



Media Release

Contact:

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For Immediate Release

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DHS seeks more Summer Food Service Program sponsors to feed children

Schools, non-profit agencies or government entities have until June 15 to apply to serve as sponsors of sites that will provide meals for children in the 2011 Summer Food Service Program in Arkansas. The three-month program is administered by the Child Nutrition Program of the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

There is no cost for organizations to serve as sponsors in the program. Once approved, organizations may receive an upfront payment of up to 65 percent of their projected budget for the program. All sponsors receive training before starting the program to learn how to plan, operate and monitor a successful food service program. Sponsors submit claims and are reimbursed weekly.

Last year, Arkansas' Summer Food Service Program, which is administered by DHS, served 1.2 million meals at 349 sites across the state. The program reimbursed sponsors more than \$3.7 million. Even with those numbers and growing participation in the program, Curtis Curry, administrator for the Child Nutrition Program at DHS, estimates that it reaches only about 12 percent of eligible children in the state.

"This is one of the few federal programs that does not have a spending cap, so we can serve as many children as sign up," Curry said. "Ideally, we want to reach 100 percent of the eligible children."

More than 279,000 public school children in Arkansas are eligible for the Summer Food Service Program that provides free meals for children at risk of hunger during June, July and August.

A school or school district is eligible to participate in the program if more than 50 percent of its children are eligible to receive free or reduced-cost lunches during the regular school year. That

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Summer food service program -2-2-2

determination is made by the Department of Education based on information provided by a student's parent or guardian.

So far, 116 providers have been approved to serve meals at 360 sites this summer. Curry expects that number to grow to nearly 170 sponsors and as many as 500 sites across Arkansas.

Recent growth in the program has been credited in part to Governor Mike Beebe's *No Kid Hungry Campaign*, which has stepped up efforts to attract more sponsors of this under-utilized program. Additionally, the DCC/ECE Child Nutrition staff has held community meetings and worked with the Arkansas Department of Education and other organizations to spread the word about the program. Despite these efforts, there still were 27 Arkansas counties last year, and as many as 20 so far this year, where no organization has applied to serve as a sponsor. It is likely children in those counties are at risk of hunger and eligible to receive free meals. These summer feeding programs fill the gap for families that depend on free and reduced price breakfast and lunch programs during the school year to meet the daily nutrition needs of their children.

"Good childhood nutrition is important to proper growth and learning. That's why the federal government thinks this is important enough to fund this program," Curry said. Sites may serve up to two meals per day and may choose from breakfast, lunch, a snack or supper. Each meal served must meet USDA nutritional guidelines.

For more information on how to serve as a sponsor for the Summer Food Service Program in Arkansas, contact the Special Nutrition Program at the Arkansas Department of Human Services at 1-800-482-5850, at 501-682-8869 or visit the special nutrition website at <https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dccece/snp>. Parents can also locate Summer Food Service Programs in their area by using the search tool on the website.

**** Moody Chapel is holding a kick-off tomorrow for its Summer Food Service Program:**

Summer Food Kick-Off
June 10, 2011 10am-1:00pm
Moody Chapel
5630 Mabelvale Pike
Little Rock, AR

Rev. Hezekiah Stewart
378-7615 or 378-0176