

Welcome!

We'll Get Started Soon.





Amplifying Impact

Advocacy Strategies for
Rural Non-Congregate
Programs

April 29, 2026



Things to Know Before We Begin.

- The slide deck will be shared via email after the webinar along with the recording.
- To engage with other attendees, please use the chat box.
- If you have questions for the speakers, please enter those into the Q&A box.
- Closed captioning is available.

EARNING CEUs

Complete Evaluation

CEU Certificate will unlock upon completion.

The link is provided at the end of this webinar or can be found under this webinar's title on the Training Zone.





AGENDA

- Introductions
- Advocacy via local collaboratives
- Advocacy with/at state agency level
- Working with local elected officials
- Q&A time
- Resources & closing



Poll Question

What do we mean when we talk about ADVOCACY?

advocacy

/ˈadvəkəsē/

Advocacy is the active support, recommendation, or pleading of a specific cause, policy, or individual to create change, influence decisions, or protect rights. It involves actions like lobbying, public education, and campaigning. Synonyms include campaigning, promoting, backing, championing, supporting, and pushing for a cause.

Advocacy for Summer Meal Programs

Ways advocacy can show up:

1. Influencing decision-makers

Visiting elected officials, engaging in lobbying, and advocating for policy or funding changes that improve access and outcomes.

2. Educating others

Sharing data, stories, and context to help others understand community needs and how programs work.

3. Building partnerships

Working with schools, community organizations, and local leaders to align efforts, messaging, and services.

4. Centering community voices

Elevating the lived experiences of kids and families at the local, regional, state, or national level to inform decisions.

What are the “Three C’s of Advocacy”?

1. **Collaborate:** Expand your influence by working with other organizations and individuals who share your goals.
2. **Connect:** Establishing personal connections can build relationships with long lasting support for a cause.
3. **Communicate:** Clear consistent communication that includes personal stories with evidence and data can impact decision makers.

Disclaimer

Our speakers represent their own experience with summer meal and non congregate programs in their states and localities. Certain program models and implementation methods discussed may be restricted in some states or approved on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the State Agency.

Always check with your local state agency before implementing any new meal service models or implementation methods.

Meet Our Speakers



Heather Senecal
Director, Learning
and Evaluation
United Way of the
Greater Capital
Region



Petra Colindres
*Director of SFSP
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Washington Office
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Aaron Goldstein
Senior Manager,
Local Government
Relations
Share Our Strength

Heather Senecal

Director, Learning and Evaluation
United Way of the Greater Capital
Region



Summer Meals Collaborative: Our Role as an Rural Non-Congregate Advocate

Model: Collective Impact Coalition focused on transforming summer nourishment in 8 counties of Upstate NY

Vision: Making the Capital Region the BEST place to be a kid in the summer!

2025 Advocacy Focus:

- Rural Non-Congregate Working Group
- Activity Working Group
- Summer Meals Ambassador Program



Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

Summer Meals Collaborative

What do we mean by collective impact?

- Convening a network of community members, organizations & institutions who come together with a goal to advance positive change and who commit to learning together, aligning and integrating their actions for population & system level change.

As the Summer Meals Collaborative we:

- Focus on supporting each other AND our shared vision
- FROM efficiency management TO transformative change
- Expanding our ecosystem and calling more partners into this work with us

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026



Come Together.

TO MEET THE GROWING NEED IN OUR COMMUNITY, THE COLLABORATIVE LAUNCHED TWO INITIATIVES.

- **Summer Meals Ambassadors program:** activated our community members to help spread the word about how we are making the Greater Capital Region the BEST place to be a kid in the summer.
- **Working groups:** enabled us to collaborate more purposefully. They provided an excellent opportunity to involve more partners in our initiatives, boost participation, create enriching experiences for children and families, and roll out rural non-congregate programs.



Eat Together.

THE COLLABORATIVE IS GROWING! WE ADDED PARTNERS AND EXPANDED OUR REACH TO MORE KIDS AND MORE COMMUNITIES THIS SUMMER!

- 16 school districts participated in Summer Meals.
- This summer, **212,342 meals** were served to kids and teens.
- The Collaborative **hosted 87 sites** across the Greater Capital Region.
- Increased rural sites this summer. **22 sites** across Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schoharie counties.
- Approximately **44% of all meals** served by the Collaborative this summer were in rural communities.



Have Fun Together!

THE SUMMER MEALS COLLABORATIVE KNOWS HOW TO HAVE FUN!

- Hosted **10 Block Parties and Summer Cookouts** in Schenectady, Albany, and Troy, serving 1,000+ family meals.
- Launched the region's first summer meals activity challenge, **Color Your World**, with weekly art, literacy, science, and movement activities.
- 66% (more than half) of the meal sites offered **free exciting, engaging and enriching programs** for kids and families.
- More than double the number of **kids stayed at meal sites and had fun** engaging in activities and being with friends.



