go for meals after the summer school session ended contributed to poor participation.

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to Appendix F for a chart with county and statewide data.

## **Access Denied: Communities Lacking an Open Summer Lunch Location**

A new CFPA analysis of state records discloses that many communities in California still lack even a single site where low-income children can go to eat free, nutritious meals during the summer. The following table lists the areas (cities or towns) in California that do not offer **any** free lunch to low-income children on summer vacation, in spite of the availability of federal nutrition funding to provide free meals to these students. (School districts within these areas may offer meals: to special education students, to students attending summer school, or may be in the application process to offer summer meals this year.) Appendix E lists all the school communities that do not offer free summer lunches. The table below lists those areas that have the largest populations of underserved students, 2000 or more low-income students, attending schools in areas which qualify to receive funds to serve free meals to all children in the neighborhood.

Records from the California Department of Education (CDE) also indicate that certain areas in California may offer summer food sites, but the number of needy low-income students indicates that families would likely benefit from additional site locations. For example, the community of Palmdale in Los Angeles County's Antelope Valley has over 13,000 low-income students, but just one open summer food site.

<b>Areas with 2000+ FRP Students with Limited or No Summer Food Access<sup>3</sup></b>				
<b>City</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>District(s)</b>	<b># of Students at 50%+ FRP Schools</b>	<b># of Sites</b>
<b>San Lorenzo</b>	Alameda	San Lorenzo Unified	<b>2,569</b>	no sites
<b>Caruthers</b>	Fresno	Caruthers Unified* Riverdale Joint Unified	<b>2,408</b>	no sites*
<b>Calexico</b>	Imperial	Calexico Unified	<b>6,269</b>	no sites
<b>California City</b>	Kern	Mojave Unified	<b>2,207</b>	no sites
<b>Covina</b>	Los Angeles	Covina Valley Unified	<b>4,123</b>	1 site
<b>Palmdale</b>	Los Angeles	Palmdale Elementary	<b>13,289</b>	1 site
<b>Buena Park</b>	Orange	Centralia Elementary	<b>4,589</b>	no sites
<b>Lake Elsinor, Corona</b>	Riverside	Lake Elsinore Unified	<b>5,254</b>	no sites
<b>Moreno Valley</b>	Riverside	Moreno Valley Unified	<b>20,676</b>	no site
<b>Blythe</b>	Riverside	Romoland Elementary Palo Verde Unified	<b>3,647</b>	no sites
<b>Barstow</b>	San Bernardino	Barstow Unified	<b>2,808</b>	no sites
<b>San Mateo</b>	San Mateo	Ravenswood City Elementary	<b>3,549</b>	1 site

\*Note: Caruthers Unified is applying to operate NSLP Seamless for 2008.

The communities listed above qualify to operate “open sites” because 50 percent or more of the students in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price (FRP) meals, qualifying the school district or local municipal recreation program to receive federal funding to serve free lunches to the entire neighborhood population under 18 years of age. At these sites, all children are allowed to eat meals regardless of their participation in summer school or summer camp.<sup>4</sup>

Targeted advocacy and technical assistance are needed to open summer lunch sites in these communities. Community meetings conducted by USDA, CDE, CFPA, local food banks, and local school food service authorities have generated new sites in San Diego, Santa Rosa, El Centro, Fresno, and other cities. Local meetings ought to be convened in the communities with significant, underserved populations to identify potential sponsors, sites, and vendors.

<sup>3</sup> These tables display an initial assessment of communities that appear to lack free summer lunch sites. CFPA has attempted to verify findings, but there still may be errors. Therefore, the lists are a starting point in the process of identifying underserved areas. Local summer nutrition advocates should contact their school districts to assess the opportunities in their communities.

<sup>4</sup> At “Enrolled Sites”, students need to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but the site does not need to be located in an eligible neighborhood. At Enrolled Sites, eligibility needs to be documented and only qualifying children are allowed to receive meals.

Additionally, there are needy low-income children in communities that do not qualify for open sites. Federal law establishes eligibility to serve free lunches to all children in neighborhoods with 50 percent or more of the local students certified as eligible for FRP meals. With the spikes in food and gasoline prices taxing households, with California leading the nation in home foreclosures, and with the latest self-sufficiency index noting that many California families need \$63,000 annually to make ends meet<sup>5</sup>, it is time to broaden the nutritional safety net to serve families in households not customarily seeking public assistance. A sensible first step is to lower the 50%+ FRP threshold required to operate open sites and offer free meals to students living in neighborhoods with 40 percent certified for FRP meals at school.

