



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**TOM TORLAKSON**

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

January 17, 2014

Dear County and District Superintendents and Direct-Funded Charter School Administrators:

### **SCHOOLS HELPING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SUMMER MEALS**

The news regarding America's hunger crisis continues to be dismal. Recent cuts to the national Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will significantly increase the difficulty for low-income families to afford and provide adequate meals for their families nationwide. In California, there are at least four million low-income individuals struggling with food insecurity on a daily basis, many of them children. During the school year, low-income children are provided free or reduced-price meals through School Nutrition Programs (SNP). During the summer recess, these same children often miss daily nutritious meals and intellectual stimulation and end up lagging behind their peers when school starts.

Research has proven that children's mental alertness and cognitive development improves when they consume nutritious meals. Children who eat nutritious meals and participate in safe activities during the summer recess are more creative and productive in school and at home. One of the core values of the Team California for Healthy Kids campaign is for active participation in federal child nutrition programs, including summer meal programs. Summer meal programs enhance these enrichment activities, which helps improve student attendance and engagement, and helps to combat childhood obesity. This is why I am encouraging all California school districts to make summer meals available and easily accessible to all children and youth in their surrounding communities.

#### **Summer Meal Programs**

The California Department of Education (CDE) administers two summer meal programs that provide nutritious meals for disadvantaged children, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Feeding Option (SSFO). Despite rigorous outreach efforts, we continue to see reductions in summer feeding sites throughout many California school districts. Such programs are vital in low-income areas, where children often rely on free or reduced-price school breakfasts and lunches for their nutrition. We need your help to turn this around! These programs are extremely important and need to become more accessible to our students so that they may thrive.

## What Can You Do?

- **Sponsor a summer meal program.** Turn your schools that are not hosting summer school into summer meal sites.
- **Become a site.** If you would like to get involved on a smaller scale, you can assist by serving meals at one of your sites to the children in your community as a summer meal site.
- **Operate as a summer meal vendor.** Many schools coordinate with recreation and community organizations to provide their students with summer meals in safe settings when local schools close for the summer. You can help expand access to summer meal programs by supporting operators at sites throughout the community as a food service vendor.
- **Get the word out.** Send out letters and/or e-mail notifications to parents during the first week in June informing them where and when summer meal sites will be operating nearby. Recently enacted federal law (the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010) requires that school food authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program distribute information to parents regarding the availability and location of summer food service program meals.
- **Volunteer your time.** Encourage your teachers to volunteer their time over the summer months and assist with summer learning programs in conjunction with operating a summer meal program. Help close the achievement gap attributed, at least in part, to cumulative learning loss during the summer recess.

## Resources

The CDE has created an interactive Web page with a map of California that lists summer meal sites. You may find this map on the CDE Food Programs Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites.asp>.

Still not sure which summer option is best for your district or school? Please visit the CDE Summer Food Service Web page <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sf/> for general information about our summer programs.

### Other Support

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 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.

If you have questions regarding the SFSP, please contact one of the Summer Food Specialists in the Nutrition Services Division:

Summer Food Specialist	Phone Number	Toll-Free Phone 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:auaquilar@cde.ca.gov">auaquilar@cde.ca.gov</a>
Vincent Keene	916-322-8319	800-952-5609	<a href="mailto:vkeene@cde.ca.gov">vkeene@cde.ca.gov</a>

If you have any questions regarding the SSFO, please contact your SNP County Specialist. The SNP County Specialist list is available in the CNIPS Download Forms section, titled as "Caseload SNP." You may also contact an SNP Office Technician by phone at 916-322-1450, 916-322-3005, or 800-952-5609.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

TT:vk

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