TIPS FOR STAFFING SUMMER MEALS PROGRAMS

No Kid Hungry gathered advice from summer meals sponsors who have found innovative ways to ensure their programs stay afloat in the summertime with passionate and dedicated staff. Below are some of their recommended strategies for staffing summer meals programs.

Finding Staff & Volunteers

- Employ Teens
- Advertise Employment Opportunities to District Staff
- Look to Your Community for Staff and Volunteers
- Get Creative to Find Drivers

Working with Your Team

- Support Your Staff

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Employ Teens

Employing teens can benefit your summer meals program in so many ways, while also giving teenagers the opportunity for meaningful and paid summer work experience.

Benefits for the summer meals program:

- Employing teens builds trust with kids in the community. Employing teens as site staff not only make sites more comfortable for children to attend, but also gives younger kids mentors to look up to.
- Teens are some of the best advertisers for employment for future summers. Many sponsors who employ teens find that they talk about the job with their siblings and friends, and consequently, sponsors have a long list of interested students ready to work in future summers!
- Teens make it fun! Teens bring a spark to the program. They bring their own fresh ideas, and it improves the program in the process.

If you're a school-based sponsor, consider bringing teens on staff throughout the year for a few hours a week or in a work-study capacity.

How to recruit teens:

- Work with school staff to get the word out, including work-study coordinators, counselors, and even coaches of the sports teams.
- Send emails and/or texts to high schoolers in the district advertising the opportunity.
- Put a notice on the district website and advertise via social media and local news outlets.
- Offer sessions to help students fill out the application, complete their new hire paperwork, and ask questions.

Highlight the following in advertisements:

- No nights or weekends!
- Casual attire – no uniforms.
- Opportunity for full-time or part-time employment.
- If you're flexible to allow for a week off for a summer vacation, be sure to mention it!

"Employing teens in the summer meals program is the best idea ever."

– Donna Martin, Burke County (GA)

Advertise Employment Opportunities to School District Staff

Summers off can be a perk to working in the school system, but many staff seek outside employment in the summertime to make extra money. Other staff may have high schoolers or college students at home for the summer who are seeking employment.

- Advertise to school district staff via staff memos and meetings.
- Reach out to former and temporary staff like substitute teachers, retired school nutrition employees, paraprofessionals, and teachers.
- Work with your central office to connect with current and former employees.

Look to Your Community for Staff and Volunteers

Your community is your greatest resource! Think outside the box to recruit both employees and volunteers to staff your summer program.

Recruiting Staff:

- Reach out to local universities for dietetic interns and/or nutrition students. They will appreciate the opportunity to add relevant employment to their resumes.
- Connect with local restaurants and food businesses. Kitchen staff often don't begin their shifts until the afternoon and may be looking for additional part-time work.

Recruiting Volunteers:

- Many schools require students complete service hours to graduate. Universities and high schools can be a great source for volunteers.
- Recruit volunteers through local nonprofit organizations, places of worship, and businesses. You can even ask to speak directly to the congregation and/or post an advertisement in the bulletin at local places of worship.
- Post your volunteer opportunity online! Websites such as VolunteerMatch and Idealist allow you to reach even more potential recruits.

Tip: Hire staff who speak the language(s) your community speaks!

To reach all kids and families in your community, it is imperative to have staff who speak the language(s) spoken in your community. ourBRIDGE for Kids in Charlotte, NC hired parents who speak the many languages spoken in their community. The staff made the program better in every conceivable way – from improving awareness of the program by communicating in all of the languages spoken in the community, to adding more culturally-relevant meal options to the menus, to making families, kids, and teens feel more comfortable in attending their sites.

Get Creative to Find Drivers

Do you have kitchen and site staff but need drivers? Get creative!

Explore Partnerships:

- Summer school bus drivers may have time for deliveries between school pick-up and drop-off.
- Outside partners such as local food banks and social workers may already deliver to or visit families. These partners can deliver meals during their normal delivery or visit.
- Explore public and private partnerships. Food For People, the official food bank for Humboldt County, CA, partnered with the United Postal Service (UPS) to deliver summer meals county-wide. Learn more about how Food For People leveraged unique public and private partners to deliver summer meals here.

Look Beyond Traditional CDL Drivers:

- Use large vans or trailers instead of trucks so that drivers do not need CDLs.
- Recruit teachers and paraprofessionals who might be interested in getting a CDL (some districts provide additional benefits or incentives for staff who have CDLs).

Support Your Staff

Staffing a summer meal program is rewarding but hard work. Supporting staff through actions and words can go a long way to prevent burnout and boost morale.

- Provide small tokens of appreciation like surprise donuts, snacks, or lunch.
- Have leadership formally recognize staff's hard work.
- Your staff is your team! Directors can show they are a part of that team by working on the line for prep or meal service.
- Give staff fun team shirts or jackets to wear onsite.

Flexible Summer Work Options:

- Staff may be interested in working during the summer, but have conflicts due to travel or childcare needs. Breaking your summer calendar into two or more sessions staff can sign up for can provide a more flexible option for staff who would like to work during the summer months but may not be able to commit to the whole season. Offering flexible sessions can also help to mitigate burn out while increasing the number of employees who may be able to support your program.

You can find more resources and webinars on No Kid Hungry's Center for Best Practices Webpage.