### California Public School Students' Eligibility for Subsidized Meals

Total Enrollment	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Total FRPM	Percent FRPM
5,890,847	2,423,981	570,884	2,994,865	50.84%

### Students Enrolled in Schools with 50%, 45%, and 40% FRP Eligibility

F/R Eligibility Threshold	Number of Schools	Enrollment	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Total FRP
50%	5,095	3,082,314	1,916,033	386,347	2,302,380
45%	5,508	3,382,395	2,025,369	419,456	2,444,825
40%	5,949	3,692,801	2,125,615	451,470	2,577,085

Of the three million students who qualify for FRP meals, approximately 2.3 million attend a school in which at least 50 percent of the total student population qualifies for a free and reduced meal. Low-income students have customarily been concentrated in neighborhoods with significant numbers of other low-income students. However, as demonstrated in the table above, there are approximately 275,000 needy students living in neighborhoods near schools with between 40-49% FRP eligibility. Congress ought to change the area eligibility threshold to allow sponsors to open SFSP sites in these neighborhoods.

<sup>5</sup> "California Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard by County". Insight Center for Community Economic Development. Available at: <http://www.insightcced.org/index.php/insight-communities/cfess/ca-sss>.

## **Smart Outreach**

Summer lunch programs only work when children participate. Too few children not enrolled in summer school or summer camp visit open sites for lunch, even though the data indicate there are 1.5 million low-income children eligible for free lunch but not participating in July. With July 2007 participation declines in California's largest counties, it is essential to turn around those trends, in part by opening new sites, in part by retaining participants with high-quality lunches, and in part through providing youngsters and their parents with information about the site locations.

Among the promising partnerships recently formed around the state, this spring, Los Angeles Unified School District convened the first-ever SFSP outreach meeting with City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles to coordinate promotional efforts. These three agencies operate almost three hundred open sites and, for the first time ever, will provide families with consolidated SFSP site information, directing households to the nearest site. The project will utilize the 2-1-1 referral system, as well as the support of the County Department of Public Health, California Food Policy Advocates, and dozens of local social service providers to ensure that families find out about the nearest free lunch site, particularly when summer school ends in late July. Local collaboration across the state is essential to reaching families with this valuable resource.

## **Healthy Seconds: Food Safety and Leftover Lunches**

Many SFSP sites, particularly those operating at parks or small community organizations, struggle with implementing food safety regulations, which limit their ability to share unconsumed foods. Because serving sizes and packaged meals are usually uniformly prepared for youth of all ages, a five year old may not want part of her meal, while a 17 year old eating at the same site might want more than what he is served. Some sites have placed uneaten, unopened food items on a “share table”, which reduces food waste and allows those who are still hungry after consuming their meal to select leftover items. Unfortunately, application of a recent change in California food safety regulations and significant misunderstanding about these regulations has curtailed the popular share tables at some SFSP sites. No evidence of food borne illness or dangerous food service practices in the SFSP generated these changes in policy and practice. Rather, California passed SB 144 in 2006, which made numerous technical changes to the California Uniform Retail and Food Law (CURFL), including Section 114091, which prohibits re-service of any meal item, including packaged products that remain unwrapped.

CDE plans to release a Management Bulletin to clarify these regulatory issues. Over sixty public health authorities across the state visit SFSP sites to inspect facilities and note any deviation from standard food safety and food handling practices. With these new regulations, sites have been instructed to eliminate offering healthy seconds from a share table. CFPA urges CDE and the California Department of Public Health to seek exemptions in the regulations, or legislation if needed, to enable SFSP sites to re-serve food items if stringent precautions are maintained and children’s safety is not jeopardized. Kids and teens ought not to go hungry while extra food goes to waste.

## **Simplified Implementation**

In the waning days of 2007, Congress extended the cost accounting procedures, generally referred to as the “Simplified” Summer Food Service Program, to all states in the country to ensure that children in every community benefit from this popular improvement to summer lunch administration.<sup>6</sup> Prior to this extension, these simplified accounting procedures were limited to 26 states. The goal of “simplified” summer food is “to facilitate and encourage participation by eligible sponsors in order to reach more hungry children in the summer months and other times during the year when they do not have access to school meals.”<sup>7</sup> Because sponsors have consolidated their reimbursement claims and retained greater flexibility and discretion in allocating funds, this goal has been accomplished in several of the states that implemented Simplified on a pilot basis over the last five years.

These simplified accounting procedures are changes that sponsors operating in California can take advantage of during the summer of 2008. Under simplified accounting procedures, sponsors:

- Do not have to report costs to the State agency (CDE, in CA), although they must maintain records on file for the State agency’s review,
- Do not have to categorize costs as “operational” or “administrative”,
- Receive reimbursements based on “meals times rates” without comparison to actual or budgeted costs.

By eliminating the requirement to compare and categorize costs and allowing for the full level of reimbursement, sponsors can reduce their administrative burden, save time, ensure the maximum reimbursement, and spend funds on the most needed expenses. Guidance from both USDA and CDE stress the importance of careful accounting, monitoring, and program management with these simplified accounting procedures.

