

# Summer Feeding



Many students, especially those from low-income families, experience a “summer slide” in learning because of increases in hunger over the break. Summer feeding programs combat this by providing high-quality meals to children and teens 18 years or younger.

## Why is summer feeding important?

Summer feeding programs help combat summertime food insecurity, weight gain from unhealthy foods and summer learning loss.<sup>1</sup> With the facilities, equipment and staff, schools can easily become approved, federally reimbursable summer feeding sites.

Paired with enrichment activities, like recreational sports, art camps or reading programs, summer feeding programs can make incremental differences in students’ hunger, weight and educational status.



### Provide Much-Needed Nutrition to At-Risk Students

On average, summer feeding programs can reduce the number of children experiencing very low food insecurity by one-third.<sup>2</sup>



### Promote Healthy Physical and Mental Growth for Students

Without access to nutritious meals, many low-income kids turn to inexpensive, unhealthy foods, causing them to gain weight 2-3 times faster during the summer than during the school year.<sup>3</sup>



### Helps Combat Summer Learning Loss

Summer nutrition is closely tied to summer learning loss. Stopping the summer slide among kids from low-income families could save up to \$50.6 billion in reteaching costs.<sup>3</sup>

**“We love summer food service. We work with our district and community groups to serve meals where other groups already have programs, such as summer school or the community library. We’re also not afraid to adjust our meals during the summer. If a site isn’t attracting kids, we work with the state to adjust, close or open a site. We usually serve about 2,500 breakfasts and 5,500 lunches in a summer.”**

– Krista Neal, Child Nutrition Director  
Stillwater Public Schools, Stillwater, Oklahoma





# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Q Why is summer feeding important to your community?**

**A** Children who miss school breakfast and lunch are more likely to be sick, absent or tardy, disruptive in class and inattentive. They also score lower on achievement tests. Summer feeding programs provide an opportunity to continue a child's physical and social development while providing nutritious meals during long vacation periods from school. This continuous nutrition and development helps at-risk children return to school nourished and ready to engage in a new year of learning.

## **Q What sites can operate the program?**

**A** Individual states approve school feeding sites as open, enrolled or camp sites.

- Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, making them eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Meals are served free to any child at the open site.
- Enrolled sites provide free meals to children enrolled in an activity program at the site where at least half of them are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
- Camp sites may also participate in summer feeding. They receive payments only for the meals served to children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

## **Q Who is eligible to receive summer meals, and how many days can they participate?**

**A** Children age 18 and younger may receive free meals and snacks through the Summer Feeding Program. Meals and snacks are also available to persons with disabilities who are over age 18. At most sites, children receive either one or two reimbursable meals each day. Camps and sites that primarily serve at-risk or migrant children may be approved to serve three meals a day.

More questions?  
Reach out to your Dairy MAX [School Wellness Consultant](#).

### References:

1. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-summer-nutrition-report-2019.pdf> 2. [http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/summer-hunger-is-too-expensive-to-ignore\\_1.pdf](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/summer-hunger-is-too-expensive-to-ignore_1.pdf) 3. [http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Summer%20Nutrition%20Program%20Social%20Impact%20Analysis\\_1in7.pdf](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Summer%20Nutrition%20Program%20Social%20Impact%20Analysis_1in7.pdf)