



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

April 10, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Meal Options for Students in the Summer**

The purpose of this memorandum is to present program options available to school divisions for feeding children in the summer months.

Good nutrition is essential for good health and effective learning every day, year-round. During the school year, students receive meals while they are in school; however, when school is out, many students lose access to nutritious meals. For many children, summer vacation exposes them to an increased risk of hunger and developmental decline. Hunger is one of the most severe roadblocks to the learning process. Lack of nutrition, during the summer months, may set up a cycle for poor performance once school begins again.

Governor Terry McAuliffe and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe have identified child nutrition as a high priority. They recognize the important role good, nutritious meals and physical activity play in ensuring the children of Virginia develop healthy lifestyles and succeed academically and become productive citizens. Mrs. McAuliffe has sent a letter directly to all division superintendents encouraging schools to become a sponsor of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and announcing a grant opportunity offered through the Commonwealth's partnership with Share Our Strength No Kid Hungry campaign.

Additionally, the USDA has identified Virginia as one of several states with pockets of persistent poverty and thus has focused effort and attention on Virginia to expand the number of meals served to children during the summer months. The USDA has made the Summer Food Service Program a top priority in Virginia.

Schools are in a perfect position to provide meals to students during the summer months. There are three options school divisions may use to help children bridge the nutrition gap in the summer. School divisions are encouraged to consider participating in one of the following programs to meet the nutritional needs of students during the summer months:

- 1. Academic Summer School Programs-National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).** Schools that offer academic summer school sessions can serve breakfast and/or lunch to students and receive federal reimbursement for the meals served through the regular National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs as they do during the school year. Only those students enrolled in the summer school session can participate in the school meals programs. Schools wishing to participate in the summer NSLP and summer SBP must request approval through the Virginia Department of Education's School Nutrition Programs Web-based application (SNPWeb). Federal reimbursement is by category and is at the same rates schools earn during the school year.

If your school division plans to participate in the Academic Summer School Program, please consider

becoming a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) site after you have fed your summer school students. This can be easily accomplished and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will work very closely with school divisions to ensure a smooth transition in offering both programs.

2. **Seamless Summer Option (SSO).** This option combines features of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Under the SSO, schools with at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price meals remain in the regular National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and serve meals to all children at no charge. All meals are reimbursed at the free rate established for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. There is no academic requirement. The SSO program may be operated as:
  - o An open site that must be open to anyone under 18 years of age in the neighborhood, or as
  - o A restricted open site that restricts attendance at the site to children who attend the school during the school year and siblings of those students but not the entire neighborhood.
3. **USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).** The SFSP is a USDA federally- funded child nutrition program administered by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Division of Community Nutrition. School divisions can apply to participate in the SFSP as an open site. Schools can qualify as an open site and earn higher reimbursement for meals served under the SFSP if they plan to offer meals to children in the community. Eligibility criteria to qualify as an open site include:
  - a. Schools located within the attendance area of a school where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced price meals;
  - b. Open their programs to neighborhood children; and
  - c. Serve all meals at no cost to participants.

Federal reimbursement under SFSP is higher than NSLP and all SFSP meals are reimbursed at the same rate. There is no academic requirement for participation in the SFSP. The SFSP is ideal for recreational, enrichment or activity programs over the summer. A school may be a sponsor for the SFSP, prepare meals and receive federal reimbursement or, schools can choose to provide meals as a vendor to sponsoring institutions such as the local parks and recreation department, the YMCA, or other community organizations.

Restricted Open site waiver: In an effort to ensure that all eligible Virginia children continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer, in 2014 VDH and VDOE requested and were granted a waiver from USDA to allow school division sponsors to operate restricted open sites. This waiver will continue again for summer 2015. Open school sites operated under SFSP and SSO may restrict attendance at the site to children who attend the school during the school year and siblings of those students. These sites may not be restricted to only children attending summer school at the school sites. Restricted open school sites must provide alternative summer meal site information to all children coming to the site whose access is restricted. Additionally, these restricted open sites should be publicized and targeted only to families of children attending the school during the school year and summer session and should not be publicized as open meal sites for anyone in the community to attend.

If the school division chooses not to provide meals during the summer months, there may be sponsors in the school's attendance zone that do participate and provide meals to children.

#### Reaching Families

School divisions are encouraged to provide information about the SFSP to all families to ensure they are aware of the availability of access to nutritious meals for their children throughout local communities.

- o Schools can work with their PTA, send electronic announcements to parents through the school notification system, or provide written communication to inform families of the availability of summer meals.
- o Families can also call 2-1-1 (Virginia's information and referral search tool) to find a feeding site closest to their neighborhood. Site information is available on the VDH Web site at

<http://www.vahealth.org/NuPAFP/General%20Info/sfsp.htm>.

- o Families may also use their mobile phones to text “SummerVA” to 877-877 and find the feeding site closest to their home. The 2-1-1 and text services provide up-to-date information on Virginia summer meals at no cost.
- o The Virginia No Kid Hungry campaign, a public-private partnership between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Share our Strength organization, is dedicated to ending childhood hunger in Virginia. The No Kid Hungry campaign is working to connect children to summer meals and afterschool meals. Neighborhood feeding sites can be located on the No Kid Hungry Web site at [NoKidHungry.org/Virginia](http://NoKidHungry.org/Virginia).
- o The National Hunger Hotline, 1-866-3-HUNGRY, operated by WhyHunger, is a toll-free phone number available to people in need of food assistance. Families can call the National Hunger Hotline to find summer meal sites in their communities.

This year, Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry Campaign is offering monetary grants to school divisions to encourage them to participate in the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Any school division interested in starting, expanding, or strengthening their involvement with the USDA SFSP, or the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option, is invited to apply. Grants up to **\$3,000** will be awarded. **Applications that receive full funding will align with the campaign’s goals of access, education, and awareness as outlined on the No Kid Hungry Web site at <http://www.nokidhungry.org/>.** Please visit <http://grants.nokidhungry.org/> for more information and, if you choose to apply, please use code VASUMMER2015 to create an account and file the grant application.

The school divisions’ role in feeding hungry children should not stop during the summer months. Please consider participating in one of the above programs and provide information to parents on summer meal options for children. Help ensure Virginia’s children return to school ready to learn.

If you have any additional questions about the SFSP, please contact Conchetta Yonaitis, Special Nutrition Programs Manager, Virginia Department of Health, Division of Community Nutrition, by telephone at (804) 864-7271 or by e-mail at [conchetta.yonaitis@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:conchetta.yonaitis@vdh.virginia.gov).

For more information about the Summer NSLP, Summer SBP or the SSO, please contact the school nutrition program specialist assigned to your division or the Office of School Nutrition Programs at (804) 225-2074.

SRS/CDG/cc