Because the intention of expanding Simplified to all states is to allow SFSP to reach more students with nutritious meals, sponsors’ savings in both time and fiscal resources resulting from this policy change should be devoted towards efforts to get more kids eating meals. There are three strategies by which this can be achieved: expanding access by adding new sites, increasing participation through more outreach and marketing of existing sites, and improving meal quality to attract and retain participants.

### *1) Expanding Access*

New sponsoring agencies may now find SFSP more attractive due to easier accounting rules and their ability to run the program in a more fiscally sound manner. Additionally, old sponsors that dropped off the program because they lost too much money may discover that the new rules enable their

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<sup>6</sup> Congress signed the “Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act” on December 26, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> “Nationwide Expansion of Summer Food Service Program Simplified Cost Accounting Procedures”. USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. Memo to State and Regional Directors, January 2, 2008. Available at: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Administration/Policy/2008/SFSP\\_01-2008-OS.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Administration/Policy/2008/SFSP_01-2008-OS.pdf).

agency to reconsider sponsoring SFSP. CDE and summer nutrition advocates should aggressively reach out to each of these potential partners.

## *2) Increasing Participation*

Time and resources saved by implementing the simplified accounting procedures and securing full reimbursement can be invested in activities to promote awareness of lunch sites. Results from our informal survey of stakeholders around the state reveal that participation can increase as a result of marketing of the program and outreach to communities. The saved resources can be spent on banners and flyers. Working with local community agencies to heighten awareness that free summer meals are available to local children can help increase participation. In addition, incorporating enrichment activities is a way to attract children to a program including physical activity, fun, and appealing food.

## *3) Improving Meal Quality*

As documented in a 2003 Mathematica report and in several surveys of parents whose children participate in summer nutrition programs, poor meal quality – and the perception of low quality – results in limited and irregular participation among eligible households. If a child eats a partially frozen sandwich, a tasteless apple, or sees the same food daily, they may not return for another meal. In addition to the need to serve attractive and appealing meals, sponsors have the responsibility to serve healthy and nutritious meals. Contrary to popular opinion, these two goals – taste and healthfulness – need not be mutually exclusive. Summer is the height of growing season, when fruits and vegetables are cheap, bountiful, and most delicious. Other helpful ideas are available in [this guide to summer lunch meal quality](#).

USDA and CDE should work with sponsors through one-on-one conversations with sponsoring agencies, written correspondence, and annual training materials to encourage sponsors to invest savings from the new rules in strengthening their summer nutrition programs.

## **2009 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization**

In 2009, Congress is scheduled to renew the federal child nutrition programs, including all summer meals – NSLP, Seamless, and SFSP. This presents a great opportunity for Congress to enact policies and appropriate funding to expand access to, increase participation in, and improve the nutritional quality of summer meals.

When Congress passed this legislation in 2004, policymakers provided the summer seamless option to all NSLP operators, extending a pilot initiated in two California districts nationwide. Additionally, several new pilot projects were started. Pennsylvania received authority to open sites in 40-49 percent FRP rural areas. California implemented the Year-Round Community Snack Program as a pilot project to allow SFSP community sponsors to serve afterschool snacks under SFSP paperwork, reimbursement rates, and monitoring rules. The history and dividends of the California pilot are described [here](#).

Although Child Nutrition Reauthorization is not the only opportunity for policymakers to change to these federal programs (indeed the expansion of the simplified reporting procedures to SFSP as described above was the result of an appropriations bill in 2007), it does provide the most extensive opportunity to review the policy and budgetary challenges limiting program growth. CFPA has surveyed hundreds of California stakeholders, reviewed program data, and conducted interviews with key informants to identify promising opportunities to strengthen the child nutrition safety net.

# **Policy Recommendations**

## *Recommendations for Congress and USDA*

- 1) **Increasing reimbursements to sponsors.** Most agencies operating SFSP still report losing money. Reimbursement rates were cut 10 percent in 1996. With rising food and transportation prices, SFSP needs additional resources to grow and to provide healthier meals.
- 2) **Lower area eligibility requirements from 50 percent FRP to 40 percent.** At least 275,000 low-income children in California live in communities ineligible to operate an open SFSP site, but might have access if Congress allowed sites to operate in 40-49% FRP neighborhoods.
- 3) **Improve nutrition in SFSP.** Congress should require USDA to quickly update meal patterns, training materials, and guidance to sponsors to align summer meals with current nutritional science. There is currently a process underway to revise nutrition standards for NSLP and SBP, which may improve meal quality for NSLP-funded summer lunches. However, SFSP will not automatically be updated in response to these improvements. Obviously, nutrition adjustments must be made in the context of location; many SFSP meals are served in facilities without refrigeration, preparation, or cooking capacity.
- 4) **Simplify summer nutrition administration.** Congress should convert the California snack pilot into a nationwide, community nutrition program by consolidating SFSP and Afterschool Snack Program regulations.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Congress should require USDA to review whether current monitoring and administrative requirements are appropriate to maintain program integrity or are too excessive and cumbersome.

