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Summer Food Service Program seeking sponsors to serve communities

PIERRE, S.D. - In an effort to fend off hunger, the South Dakota Department of Education's office of Child and Adult Nutrition Services is seeking sponsors for a federally-funded program that provides nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas during the summer months.

Community organizations, nonprofits, schools, and tribal and local governments can apply to be sponsors if they operate in low-income areas, serve a group of mostly low-income children, or operate a summer camp with a high proportion of low-income participants. Parks and recreation departments, city and county health departments, libraries, and neighborhood service agencies can participate as sites or sponsors.

"This program plays an important role in providing children healthy meals throughout the summer when they don't have access to the National School Lunch Program," said Mikayla Hardy, program specialist with South Dakota's Child and Adult Nutrition Services.

When school is in session, more than 60,000 South Dakota students receive free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. The Summer Food Service Program is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered by the South Dakota Department of Education. It provides meals to students when school is not in session. Children age 18 and younger may receive a meal free of charge at a participating site. In 2019, South Dakota Summer Food Service Program sponsors served 484,059 meals. That is a decrease from the 516,186 meals served in 2018, though it is important to note that the need for meals has not decreased.

Summer food program sites must be in the attendance area of a school where 50 percent or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or within the boundary of a U.S. Census block where at least 50 percent of children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals when at school. A site meeting those criteria is open to all children under age 18 with special considerations for children from migrant households or those with a disability. It is important to note that while some areas may not qualify with school data, such areas may still be able to qualify using census data. To determine eligibility in your area, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/mapping-tools-summer-meal-programs>.

Organizations interested in reviewing sponsor responsibilities are invited to watch this [Summer Food Service Program Overview](#). To learn more about serving as a sponsor or site, call Child and Adult Nutrition Services at 605-773-3413. For more information, go to <http://doe.sd.gov/cans/sfsp.aspx>. Sponsors are often looking for partners to help provide activities and educational programs to encourage continued student participation throughout the summer.

School food authorities also have the option to utilize the Seamless Summer Option to provide meals in the summer. Information on that option can also be obtained from South Dakota's Child and Adult Nutrition Services office.

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