



NEW JERSEY FOOD FOR THOUGHT CAMPAIGN

Healthy Food. Strong Kids.

Promoting Summer Meals in Your Community

During the academic year, hundreds of thousands of New Jersey children rely on school meals for the nutrition they need to grow, learn and be healthy. In the summer, these same children often find themselves without enough to eat, as families struggle to survive on tight budgets.

The federal Summer Meals Food Service Program, administered through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, fills that meal gap.

Funded through the USDA, summer meals are free at “open” sites, require no application, identification or income verification from parents. All meals must meet USDA nutrition guidelines, which call for balanced meals that contain low salt and sugar and whole grains.

Not only do these programs provide nutritious meals, they also give kids a chance to engage in fun, healthy activities during the summer months.



1. School outreach
2. Kick-off events
3. Summer meals “blitz”
4. Community engagement
5. Media outreach
6. Social media



New Jersey communities are serving summer meals to a growing number of children. We can all play a part in fueling this progress by spreading the word, so parents and other caregivers know where to find summer meals sites. Schools, community and faith-based organizations, summer meal sponsors, libraries, child care providers and others can use this toolkit to alert parents about the availability of summer meals.

It’s all here — e-mails, news releases, letter to the editor, social media posts, flyers and other tools to make outreach simple, easy and effective. Just copy, paste and share with your networks. To find out whether sites are located in your community, visit summerfoodrocks.org/sitefinder. Sites are added throughout the summer, so be sure to check back.

For more information, contact Lisa Pitz at lpitz@cfanj.org or Nancy Parello at nparello@cfanj.org. This toolkit was prepared by Advocates for Children of New Jersey and Hunger Free New Jersey.



New Jersey Summer Meals Outreach Kit



School Outreach

School leaders — superintendents, principals, teachers, school nurses, PTA members — can all play an important role in getting the word out to parents about summer meals.

Here is a list of simple outreach steps schools can take to help their students receive the summertime nutrition they need to return to school healthy and ready to learn.

- 1. Send flyers home with site locations/hours in students' backpack.**
- 2. Use robo-call system to spread the word.**
- 3. Send an e-mail to parents about summer meals.**
- 4. Print information about summer meals on the back of lunch menus.**
- 5. Hang flyers and signs in common areas (hallways, cafeterias, nurses, principal and guidance counselor offices) where both parents and students can see them.**
- 6. Share information on social media pages.**
- 7. Work with school PTAs to get the word out to parents.**
- 8. Post a message on outdoor signs:
"School's Out, Summer Meals Are Served!"**

Sample E-Mail Messages

JUST COPY & PASTE!



PTA leaders

Dear

As you may know, many students in your child's school district rely on school meals to get the nutrition they need to grow, be healthy and succeed in school. In the summer, these children lack access to those meals and families struggle to put food on the table.

The federal summer meals program provides a solution to summertime hunger for kids.

As a parent leader, we are asking for your help in spreading the word about summer meals by forwarding this e-mail to parents in your school. Parents can find summer meals sites by contacting ([sponsor name/email/phone or insert link to web page with site information](#)).

What is the Summer Food Service Program?

The SFSP is a federally-funded program operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered in New Jersey by the state Department of Agriculture. Organizations with summer programs for children can serve meals through SFSP. The NJ Department of Agriculture reimburses sponsors for all meals served free at approved SFSP meal sites in low-income areas to children 18 years and under.

Statewide, there is great need for this program, particularly in those areas where many children are eligible for free and low-cost school meals.

Unfortunately, many parents simply do not know this program exists. In fact, in 2018, just 26 percent of low-income children received summer meals. Not only do these programs provide nutritious meals, they also give kids a chance to engage in fun, healthy activities during the summer months. Please help combat childhood hunger and ensure your child's classmates have the summertime nutrition they need to return to school in September ready to learn.



Parents

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Free summer meals are available to children and teens ages 18 and younger at safe places like schools, parks, churches and other sites in your community.

Free Summer Meal Details:

- Meals are FREE to children and teens ages 18 and younger who come to an open summer meals site or through mobile meals.
- Food served is healthy and follows federal nutritional guidelines.
- Summer meals sites are at fun, safe places for kids and teens to be active and visit with friends.
- No application, ID or proof of income is needed. You can just bring your child to an open summer meals site in your community.

