



Arkansas House Newsletter

May 24, 2019

Summer Meals for Arkansas Children



It is estimated that less than 15 percent of children who qualify for free or reduced-priced school lunches in Arkansas are getting the same high-quality meals in the summer. Children shouldn't go hungry just because school is out.

That is why the Department of Human Services and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance partner with schools, churches and community centers across the state to provide meals in the Summer Food Service Program. The program is 100 percent federally funded and covers the cost of up to three nutritious meals and snacks a day for children.

Last summer, Arkansas children enjoyed free meals at more than 500 feeding sites across the state. More than 1 million meals and snacks were served.

Final site approvals for 2019 are expected in the next few weeks, but organizers expect to exceed last year's numbers.

The meals served to follow USDA nutrition guidelines and are paid for by USDA. Many sites offer educational and recreational activities that kids enjoy.

Arkansas children 18 years old and younger can receive USDA-supported free summer meals at school, community and faith-based sites across the state, most opening by June 3 and serving through early August, that are approved through the Arkansas Department of Human Service's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or the Arkansas Department of Education's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) program.

Parents do not need to apply to the program to get a free summer meal for their kids, and it does not interfere with other benefits they may be receiving. They can simply bring their child to a summer meals site in their community and their kids can eat a healthy, nutritious meal.

There are USDA authorized Summer Meals Sites in almost every county in Arkansas. When the last day of school is drawing near, parents and caregivers can find a summer meals site in their communities by:

- Going to www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks. The site has an interactive map that will show meal sites near you.
- Calling 1-866-3-HUNGRY
- Texting FOOD to 877 877

The site is updated continually as more summer feeding sites are added to the program.