



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, June 7, 2011

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California Children Missing Out on Meals During Summer Months
Summer Nutrition Programs in Crisis, Say Advocates, and Action Is Needed

California – June 7, 2011 – A new national report finds that participation in California’s Summer Nutrition Programs continues to plummet, with a drop of 65,000 children from July 2009 to July 2010. This represents a nearly 13 percent decline in participation at a time when participation in other federal nutrition programs is on the rise, according to [Hunger Doesn’t Take a Vacation](#), the Food Research and Action Center’s (FRAC) latest look at participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs.

Leaders of four leading California nonprofits attributed much of the drop-off to cuts to state and local funding for education which are causing summer schools to disappear in too many districts. And that leaves fewer sites to serve summer meals to needy children.

In response to the FRAC report, four organizations have [issued a call to action](#) for California to reverse its declining participation rates by taking steps to increase participation, including:

- State and local policy makers should reverse cuts to summer learning and enrichments – reinstate educational programs to revive the accompanying nutrition programs;
- Schools and nonprofit organizations should maintain or expand efforts to promote and operate the Summer Nutrition Programs; and
- State and local decision makers, advocates, and community members should look for county-specific data on summer meal participation that will be released on June 15 by California Food Policy Advocates to give a more in-depth look at what is happening across the state.

The organizations that issued the call to action are: California Association of Food Banks; California Food Policy Advocates; CANFit; and Partnership for Children and Youth. The full text of the call to action is available online.

While participation in summer meal programs fell, participation in the National School Lunch Program rose from the 2008-2009 school year to the 2009-2010 school year, confirming the rising need for nutrition assistance among low-income families. More than 2.26 million California children relied on the School Lunch Program in 2008-2009; this number jumped to 2.36 million in the 2009-2010 school year. By comparison, only 444,372 California children took part in the Summer Nutrition Programs in July 2010 compared to 509,710 in July 2009. That means the Summer Nutrition Programs reached less than 20 percent of low-income children who ate school lunch during the regular school year.

If the Summer Nutrition Programs in California were to serve just 40 out of every 100 children who participate in the School Lunch Program during the year, the state would receive an additional \$33.6 million in federal nutrition funding – and help an additional 500,998 low-income children.

The Summer Nutrition Programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program, should fill the food gap for the thousands of low-income children who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year to help keep hunger at bay. Through these programs, children, aged 18 and under, can receive free meals at participating summer sites at schools, parks, other public agencies, and nonprofits.

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The mission of [California Association of Food Banks](#) is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well nourished California.

[California Food Policy Advocates](#) is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

[CANFIT](#) helps bridge the gap between communities and policymakers. Since 1993, CANFIT has been at the heart of the movement to improve healthy eating and physical activity environments for adolescents in low income communities and communities of color.

Formed in 1997, [Partnership for Children and Youth](#) connects schools and their community partners in underserved communities with available public and private resources, and improves the effectiveness of funding streams serving poor children.