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Help students by starting a local Summer Food Service Program

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, 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.

"Many South Dakota families struggle to make ends meet, and that doesn't stop when schools close for the summer," said Julie McCord, program specialist with South Dakota's Child and Adult Nutrition Services. "The Summer Food Service Program helps fill that gap by providing our state's students with nutritious meals when they don't have access to the National School Lunch Program."

When school is in session, over 61,000 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 2016, South Dakota Summer Food Service Program sponsors served 477,796 meals, which is an increase from the 465,973 meals served in 2015 and the 428,883 served in 2014.

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 and reduced-price meals when at school. A site meeting those criteria is open to all area 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 can watch the [Summer Food Service Program Overview](#) on the South Dakota Department of Education's Summer Food Service Program webpage. To learn more about serving as a sponsor or

site, call Child and Adult Nutrition Services at (605) 773-3413. For more information and to register for training, go to <http://doe.sd.gov/cans/sfsp.aspx>. The deadline to register for training is Tuesday, Feb. 21. 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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