Rural Non Congregant Working Group

- Decision to create WG came from general meeting
- How we organize
 - Monthly Zoom meeting
 - Broader membership
 - Members: SFAs, CBOS, county government, advocates
 - Returning sponsors and new sponsors
 - Various implementation models, information sharing
- 2025 Results
 - 44% of all meals served by Collaborative members were in rural communities
 - 19% of RNC sites in NYS were run by Summer Meals Collaborative members
 - 42,769 meals



Activity Working Group

Color Our World-Theme 2025

- 8 week long program, each week a different color of the rainbow
- Activity Partners focused on 'curriculum' of fun.
 - Stimulating creativity in arts & sciences
 - Nutrition education
 - Reading challenges
- Created opportunities for kids to participate around the region (RNC + Congregant)
 - At Summer Meals Sites, At Home
 - Being Together, Apart

2025 Results

- Increased engagement with summer meals
- Created a Rainbow at the end of the Summer



GREEN WEEK

BEADS OF GREEN, BUGS OF FUN! Use beads and pipe cleaners and make little critters. Curl the pipe cleaner to make crawly little caterpillars or bend them to make the wings of a butterfly. String the beads and make your bugs of fun come to life!

JUMPIN' GREEN FROGS Can you find things around your house to make little finger puppets? Maybe a toilet paper role? Or cardboard? Paint it green and you have your very own frog finger puppet!

GREEN LIGHTS FOR GOOD BITES! Green light foods are foods our body can't get enough of! Think of fruits and vegetables! Green means GO! Eat healthy foods to keep your body going healthy and strong!

THE BIG GREEN COLORING PAGE Check out a green-themed COLORING SHEET from friends at ALBANY CENTER GALLERY! Make a drawing of YOUR CHOICE and create a GREEN-inspired meal.

SUBMIT YOUR ART
Text a photo of your creation to the United Way Summer Meals team at 518-640-2365 for your work to be featured in the Digital Rainbow.



UNITED WAY
Greater Capital Region

SUMMER MEALS COLLABORATIVE

ALBANY CENTER GALLERY
Community Studios

CREATE
Community Studios

RUSSELL SAGE COLLEGE

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM AT SARATOGA

518SUMMERMEALS.ORG

Summer Meals Ambassador Program

Why Ambassadors?

- Engage/Activate community members
- Change the narrative by changing the narrator

How it works

- Sign up
- Watch a short, 5 minute [video](#)
- Get a 1 pg info sheet & a t-shirt
- Wear your shirt everywhere and talk about summer meals!



Strength of the Collaborative (Coalition) Model

- Members support each other
 - Mentoring, sharing information, resources, etc
 - Working Groups allow for more topic focused discussion and relationship building
 - Continuous circle of knowledge
- “We don’t each have to do everything”
 - How do you eat a sequoia? In small bites
 - Collaborative members work on the small bites
- Sense of community, not being alone in the work
 - Summer Meals is a short program with a lot of moving parts
- Draw inspiration from each other



How to Build a Summer Meals Collaborative in your Community

Recipe for Success

- Backbone, convenor, and/or ‘container’ organization
- A common “cause” or vision
- Shared but flexible strategies & measurements
 - Different program delivery models, different participation models
- Mutually reinforcing activities-but focus on the common goal/vision
- Clear & articulated ‘roles’ with the group
 - Doesn’t need to be formal, working groups are an articulated role
- Continuous “ecosystem” building to accomplish goals
- Consistent communication & inclusive ‘vision casting’
 - Both among members of the collaborative and those participating in summer meals



SUMMER MEALS COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS



Petra Colindres, R.D.

*Director of SFSP and Farm to CNP
Washington Office of Superintendent
of Public Instruction (OSPI)*



Advancing Access

The State Role

- Rural communities face unique barriers
- States play a critical role in translating federal rules into access

Policy → Practice → Partnership → Access

At the state level...

- Lead coordination to expand sustainable, community-driven solutions
- Bridge the gap between policy to practice through guidance and support,

Goal: Balance program integrity with a sponsor- and community-centered approach.



**FIND MEAL SITES
NEAR YOU** 

https://bit.ly/summer_meals

Making Summer Meals More Accessible - Rural Non-Congregate Meals



NUTRITIOUS **FRESH** **FLEXIBLE**

SUMMER MEALS ON THE MOVE
SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM

From Policy to Practice

Federal Guidance → State Practice

- Clarify expectations to reduce confusion and risk
- Align guidance across programs to ensure a cohesive approach
- Translate guidance into timely, usable resources
- Provide practical tools and examples to support implementation
- Support sponsors in navigating requirements

State Experience → Federal Engagement

- Elevate sponsor challenges and rural realities
- Share implementation successes to inform best practices
- Engage with USDA for clarity
- Provide data, trends, and on-the-ground feedback to inform decisions
- Identify emerging issues early and communicate potential impacts