## *Recommendations for the California Department of Education*

While Congress is expected to address SFSP in 2009, the California Department of Education should consider taking several immediate steps to strengthen the summer nutrition safety net:

- 1) Provide more information and technical assistance on summer nutrition resources to communities that are eligible for “open sites” (due to 50%+ FRP eligible student populations) but do not offer open NSLP Seamless or SFSP sites.
- 2) Formally commend sponsors and vendors for providing appealing *and* nutritious lunches. USDA awarded its Sunshine Award to Capistrano Unified in 2007 for improved nutrition. CDE should institute a similar recognition.
- 3) Update training materials to encourage optimal nutrition practices, particularly with regard to vendor contracts.
- 4) Target areas that do not offer summer lunches for priority receipt of start-up grants.
- 5) Resolve food safety restrictions through providing accurate information to SFSP sponsors, local health departments, and if necessary, seeking change in CURFL.

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<sup>8</sup> While not the focus of this report, a related recommendation for afterschool snacks would be that the snack meal pattern be expanded to include a third component, specifically fresh fruits or vegetables, and a commensurately higher reimbursement rate.

### *Recommendations for Local School Boards and Community Partners*

- 1) Before school ends and again before summer school ends, schools should systematically distribute information to participating students and their parents with locations of free lunch sites in the community.
- 2) Local school boards should assume responsibility for summer nutrition in all qualifying areas, undertaking coordination with municipal and county governments and community partners to make meals more widely available.
- 3) Participation increases ought to happen with outreach. Local sponsors and summer nutrition partners should gather information from participants about factors influencing participation and the impact of outreach activities.
- 4) Community nutrition advocates, such as WIC providers, food banks, and social services agencies, should identify areas without sites and convene meetings with the local school district to identify ways to initiate summer lunches.

## **Appendix A – The Importance of Summer Nutrition**

Among low-income families, nutrition problems do not merely center on their ability to afford enough food, but their ability to afford enough healthy and nutritious food. In general, healthier food is more expensive and less accessible to low-income communities. As a result, families in economic hardship often face the problem of both going hungry and becoming overweight, as cheap, calorie-laden convenience foods become the staple of their diet, instead of more expensive, nourishing foods.

Summer Hunger. Among families with children, food insecurity is greater during the summer than in the spring. Research shows that summer programs are important in reducing summer food insecurity. “Food insecurity” is defined as a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or a limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. “Very Low Food Security” (previously referred to as “food insecurity with hunger”) is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food.<sup>9</sup> Annual studies of rates of food insecurity with hunger on the national level show significant seasonal differences between spring and summer.

Data released in June 2007 by UCLA’s Center for Health Policy Research indicate 30 percent of the state’s low-income adults – 2.5 million Californians – struggle with food insecurity.<sup>10</sup> Based on analysis of data from the comprehensive California Health Interview Survey, this report does not directly examine the incidence of food insecurity among children and teens, yet we do know that nearly 7.6 million other people, including children, live in these food insecure households and share with the adult household members’ struggles to put food on the table.

Research confirms that seasonal differences in food insecurity are less in states with greater participation in the summer meals programs. According to the statistical model used in a USDA Economic Research Service study, increasing participation in the summer meals program to a rate of 54 percent – meaning that 54 percent of the low-income students who participated in the school lunch program also participated in the summer meal programs – might eliminate altogether the seasonal differences in food insecurity rates.<sup>11</sup> This evidence is persuasive in both demonstrating the importance of summer nutrition programs and the need to increase participation rates in these programs. It is useful to note that summer meals participation nationally hovers around 20 percent of low-income children who eat lunch at school during the school year also eating a summer lunch.

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<sup>9</sup> Nord M, Andrews M, Carlson C. “Household Food Security in the United States, 2006”. Economic Research Service, USDA, November 2007. Available at: <http://ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR49/>.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison GG et al. “Food Security Among California’s Low-Income Adults Improves, But Most Severely Affected Do Not Share in Improvement”. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, June 2007. Available at: <http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pubID=225>.

<sup>11</sup> USDA, ERS. “Hunger is the Summer: Seasonal Food Insecurity and the National School Lunch and Summer Food Service Program”. Paper presented by Mark Nord at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management annual research conference, Washington, D.C. November 2003.

