



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**TOM TORLAKSON**

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 11, 2013

Dear Community Leaders:

### **IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUMMER MEALS**

Often the only nutritious meals received by low-income children are at school. Once summer recess begins, the access to those meals ends. 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, which is designed to keep children active and properly nourished throughout each day, in and out of school.

How can your organization help?

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is an excellent way to ensure that nutritious meals continue for our most needy students. I urge organizations to join the SFSP and provide meals to these kids throughout the summer so their growing minds and bodies will not be hampered by the lack of proper nutrition.

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 in the community 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 based on 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 have their applications approved and attend mandatory training by California

Department of Education (CDE) staff before becoming an SFSP sponsor. These training sessions are available through April each year.

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

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

A Summer Food Sponsor brochure is also available with more information on the CDE Summer Food Service Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sf/mqmb.asp#resources>. If your organization is not available to help this year, please share this information with partners in your community.

Still not sure if the SFSP is right for you? Agencies interested in becoming summer food sponsors may contact any of the SFSP staff below for assistance.

SFSP Staff	Phone Number	Toll-Fee Number	E-mail
Melissa Garza	916-322-5885	800-952-5609	<a href="mailto:mgarza@cde.ca.gov">mgarza@cde.ca.gov</a>
Dennis Arena	916-324-9073	800-952-5609	<a href="mailto:darena@cde.ca.gov">darena@cde.ca.gov</a>
Augie Aguilar	916-327-5865	800-952-5609	<a href="mailto:auaguilar@cde.ca.gov">auaguilar@cde.ca.gov</a>
Tanya McCrae	916-322-8323	800-952-5609	<a href="mailto:tmccrae@cde.ca.gov">tmccrae@cde.ca.gov</a>

For additional information, success stories, and tools for running a successful summer meal program, please visit the California Summer Meal Program Coalition Web site at <http://www.summermealcoalition.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