From Practice to Partnership

- **Summer Summits:** Convene sponsors, community partners, and agencies to share strategies and build regional connections.
- **Summer Sponsors Advisory Board:** Create a consistent forum for sponsor voice, feedback, and peer-to-peer collaboration.
- **Sponsor Engagement:** Work directly with sponsors to identify partnership opportunities that expand access in their communities.
- **Farm to Summer Integration:** Partner with local food networks to connect sponsors with sourcing and community-based support.
- **Cross-Program Alignment:** Align efforts across child nutrition programs to create more cohesive, partner-driven approaches

From Partnership to Access

- Use sponsor feedback and data to strengthen and expand program reach
- Identify gaps in rural coverage and target access where it's most needed
- Showcase compliant and sustainable non-congregate models
- Increase participation by supporting program models that reflect community access needs



Partnership → insights + coordination → expanded access + stronger models

Aaron Goldstein

Senior Manager, Local Government
Relations
Share Our Strength





THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR CHILDREN TO GO HUNGRY IN THIS COUNTRY.

MAYORS ARE COMING TOGETHER TO END CHILD HUNGER.

Why?

- Amplify messages
- Advance policy and programmatic goals
- Share best practices
- Advocate for policy change at the state and national levels
- Build strong political champions for the long-term

Goals

- Develop a roster of Mayors to become champions for ending childhood hunger and deepen relationships between Share Our Strength and Mayors
- Form a strong, nonpartisan cohort of national Mayoral champions for ending childhood hunger
- Build issue awareness amongst Mayors and mayoral staff about childhood hunger



Mayor Daniel Rickenmann
Columbia, SC (R)
Chair



Mayor Alyia Gaskins
Alexandria, VA (D)
Vice-Chair

Commitments

- 609 mayors
- From all 50 states and DC
- 107 member mayors are from communities eligible for rural non-congregate
- 293 Democrats, 240 non-partisan, 58 Republicans, 8 Independents
- 248 women and 234 mayors color
- 334 mayors are serving their first term in office
- 63 mayors are under the age of 40
- 253 member mayors represent cities with populations less than 30,000
- 169 member mayors represent cities with populations greater than 100,000
- 12 member mayors represent cities with populations greater than 1,000,000

*As of 4/29/26

Role of Mayors & Summer Nutrition

- Build awareness
- Maximize access and participation in summer nutrition programs
- Share firsthand stories and concrete community examples
- Coordinate local advocacy efforts and partner with school districts, groups, and families
- Amplify successful program implementation through existing school, agency, and community partnerships

Summer Meals in Your Community - Engagement Toolkit for Mayors

- Issue a Summer Meals [Proclamation](#)
- Pave the Way for Summer Meals Sites in Your Community
- Promote the No Kid Hungry Summer Resource Hub & Outreach Toolkit
- Visit a Summer Meals Site

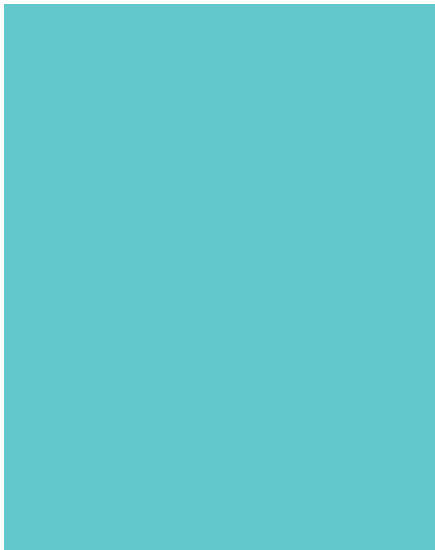
Call to Action

- Mayors Alliance pledge:
<https://mayorshungeralliance.org/join/>

*Mayor must consent to joining the Mayors Alliance



Speaker Q & A



Resources & More

[The Mayors Alliance to End Childhood Hunger One Pager](#)

The Mayors Alliance [Website](#)

[Summer Meals in Your Community - Engagement Toolkit for Mayors](#)

Visit the [SNA Training Zone for CEUs](#)

Visit our Center for Best Practices for more summer meal resources and webinars:

www.bestpractices.nokidhungry.org

Upcoming Webinars in Our Series

May 13th:

From Pickup to Porch: Best Practices for Diverse Rural Non-Congregate Meal Distribution

May 20th:

Beyond the Flyer: Next-Level Promotion for Summer Meals Success

June 10th:

Home Delivery Models and How They Could Work for Your Community

Summertime Snack



Join No Kid Hungry's monthly newsletter to receive access to:

- *Summer Meals Webinars*
- *Summer Resources*
- *Summer Templates*
- *Summer Tools and more!*

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/subscribe





Your Feedback is Appreciated!

At the conclusion of this webinar, a 5-question survey will open in your browser window.

Please take a moment to complete it.

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is leaning on a yellow metal railing of a playground structure. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, suggesting an outdoor park setting. A teal rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "THANK YOU" in white, uppercase letters.

THANK YOU