By contrast, participation in summer nutrition programs in California is at a rate of about 28 percent by low-income children. Much of this margin reflects California's emphasis on summer school (although this is declining, which helps explain the consequent declining participation in summer nutrition programs), where much of the participation in summer food occurs. And, of course, the numbers show that well over one million low-income children and teens are going without the benefits of state and federally reimbursed summer nutrition, reminding us of the challenge to reach full use of the summer nutrition safety net.

Summer Obesity. It is clear that overweight and obesity now pose significant problems to California's children – often the same children who are threatened by hunger and food insecurity. Recent data reveal the scope and magnitude of childhood obesity.

Data from national surveys conducted in 1976 through 1980 and 2003 through 2004 demonstrate that the prevalence of overweight children increased between these two periods. For children aged two to five years, prevalence increased from five percent to almost 14 percent. For those aged six to eleven years, the prevalence increased from 6.5 percent to almost 19 percent. Finally, for those aged 12 to 19 years, the prevalence increased from five percent to over 17 percent. Moreover, certain populations, such as Latinos, African-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, have even higher rates.<sup>12</sup> Rates are also higher among low-income populations. Among children aged six to 19 years living in families with incomes 200 percent over the federal poverty line, over 15 percent were overweight. However, for those living in families below 100 percent of the federal poverty line, the rate was 20 percent.<sup>13</sup>

Given these alarming statistics, it seems clear that all available resources should be enlisted to prevent childhood obesity, as well as food insecurity, and that federal nutrition programs should be the first line of prevention. School vacations are an ideal time to focus on good nutrition: students are less preoccupied by core academic subjects and testing pressures, the growing season for healthy fruit and vegetables is at its peak, and opportunities abound for vigorous physical activity, nutrition's counterpart in the "calories in, calories out" equation.

A recent report in the *American Journal of Public Health* identifies the role summer nutrition and activities play in the obesity crisis. Using data from a national survey of children in kindergarten and first grade, during summer vacation, average Body Mass Index (BMI) grew twice as fast as during the school year. This difference suggests that during the summer, the child's environment is more conducive to weight gain. Moreover, the study also found smaller variation in BMI during the school year which suggests that high (or low) rates of BMI growth are less likely when a child is in school.

The authors find that, overall, overweight, average, and underweight children all exhibit healthier growth during the school year than during summer vacation.<sup>14</sup> The authors suggest that the

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<sup>12</sup> "Childhood Overweight". Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood/index.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> "Overweight among children and adolescents 6–19 years of age, by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin, and poverty level: United States, 1963–1965 through 2001–2004". Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/06.pdf#074](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/06.pdf#074).

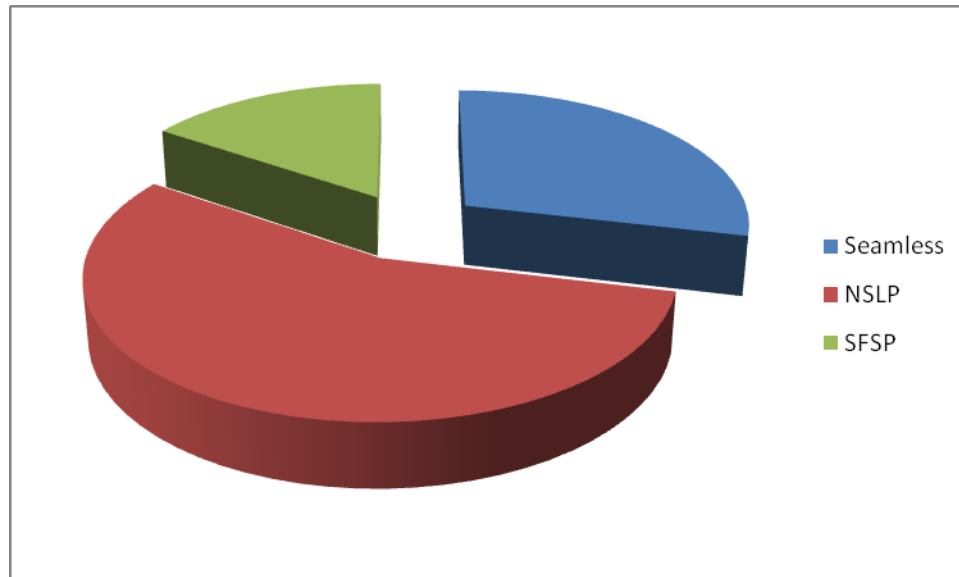
<sup>14</sup> Von Hippel, PT, et al. "The Effect of School on Overweight in Childhood: Gain in Body Mass Index During the School Year and During Summer Vacation". *American Journal of Public Health*, April 2007, Vol. 97, No. 4.

relatively unstructured summer environment allows children to be more sedentary and eat more unhealthy foods. While the authors of the article do not directly mention summer food programs, one can easily see the role that they can and should play in improving the health of children during the months when school is out of session.

