



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



April 26, 2013

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to urge you to take action on an important issue affecting children in your community. Childhood food insecurity remains at unacceptable levels across the country and children are most acutely at risk in the summer when they do not have access to school meals. The nation's principals have a lead role in caring for students and helping them achieve and excel during the school year. Your leadership can help to ensure that those same children do not go hungry in your community this summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates summer meal programs to address this problem, and we are requesting your help to make access to and participation in summer meals a priority.

The USDA Summer Meal Programs available to schools include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) as well as the Seamless Summer Option in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These programs operate as a partnership among the Federal government, State agencies, and local organizations to serve free meals to children age 18 years and younger. USDA provides reimbursement for meals; State agencies administer the program; and local organizations, including schools, nonprofits, parks and recreation departments, libraries, and faith-based groups serve the meals.

In 2012, about 2.5 million children received summer meals through the SFSP. And while an additional 1 million children received meals through the NSLP Seamless Summer program, the combined 3.5 million children served in the summer months through these two programs is far fewer than the 21 million children who receive free or reduced price lunches through the National School Lunch Program during the school year. This means that during the summer we are not reaching the vast majority of children who rely on school meals to meet their nutritional needs. You can help change this by:

- **Providing children in your community with meals at your school this summer.** Local schools are the best sites for summer feeding efforts. Children and parents are familiar with local schools and schools are known for providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Even if your school will not be offering summer programming, if it is located in a low-income area it can be a summer feeding site and fill that important meal gap for your students this summer so that they are ready to learn when they return to school in the fall.

Summer Meal Programs

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- **Asking teachers and staff in your school to share information about nearby summer meal sites, whether the sites are at your school or at other locations in your community.** Principals can find local feeding sites by calling 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE or visiting www.whyhunger.org/findfood. Schools communicate regularly and effectively with the families of children in your community. You can help reach out and connect these families with summer meals before the school year ends and continue to make a difference in the lives of your students even after the school year ends.

You can learn more about the USDA Summer Meal Programs by visiting:
www.summerfood.usda.gov.

These programs need champions. Please help us feed more children in your community when school is not in session by being a champion for summer meals. Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education