To find meal sites near you, visit summerfoodrocks/sitefinder.org, text "food" to 97779 or call the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-Hungry.

Please pass the word along to other parents and caregivers in your community!

Sincerely,

■ Robo-Call 30-second script:

For kids, summer should be a stress-free time, full of food, friends and fun. Free summer meals can help! Any child or teen age 18 and under can get free healthy meals at safe locations across the area. Many meals sites also offer learning and recreational activities so your kids can stay active and spend time with friends. To find a site near you, ([contact sponsor name/email/phone or web address](#)).

■ Information for back of school menus

Free summer meals for kids! No registration, I.D. required!
Call ([sponsor contact information](#)) to find a site near you.
(Or print site locations on back of menu)

■ Flyers

Customizable flyers can be found at njsummermeals.org.

■ Message on Sign Outside of School

School's Out, But Summer Meals Are Served!

[sponsor name/email/phone or web address](#)



Host a Kick-Off Event

Hosting a kick-off event to promote summer meals is a great way to engage sponsors, partners, families and the community! Planning additional events throughout the summer energizes participants and reminds families that summer meals are still available.

The best time to hold kick-off events is in the beginning of June during National Summer Kick-Off Week, right after the academic school year ends and/or the day of or a few days prior to the opening of your summer meals program.

Successful kick-off events involve a variety of community members and organizations. Be sure to invite the mayor, school superintendent, other local officials, community and faith-based organizations and local business leaders. Providing food and fun activities for children and parents is another important component. You might also consider having drawings or give-a-ways of donated items like tickets to local events, t-shirts, sunglasses, stickers and other items.



Hold a Blitz Day.

During a Blitz Day, volunteers come together to canvass a community with outreach materials about the available free summer meals. Blitz Day outreach locations can include schools, child care centers, businesses, community centers, faith-based organizations, parks, libraries, health centers, Family Success Centers and other locations where children and parents congregate.

At a typical Blitz Day...

- Volunteers and community leaders meet at a designated time and location.
- A community leader or host says a few words.
- Sponsor provides a brief overview of summer meals programs, frequently asked questions and assigns canvassing areas.
- Volunteers head out in partners or small teams to their respective zones and begin the Blitz.
- Volunteers meet back at a designated time. (Typically 2-4 hours later)
- Volunteers give updates/feedback.
- Host/s provide food/beverages as a thank you.



Engage the Community

Engage community organizations, businesses, social service agencies and others to distribute flyers with information about local sites, including site locations, meals served, dates and times meals are served and contact information for each site. Flyers can be distributed at:

- **Libraries**
- **Child care centers**
- **Boys and Girls clubs**
- **Food pantries**
- **Housing authorities**
- **Supermarkets (Ask that they be placed on customer windshields).**
- **Family Success Centers**
- **Doctors' offices, community health centers, hospitals**
- **Parks and recreation centers**
- **City pools**
- **Government services offices (ESL, adult literacy, vocational training, WIC, Medicaid, Social Services offices)**
- **Car windshields in parking lots**
- **Churches and other faith-based organizations**
- **Bus stops/public transit**
- **Popular fast-food chains**
- **Shelters**
- **Community centers**

Also engage your community partners to help spread the word, including local business associations, such as the Rotary Club, and community organizations, such as the YMCA, United Way and other organizations that serve children and families.

Customizable flyers can be found at
<https://njsummermeals.org>.



Sample E-Mail Message

JUST COPY & PASTE!



Partner Organizations

As you may know, many students in our community rely on school meals to get the nutrition they need to grow, be healthy and succeed in school. For these children, when school's out, hunger sets in.

The federal summer meals program provides a solution to summertime hunger for kids. In (Community Name) XX sites will be serving nutritious meals this summer.

Please help us spread the word to (Community Name) parents about these programs, by:

- Distributing the attached flyers in locations where children and families congregate.
- Sending e-mail alerts to your networks. Sample attached.
- Posting on social media. Sample posts attached.

About Summer Meals

In general, summer meals programs, funded through federal dollars, are free and require no identification or income verification from parents. Unfortunately, many parents simply do not know they exist. In fact, in 2018, just 26 percent of low-income children received these meals.

Not only do these programs provide nutritious meals, they also give kids a chance to engage in fun, healthy activities during the summer months.