## **Appendix B – Summer Nutrition Options**

The best public policy response to obesity and hunger during summer months is easily accessible, appealing, and nourishing meals served at robust summer programs when school is out. There are several programs that aim to feed low-income children during the summer.

**Proportion of Different Summer Meal Programs in California**



First, the **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**, the country's oldest child nutrition program, continues to operate in the summer months at year-round schools and during summer school. However, as year-round schools in California begin to revert back to traditional academic calendars with a June-August summer recess, participation in NSLP has declined.

Second, many schools serve lunch during summer school through the **Summer Seamless Option**, a streamlined program developed through a pilot program in California in 2001. The Summer Seamless Option offers appealing simplicity and administrative cost-savings that encourage schools to operate the program. The Option allows schools where more than 50 percent of the children are certified eligible for free or reduced-price meals to use the exact same paperwork, recordkeeping, accounting, and claiming procedures as the National School Lunch Program. In return, schools must open the cafeteria to children from the surrounding community even if they are not enrolled in summer school. Districts receive the NSLP free reimbursement rate for all meals. State law requires all schools to serve meals during summer school sessions. However, this requirement can be waived if certain conditions are met.

The third program, originally designed for children who attend schools with a traditional June through August summer break and who do not participate in summer school, is the **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**. SFSP sponsors, such as Parks and Recreation departments and Boys and Girls Clubs, receive payments from USDA for serving healthy meals and snacks to children and teenagers, 18 years and younger, at approved sites, such as parks and community centers in

low-income areas.<sup>15</sup> Several California school districts continue to operate SFSP because of the slightly higher reimbursement rate differential. Summer Food Service Programs run by community-based organizations are generally connected to enrichment, recreation and other structured activities.

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<sup>15</sup> Areas where 50% or more of the children attending local schools are certified as eligible for free or reduced price school meals are classified as low-income. In the 2008-9, free or reduced price meals are available to children living in households with incomes below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, under \$35,560 annual income for a family of three.

## **Appendix C – Reimbursement Rates**

The reimbursement rates below reflect those for July 2007.

### **Federal Reimbursement for the National School Lunch Program**

	<b>Free</b>	<b>Reduced-Price</b>	<b>Paid</b>
<b>Agencies that served less than 60% free/reduced-price lunches in 2005-06</b>	\$2.47	\$2.07	\$0.23
<b>Agencies that served 60% or more free/reduced-price lunches in 2005-06</b>	\$2.49	\$2.09	\$0.25

### **State Meal Reimbursement for NSLP**

	<b>Free</b>	<b>Reduced-Price</b>
<b>Public Educational Agencies</b>	\$0.2195	\$0.2195
<b>All Other Eligible Agencies</b>	\$0.1634	\$0.1634

## Summer Food Service Program<sup>16</sup>

### Operating Costs

<b>Meal Type</b>	<b>Maximum Reimbursement</b>
<b>Breakfast</b>	\$1.51
<b>Lunch/Supper</b>	\$2.64
<b>Supplements</b>	\$0.61

### Administrative Costs

<b>Meal Type</b>	<b>Rural and All Self-preparations Sites Maximum Reimbursement</b>	<b>Vended Urban Sites Maximum Reimbursement</b>
<b>Breakfast</b>	\$0.150	\$0.120
<b>Lunch/Supper</b>	\$0.275	\$0.230
<b>Supplements</b>	\$0.075	\$0.060

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<sup>16</sup> Due to the expansion of "Simplified" nationwide, SFSP reimbursements are no longer divided into operating and administrative after January 1, 2008.

## **Appendix D – Methodology for Identifying Locations without Summer Food**

- 1) Identify schools with 50 percent or more free/reduced-price eligible (FRP) student populations. This eligibility threshold is the measure used to qualify a specific neighborhood to offer an open summer food site.

Only school districts with approximately 500 or more FRP students in 50+ percent FRP eligible schools were identified. School districts which exclusively contain high schools were also excluded. These two exclusions were made because it is generally not considered feasible to serve especially low numbers of students or high school age students.

- 2) Identify the cities that do not offer summer food sites to low income students.

Preliminary summer food sites list 2008 available from the CDE:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites08.asp>

The location of schools in specific district is available in the California School Directory:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/index.asp>

- 3) Cities with school districts which operated on year round schedules were identified and eliminated from the target lists. Those schools with year round enrollment serve low-income students meals during summer months through the National School Lunch Program as a part of the normal school calendar.
- 4) Double checking and verification via e-mail and phone.

### ***Potential Sources of Error***

- 1) Information Source Error: Certain sites may not be listed in the summer food site directory. Certain districts may not be listed on the year round school list.
- 2) Human Error: Efforts were taken to verify the cities listed. However, cross-checking procedures cannot absolutely rule out human error due to the large number of districts, schools, and summer food sites.
- 3) Data Year Alignment: The most current data were used for all measures, but changes between years may have produced errors. The FRP eligibility data are from early 2007, the preliminary summer food site list is from Spring 2008, and the year round enrollment data are from 2006.

