Summer Meals 101 for Community-based Organizations

**Summertime childhood hunger:** Last school year, parents of 467,279 Washington schoolchildren signed them up for free or reduced-price school meals. What happens to these kids during the summer months? Parents struggle to stretch available food dollars to cover the gap left by school meals.

Going without food even part of the time has major impacts on our children: hungry kids get sick more often and stay sick longer, they miss school more, may be aggressive or lethargic and they miss out on education and relationship building with their peers because they are thinking about their empty tummies.

**Kids don’t have to be hungry in the summertime; there’s a federal entitlement program called the Summer Food Service Program:** Funds are available from the US Department of Agriculture to feed kids at sites in areas where more than half the kids at school are eligible for free or reduced-price meal. The only obstacle in the path of these meals is the lack of organizations in local communities willing to sponsor the program.

**School, public entities, non-profits and tribes can sponsor summer meals.**

Here’s how to get started:

1. **Find out if there’s a summer meal program in your area:**
   - Go to the Summer Meals Search Tool and enter the zip code(s) in your area to see if there are programs you could support by letting the families you serve know about them.

2. **Even if there are programs, check out how long they last:**
   - Summer schools are getting shorter. What happens to kids before and after their 2-3 week programs?
   - Think about starting a wrap-around program that helps kids for the whole summer.

3. **Want to learn more?? Sign up for the Summer Meals E-Newsletter.** Websites to check out:
   - The Summer Meals Resource Toolkit has everything you need to get started!
   - The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction administers the program in Washington.
   - The national Food Research and Action Center has tons of resources on starting, expanding and promoting summer meals.
   - The US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service provides the funds to operate summer meal programs.

4. **Talk with food banks, community-based organizations that have sponsored programs:**
   - Food Banks operating summer meals programs in 2013
     - Kris Van Gasken, Des Moines Area Food Bank: dmafb@bigplanet.com
     - Kevin Glackin-Coley, St. Leo Food Connection: keving@foodconnection.org
     - Robert Coit, Thurston County Food Bank: director@thurstoncountyfoodbank.org
     - Kate Murphy, Hunger Intervention Program: info@hungerintervention.org
5. Talk with the helpful folks at OSPI and ask them to put you on their list to receive information on trainings for summer 2013:
   - Jennifer Mitchell, Jennifer.Mitchell@k12.wa.us

6. Open sites for summer meals need to be in areas where 50% or more of kids qualify for free and reduced-price school meals.
   You can find a list of eligible schools by county on the Summer Meals Toolkit website under Summer Meal Site Eligibility.

7. Host a meeting with community groups in your area to discuss site locations and outreach:
   - Picking the right sites is key: ask people where kids hang out, make sure you’re not asking kids to cross busy arterials
   - See who can help you out by providing transportation and letting folks know about your program and sites
   - See who can provide prizes and other incentives for kids who attend the program
   - See if any agencies or the parks department could provide activities at your site even some days to attract more kids

8. Great places for summer meal sites include:
   - Where kids live – apartment complexes, community parks, mobile home parks
   - Where kids play – parks, pools
   - Schools and community centers
   - Tribal centers

9. Attend the Summer Meals Trainings in March/April 2014 and then submit an application to sponsor summer meals:
   For information on the trainings, and to sign up to receive more information, contact Jennifer Mitchell at OSPI, Jennifer.Mitchell@k12.wa.us

10. Let families know about your site before you open and then again during the program:
    - WithinReach will send you a packet of outreach materials if you sign up for OSPI training. Sue Waldin is also a great resource for outreach ideas & materials, SueW@withinreachwa.org
    - Think of multiple ways to reach your target families: food bag stuffers, notices sent home from school with kids, grocery bag stuffers, bulletin boards, local radio, etc.

    Helpful organizations that can help you started:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
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