



Indiana Coalition on Housing and Homeless Issues

NEWS RELEASE

JULY 13, 2006

SUMMER IS NO PICNIC FOR HUNGRY CHILDREN,
INDIANA COULD RECEIVE ADDITIONAL FEDERAL DOLLARS TO ENSURE SUMMER
LUNCHESES ARE SERVED TO MORE LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's summer meals programs served approximately 2.8 million children (38,007 Hoosiers) on an average day in July 2005. Unfortunately, according to a new report "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation" from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the summer of 2005 was the seventh straight year in which participation in the program has declined. Although Indiana saw a 10.1% increase in the number of children that participated in the program from 2004-2005, only 13.2 children participated in the summer meals program for every 100 who receive a free or reduced-price school lunch during the regular school year. This is below the national average of 18 children for every 100 who receive a free or reduced-price school lunch during the regular school year.

FRAC's report ranks states by assessing their performance in reaching needy children with either the Summer Food Service Program or the National School Lunch Program summer meals, by comparing the participation in these programs, to the number of children participating in the school lunch program. If all states performed just at the level achieved by the jurisdictions that achieved the best records (40 students served in the summer for every 100 served during the regular school year), FRAC estimates the federal programs would feed another 3.5 million children and provide a total of \$188.8 million in additional federal funds. If Indiana were to meet this goal of 40 children served in the summer for every 100 served during the regular school year, the state would bring in an additional \$4.1 million to feed hungry children during the summer months.

"At a time when millions of American working families are grappling with stagnant wages and rising energy, housing and health costs, far too little is being done to make sure their children aren't going hungry," said Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) President, Jim Weill. "The federal government's summer meals programs are supposed to serve all children who need the meals. It is time for Congress to make it simpler for groups to offer the meals and time for states to do more to pull down the unused federal funds."

"At a time when Hoosiers are working hard to make ends meet, Indiana cannot afford to let our children go hungry during the summer months. Nearly 1 out of 5 Hoosier children are living in poverty (18.5%) meaning that there are more children in need now than ever before," said Lisa Travis, Advocacy and Education Coordinator for the Indiana Institute for Working Families. "We need to ensure the future of our state by feeding tomorrow's leaders today."

"Summer meals programs are effective weapons in the fight against obesity as well," said FRAC Director of Child Nutrition Policy Lynn Parker. "The summer meals meet USDA guidelines and help children get the nutrients they need. And because they draw children to programs that often also offer physical activities, like basketball or swimming, summer meals promote fitness." Parker urged more school districts to include plans for summer food programs in their new school wellness policies.

The Summer Food Service Program is operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provides funds for eligible sponsoring organizations (schools, public agencies and non-profits) to serve nutritious meals in summer to children 18 or younger at approved sites that are in low-income areas, or that serve a group of children most of whom are low-income. The National School Lunch Program, also operated by USDA, provides per meal cash reimbursements to serve nutritious school meals to low-income children in school during the summer.

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