## **Appendix E – Areas Not Offering Summer Food<sup>17</sup>**

COUNTY	CITY	DISTRICT
Alameda	San Lorenzo	San Lorenzo Unified
Colusa	Colusa	Colusa Unified
Colusa	Arbuckle	Pierce Joint Unified
Colusa	Grimes	Pierce Joint Unified
Fresno	Caruthers	Caruthers Unified,* Riverdale Joint Unified
Humboldt	Petrolia	Mattole Unified
Imperial	Calexico	Calexico Unified
Kern	Kernville	Kernville Union Elementary
Kern	California City	Mojave Unified
Kern	Rosamond	Southern Kern Unified
Lake	Clear Lake	Konocti Unified
Lake	Lower Lake	Konocti Unified
Lake	Upper Lake	Upper Lake Union Elementary
Los Angeles	Paramount	Paramount Unified
Merced	Santa Nella	Gustine Unified
Merced	Gustine	Gustine Unified
Merced	Planada	Planada Elementary
Orange	Buena Park	Centralia Elementary
Orange	Newport Beach	Newport-Mesa Unified
Orange	Corona Del Mar	Newport-Mesa Unified
Orange	Huntington Beach	Ocean View
Orange	Lake Forest	Saddleback Valley Unified
Orange	Mission Viejo	Saddleback Valley Unified
Riverside	Palm Desert	Desert Sands Unified
Riverside	Lake Elsinor	Lake Elsinore Unified
Riverside	Corona	Lake Elsinore Unified
Riverside	Blythe	Romoland Elementary, Palo Verde Unified
Riverside	Moreno Valley	Moreno Valley Unified
Sacramento	Folsom	Galt Joint Union Elementary
San Bernardino	Barstow	Barstow Unified
San Bernardino	Hesperia	Hesperia Unified
San Bernardino	Lucerne Valley	Lucerne Valley Unified
San Bernardino	Phelan	Snowline Joint Unified
San Bernardino	Pinon	Snowline Joint Unified
San Bernardino	Yucaipa	Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified
San Bernardino	Calimesa	Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified
San Diego	Lakeside	Lakeside Union Elementary

<sup>17</sup> Data are accurate as of October 2007

COUNTY	CITY	DISTRICT
San Luis Obispo	Grover Beach	Lucia Mar Unified
San Luis Obispo	Nipomo	Lucia Mar Unified
San Luis Obispo	Oceano	Lucia Mar Unified
San Mateo	East Palo Alto	Ravenswood City Elementary
San Mateo	San Mateo	Ravenswood City Elementary
Santa Clara	Milpitas	Milpitas Unified
Santa Clara	Morgan Hill	Morgan Hill Unified
Sutter	Live Oak	Live Oak Unified
Tehama	Los Molinos	Los Molinos Unified
Ventura	Simi Valley	Simi Valley Unified
Yolo	Winters	Winters Joint Unified

*\*Note: Caruthers Unified is applying to participate in Seamless*

## Appendix F – 2007 Summer Nutrition Program Data

COUNTY	FRP ADP of NSLP During 2006-2007 School Year	ADP of Seamless Lunch Meal in July 2007	FRP ADP OF National School Lunch Program in July 2007	ADP of SFSP in July 2007	Total ADP of All Summer Foods in July 2006	Total ADP of All Summer Foods in July 2007	% Getting FRP Meals During School Year Who Also Get Summer Meals	County Rank (1=Worst Utilization by Eligible Children)	% Change in Participation
ALAMEDA	52,008	6,637	2,911	3,030	11,898	12,578	24.2%	37	5.7%
ALPINE	65	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
AMADOR	877	0	114	0	77	114	13.0%	17	48.1%
BUTTE	11,606	446	715	4,146	5,164	5,307	45.7%	52	2.8%
CALAVERAS	1,442	72	663	0	581	735	51.0%	53	26.5%
COLUSA	2,199	0	59	0	59	59	2.7%	7	0.0%
CONTRA COSTA	36,186	8,543	1,818	410	10,430	10,771	29.8%	46	3.3%
DEL NORTE	1,501	241	39	0	387	280	18.7%	26	-27.6%
EL DORADO	4,330	0	627	96	671	723	16.7%	24	7.7%
FRESNO	90,273	8,401	7,090	2,333	18,633	17,824	19.7%	29	-4.3%
GLENN	2,657	0	23	0	29	23	0.9%	3	-20.7%
HUMBOLDT	5,955	0	221	541	826	762	12.8%	16	-7.7%
IMPERIAL	17,549	1,337	1,584	1,521	3,826	4,442	25.3%	40	16.1%
INYO	768	0	53	60	145	113	14.7%	19	-22.1%
KERN	76,126	6,611	6,409	206	10,165	13,226	17.4%	25	30.1%
KINGS	11,462	1,072	129	569	1,923	1,770	15.4%	20	-8.0%
LAKE	4,240	108	201	0	453	309	7.3%	10	-31.8%
LASSEN	1,361	0	11	0	16	11	0.8%	2	-31.3%
LOS ANGELES	596,797	40,964	127,306	49,952	225,093	218,222	36.6%	49	-3.1%
MADERA	13,505	160	959	0	2,321	1,119	8.3%	11	-51.8%
MARIN	4,090	432	490	0	771	922	22.5%	34	19.6%
MARIPOSA	632	0	65	0	49	65	10.3%	15	32.7%
MENDOCINO	5,365	870	82	102	1,331	1,054	19.6%	28	-20.8%
MERCED	28,628	4,317	2,969	0	6,269	7,286	25.5%	41	16.2%
MODOC	809	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
MONO	474	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
MONTEREY	28,896	5,213	1,538	547	7,875	7,298	25.3%	39	-7.3%
NAPA	5,163	153	73	0	204	226	4.4%	8	10.8%
NEVADA	1,538	0	106	0	87	106	6.9%	9	21.8%
ORANGE	140,354	5,645	17,350	6,485	29,935	29,480	21.0%	30	-1.5%

