



FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER

Press Release

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School Is Out for the Summer – and Millions of Children Are Missing Out on Healthy Meals New FRAC Report Finds the Summer Nutrition Programs Falling Far Short of Meeting the Need

Washington, D.C. – July 30, 2008 – The Summer Nutrition Programs continue to fall short in reaching eligible low-income children. Fewer than one of out every five eligible children participated in July 2007, according to *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, a Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) analysis.

While 16.3 million low-income children receive school lunch during the regular school year, only 2.85 million children get summer food when school is out. That means the Summer Nutrition Programs reached only 17.5 percent of low-income children in July 2007 – a ratio that has fallen from 22.2 percent in 2000. For states, low participation means they are missing out on federal funds that can help them feed hungry children and counter summer learning loss. If states boosted participation to serve just 40 percent of eligible low-income children, they would receive an additional \$222 million in federal funds – and reach an additional 3.7 million children.

“Some drop-off from school year to summertime can be expected, but far too many children are falling through the cracks,” said Jim Weill, president of FRAC. “The weak economy should be countered by stronger, not weaker Summer Nutrition Programs. States should reach more eligible children and Congress should consider improvements that would provide additional resources.”

“This summer, we see that rising food and energy costs are playing havoc with budgets – both for families that were already struggling to make ends meet and for summer food programs that are trying to serve hungry children,” continued Weill.

Low participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs is tied to an increase in food insecurity rates during the summer. According to research by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food insecurity rates increase during the summer for households with children, and the increase is greater for states with low participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs.

Late last year, Congress took a step forward in improving the Summer Nutrition Programs by expanding to all states the Simplified Summer Food Program. Originally developed as a pilot program by Congress in a limited

Children in Summer Nutrition in 2007 per 100 Children in Free & Reduced-Price School-Year National School Lunch Program 2006-2007	
State	Ratio
Top Ten States	
District of Columbia	95.9
New Mexico	35.0
Nevada	33.1
California	30.6
New York	29.8
Rhode Island	29.4
Utah	28.6
Vermont	26.7
South Carolina	26.7
Connecticut	26
Bottom Ten States	
Arkansas	8.9
North Dakota	8.7
Louisiana	8.5
Iowa	8.4
Colorado	8.2
Texas	8.2
Kansas	6.6
Alaska	6.3
Mississippi	5.0
Oklahoma	4.9

(more)

number of states, the Simplified program reduces administrative barriers and makes it easier for providers to get the maximum reimbursement. From 2000 to 2007, the 13 states originally allowed to use the Simplified program saw their summer numbers climb by 54 percent, while states never added to the pilot (until 2008) dropped by 14.4 percent.

“The expansion of the Simplified program was a step in the right direction but there is still considerable room to improve the program,” said Weill.

About the report: The Food Research and Action Center’s annual summer report, *Hunger Doesn’t Take A Vacation*, gives data for all states and looks at national trends. The report measures participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs by comparing the number of children receiving summer meals to the number of children receiving school lunch during the school year. FRAC measures national summer participation during the month of July, when typically all children are out of school throughout the month and lose access to regular year school meals. The report is available online at www.frac.org/pdf/summer_report_2008.pdf.

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The Food Research and Action Center (www.frac.org) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition.