

To Be Well Read...



You Must Be Well Fed!

The Growing Need for Nutritious Meals During the Summer

Are an increasing number of kids spending summer days in your library? Are you looking to bolster your summer programming? Your library may be the most welcoming community center and trusted public space for your community's youth. As a valuable community resource, you can nourish kids' minds and bodies!

During the school year, more than 532,500 children and teens across Virginia qualified for free or reduced-price meals to power their learning.

When school is out, however, many children experience a nutritional void. Only 13 percent of children who rely on free or reduced-price lunch during the school year are also getting a free meal during the summer.

Children and teenagers who lack access to quality and consistent food are likely to be sick more often, have less energy, and be less focused on learning. Other linked issues include hyperactivity, anxiety, undernutrition, and even weight gain.

The federally funded **Summer Food Service Program** helps children and teenagers grow, learn, and play. This nutrition assistance program benefits kids and families—and your library!

Serving Free and Nutritious Meals & Snacks Makes Sense!

The **Summer Food Service Program** runs during the summer when school is not in session and provides free, nutritious meals to kids. The programs:

Strengthen your library's reputation and commitment to patrons: Your library is a trusted community center where parents are assured their children are enriching their minds while nourishing their bodies.

Boost your library's programs: Adding a meal or snack can enrich your existing program. Providing nutritional food may attract new patrons and draw them into other library services.

Help kids access good nutrition: Eating meals and snacks through a nutrition program is a better choice than eating unhealthy "junk foods" from a nearby store or not eating at all.

Require little to no cost to your library: The Summer Food Program is a federal entitlement program, meaning public funding is available to cover food. Most libraries have prepared food brought to the library and then library staff and volunteers offer a clean and safe place to eat before or after a library program or activity.



Virginia Libraries that have participated in the Summer Food Service Program include:

- Augusta County Public Library
Tammy Coulter
- Blue Ridge Regional Library System
Janet Boucher
- Chesterfield County Public Library
Jessica Gonzalez
- Charles P. Memorial Library, Lisa Hicks
- Hampton Public Library, Caitlin Flanagan
- Loudon County Public Library, Sterling Library
Chanel Warner
- Mecklenburg County Public Library
Cassie Boyd
- Pamunkey Regional Library, Betsy Henning
- Pulaski County Library System
Scott McGregor
- Roanoke Public Library, Amber Lowery

Check out these Summer Food Service Program online resources:

For Libraries: <http://lunchatthelibrary.org/>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>

Virginia Department of Health:
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/ofhs/dcn/sfsp/>

No Kid Hungry Virginia website:
<http://va.nokidhungry.org/serve-summer-meals>
OR va.nokidhungry.org

VDH/NKH collaborative website:
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/nkhi/home.html>

USDA Capacity Builder Tool to identify libraries and sites: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/capacitybuilder>

Share Our Strength Center for Best Practices:
<https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/free-summer-meals-kids>

Libraries participating in the summer food program may request resources at: <http://readvirginia.com/SummerFoodatYourLibrary.htm>



Learn More and Get Involved

5 Steps for Libraries

- 1. Visit websites listed** and learn more about the Summer Food Service Program.
- 2. Connect with a colleague** about free meals or snacks. Libraries across the commonwealth have experience with these child nutrition programs.
- 3. Spread the word!** Locations across Virginia serve free summer meals. If there are meal sites already in your service area, please inform families and caregivers Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or text "FOOD" to 877-877 during the summer to locate your nearest summer meal site.
- 4. If your community has a summer meal site close to the library, visit the site** and provide enriching literacy-related activities or programs.
- 5. Become a Summer Food snack or meal site** and partner with a sponsor to provide free meals to kids this summer at your library.

To learn more about how federally and state-funded nutrition assistance programs can help your library and its youngest patrons, please contact:

Enid Costley
Library of Virginia
804.692.3765
enid.costley@lva.virginia.gov

Eddie Oliver
No Kid Hungry Virginia State Director
Office of the Governor
804.692.2583
eddie.oliver@governor.virginia.gov

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