COUNTY	FRP ADP of NSLP During 2006-2007 School Year	ADP of Seamless Lunch Meal in July 2007	FRP ADP OF National School Lunch Program in July 2007	ADP of SFSP in July 2007	Total ADP of All Summer Foods in July 2006	Total ADP of All Summer Foods in July 2007	% Getting FRP Meals During School Year Who Also Get Summer Meals	County Rank (1=Worst Utilization by Eligible Children)	% Change in Participation
PLACER	8,120	411	453	208	1,041	1,072	13.2%	18	3.0%
PLUMAS	665	0	67	0	62	67	10.1%	13	8.1%
RIVERSIDE	147,021	12,029	22,200	1,009	33,422	35,238	24.0%	36	5.4%
SACRAMENTO	80,587	6,013	13,810	3,736	22,587	23,559	29.2%	45	4.3%
SAN BENITO	3,382	105	622	0	646	727	21.5%	31	12.5%
SAN BERNARDINO	140,676	1,668	37,015	511	39,421	39,194	27.9%	44	-0.6%
SAN DIEGO	142,438	10,749	32,414	1,748	47,125	44,911	31.5%	48	-4.7%
SAN FRANCISCO	18,653	2,197	419	5,313	8,808	7,929	42.5%	51	-10.0%
SAN JOAQUIN	51,724	5,798	14,348	547	24,556	20,693	40.0%	50	-15.7%
SAN LUIS OBISPO	7,585	0	1,269	157	1,201	1,426	18.8%	27	18.7%
SAN MATEO	20,515	1,593	1,640	102	3,110	3,335	16.3%	22	7.2%
SANTA BARBARA	22,768	758	1,861	963	3,095	3,582	15.7%	21	15.7%
SANTA CLARA	58,085	9,341	4,244	194	14,271	13,779	23.7%	35	-3.4%
SANTA CRUZ	10,403	4,938	701	775	6,594	6,414	61.7%	54	-2.7%
SHASTA	9,504	679	289	0	1,123	968	10.2%	14	-13.8%
SIERRA	109	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
SISKIYOU	2,094	0	14	32	51	46	2.2%	5	-9.8%
SOLANO	17,061	4,310	942	0	4,710	5,252	30.8%	47	11.5%
SONOMA	17,552	1,949	743	1,231	2,786	3,923	22.4%	33	40.8%
STANISLAUS	35,891	2,816	5,301	1,340	8,943	9,457	26.3%	42	5.7%
SUTTER	7,014	0	16	0	0	16	0.2%	1	N/A
TEHAMA	4,699	0	85	0	69	85	1.8%	4	23.2%
TRINITY	762	197	13	0	184	210	27.6%	43	14.1%
TULARE	43,346	4,037	1,750	1,305	6,763	7,092	16.4%	23	4.9%
TUOLUMNE	1,737	0	42	0	31	42	2.4%	6	35.5%
VENTURA	40,384	2,705	5,976	88	9,044	8,769	21.7%	32	-3.0%
YOLO	9,103	1,178	484	576	2,517	2,238	24.6%	38	-11.1%
YUBA	6,706	159	385	26	509	570	8.5%	12	12.0%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>2,055,440</b>	<b>164,852</b>	<b>320,708</b>	<b>89,859</b>	<b>581,887</b>	<b>575,419</b>	<b>28.0%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>