



Media Release

Contact:

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Providers Needed for Arkansas Summer Food Service Program

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is seeking schools, nonprofit organizations and government agencies that are willing to provide children with nutritious meals and snacks during the summer months as part of the agency's Summer Food Service Program.

The Summer Food Service Program begins when the regular school year ends and the Summer Food Service Program ends when the new school year begins.

This 100 percent federally-funded program was created to ensure low-income children who receive free or reduced lunches during the school year don't go hungry when school is not in session.

Last year, about 221 providers sponsored almost 1,300 sites across Arkansas and served more three million meals to children.

Unfortunately, the last year's program reached only about 15 percent of the children who are eligible for free or reduced lunches during the school year, said William "Buster" Lackey, program administrator for the DHS, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education's Health and Nutrition Program.

Lackey is also concerned that three counties in Arkansas did not have a Summer Food Service Program for children last year. Those counties were Baxter, Stone and Newton.

"Having a SFSP provider in every county is crucial," Lackey said. "We have children out there who may be going hungry; we just need a way to get food to them. That's where all of the providers who are eligible to participate come in. The schools, private non-profit organizations, and government agencies in these counties are the perfect places for children to access the program in their community."

Lackey said good nutrition is essential for childhood growth and development of our children all year long and that the meal service is really needed in the summer months.

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Providers are needed to oversee the production and distribution of the food at sites like schools, playgrounds and churches. Organizations that qualify to sponsor a program will receive funds to pay for meals and snacks for the children. All sponsors will receive training on how to complete the application and the USDA regulation training before starting their program. This part of the training will teach them how to plan, operate and monitor a successful food service program. Sponsors will learn how to submit claims for reimbursable meals served to the children that they serve throughout the summer.

Summer sites may serve up to two meals per day per child. The sponsor may choose from breakfast, lunch, a snack or supper. Each meal served must meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's nutritional guidelines. This nutritional information will be outlined during the Summer Food Service Program trainings that will be held around the state.

For the 2015 summer program, public, public charter or non-profit private schools will be given first priority to serve as providers. Other providers which can participate in the program such as public or private non-profit organizations, public or private non-profit residential summer camps, colleges or universities that participate in the National Youth Sports Program, or units of local, state or county government must meet additional requirements. Meals are available to all children regardless of age, color, sex, race, national origin, or disability.

For more information, visit <https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dcece/snp/SummerInfoM.aspx>. For questions, contact Vickie Stewart, program manager, at 501-320-8968 or via email at Vickie.Stewart@dhs.arkansas.gov.

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