To learn more about summer meals and outreach strategies, visit njsummermeals.org. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Faith-based Bulletin Insert

FREE FOOD, FRIENDS AND FUN

SERVED UP ALL SUMMER LONG - SPREAD THE WORD!

Free summer meals are available to kids and teens in [Community Name]. Free summer meals help families stretch already-tight summer food budgets. Many summer meals sites offer fun learning and recreational activities so kids and teens can eat a healthy meal while staying active and being with friends.

Meals are FREE to children and teens ages 18 and younger and follow federal nutrition guidelines. Parents don't need to apply to the program or show proof of income to get a free summer meal for their kids. They can simply bring their child to a summer meals site in their community.

Summer should be a stress-free time, full of food, friends and fun. Free summer meals can help. Help us spread the word. To find summer meal sites visit summerfoodrocks/sitefinder.org, text "food" to 97779 or call the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-Hungry.



Media Outreach

Gaining coverage in local media outlets is another effective strategy to spread the word about summer meals. Here are some tips.

- 1. Invite media to kick-off events by issuing an advisory prior to the event.**
- 2. Enlist the mayor or another local elected leader to issue a proclamation declaring the summer “Hunger Free.”**
- 3. Submit a letter to the editor. This can come from a summer meals sponsor, a local official, faith-based organization or other community organization.**
- 4. Issue a news release a week before the start of the program with site information. Include pictures from last year, if possible.**

News releases and letters to the editor should also be copied into an e-mail – not sent as an attachment.

Sample Media Messages

JUST COPY & PASTE!



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

For many kids, summertime means food, friends and fun. For families who count on school breakfast and lunch, however, the summer months can be the hungriest time of the year. That’s because about a half million New Jersey children rely on school meals for nutrition during the academic year.

Without those meals in the summer, many kids go hungry.

The good news is that starting [DATE], kids and teens can visit one of the [# OF SUMMER MEALS SITES] in [TOWN NAME] and get a free, healthy meal that follows federal nutrition guidelines. Many summer meals sites offer fun learning and recreational activities so kids and teens can eat a healthy meal, while staying active and spending time with friends.

Summer meals programs help families stretch tight budgets, while ensuring children receive the nutrition they need to be healthy and grow. At most open meal sites, families do not have to fill out an application or show proof of income to get free meals for their kids and teens.

Summertime should be a stress-free time full of food, friends and fun. Free summer meals can help. Help spread the word. For information about meal sites in (Community Name), visit (web page) or contact (Sponsor Name/phone/email)

(BE SURE TO INCLUDE WRITER’S CONTACT INFORMATION AS DETAILED BELOW!)

[NAME]
 [TITLE]
 [ADDRESS]
 [PHONE]
 [E-MAIL]



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

Contact:

(Community Name) serving free summer meals for kids

For many children, summer is the hungriest time of the year, as they lack access to school meals and family budgets are stretched tight to meeting other summertime expenses, such as extended child care and summer camps.

To combat this summertime hunger, (Sponsor Name) is offering free meals to children throughout (Community Name).

Healthy, federally-funded summer meals will be available at XX sites throughout the (Community Name) in places where children congregate during the summer, including parks, schools, pools, recreation programs and other community sites.

“We know that many (Community Name), children rely on school meals during the academic year,” said (Quote mayor, superintendent or summer meal sponsor). “In the summer, family budgets are stretched tight. These meals help fill that nutritional gap so kids return to school healthy and ready to learn in the fall.”

The meals are available to all (Community Name) children 18 years of age and under. At open sites, parents are not required to complete an application, nor provide identification for their children to receive meals, according to federal rules. The meals must meet USDA nutrition standards, which call for protein, fruits and vegetables, juice or milk and low-fat, low-sugar options.

In addition to providing free, healthy meals, these programs also offer an opportunity for children 18 years and younger to play together, engage in enrichment activities, hone their academic skills and be better prepared when they return to school in September.

Many (Community Name) students qualify for free or low-cost school meals during the school year. For some children, school meals are the only meals they receive each day. For these children, summertime means hunger.

PARENT QUOTE, IF POSSIBLE. OR QUOTE FROM COMMUNITY MEMBER TALKING ABOUT THE NEED FOR SUMMER MEALS.

For more information and to find site locations, contact (sponsor contact information) or visit (web page with site locations/hours).

Radio PSA Script — 30-Seconds

Summer should be a stress-free time full of food, friends and fun. Free summer meals can help! Any child or teen age 18 and under can get free healthy meals at safe locations across the area. Many meals sites also offer learning and recreational activities so your kids can stay active and spend time with friends. Free summer meals can help families stretch tight summer food budgets. Contact (sponsor name/email/phone or provide web page with site information.) A message from [sponsors].

Radio PSA Script — 60-Seconds

Summer should be a stress-free time full of food, friends and fun. But when school's out, families can't count on their kids eating meals at school. That stretches already tight family food budgets even more. Free summer meals can help! With free summer meals, any child or teen 18 and under can get healthy meals at safe locations just like during the school year. There is no application needed. Just go to www.WEBSITE.com or call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX to learn more and find a site near you. The free summer meals programs helps families provide their children with healthy meals in a safe, supervised place. They are also a great opportunity for kids to spend time with friends. Just go to www.WEBSITE.com or call 1-XXX-XXX-XXX to learn more and find a site near you. Summer meals programs are funded by the USDA. A message from [sponsors].

About the Food for Thought Campaign

Led by Hunger Free New Jersey, the New Jersey Food For Thought Campaign is driven by a statewide



coalition that includes the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture and Education, anti-hunger and health groups, child advocates and New Jersey's major education associations. The campaign's national partners are the Food Research and Action Center and the American Dairy Association North East.

Launched in 2011, the campaign is dedicated to combating childhood hunger by ensuring New Jersey communities maximize their use of federal child nutrition programs, including school breakfast and summer and afterschool meals.

This collaborative effort has resulted in thousands more children beginning their school day with a healthy meal and more children receiving needed summertime nutrition. Working closely with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, coalition members assist local communities in advocating for and meeting the challenges of implementing effective child nutrition programs. We're grateful for the work of all our campaign partners in this effort.

To learn more and get involved, visit njfoodforthought.org.



Get Social

Social media is another great way to inform parents and children about summer meals, as well as highlight the work being done all summer. Here are some tips for effectively social media promotion:

- 1. Use pictures whenever possible, especially images from your summer meals programs.**
- 2. Link to a web page with site locations, meals served and times meals are served.**
- 3. Engage community and faith-based organizations, local government, the school district and others to post on their social media networks. Circulate sample posts provided in this kit, along with pictures.**
- 4. Have your meals sites post pictures and messages regularly on their social media networks.**
- 5. Use your social networks to promote your kick-off and other events.**
- 6. Share videos, photos and other content with your online network and organizations you are partnering with.**
- 7. Consider buying Facebook ads to attract kids and parent to learn more about summer meals. Be sure to promote site locations.**

Sample Social Media Posts

Remember to add photos of kids eating and having fun!



Free food, friends and fun! Kids and teens can get FREE meals all summer long at sites across the community. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#). **#njsummermeals.**

School's out but food, friends and fun are still in! Kids and teens who eat meals at school can also get FREE healthy meals during the summer in a fun, safe place. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals.**

FREE food, friends and fun! Many sites in the community offer fun learning and recreational activities so kids and teens can eat a healthy, free meal while staying active and spending time with friends. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals.**

Don't let summer be the hungriest time of the year. Healthy summer meals are in your neighborhood. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals.**

Kids and teens can stay active and eat right this summer! FREE summer meals that follow USDA nutrition guidelines are available in your community. Learn more! [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals.**

FREE summer meals are no hassle! Parents don't need to apply. Just bring your child to a safe summer meals site. Free summer meals help stretch tight family budgets. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#). **#njsummermeals.**

@USDA funds **#free #njsummermeals** 4 kids & teens! Find out where meals are in your community. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#)

#Free #njsummermeals help make sure kids & teens get food they need 2 stay healthy in the summer. Find meals in your community. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals**

Studies show that kids are at higher risk for both hunger and obesity during the summer months. Find **#free #njsummermeals.** [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#)

Many **#free #njsummermeals** sites offer educational/recreational activities for kids of all ages. Get more info. [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#)

Healthy meals = healthy kids. Make sure kids in your community know where to find **#summermeals.** [\(Link to your webpage with meal sites/locations or provide other local contact info\)](#) **#njsummermeals**

Sources:

The United States Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>

No Kid Hunger and Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation,

<https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/sodexo-stop-hunger-foundation-summer-meals-outreach-toolkit>

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