



Center for Public Policy Priorities

900 Lydia Street, Austin, Texas 78702

PH: 512.320.0222 FAX: 512.320.0227 www.cppp.org

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lynsey Kluever
512-320-0222, X112 or kluever@cppp.org

Texas Makes Better Use of Federal Resources for Summer Meal Programs; More is Needed to Reach Needy Children

- New report estimates Texas could reach half a million more children; state missing out on \$30 million in federal funds for summer meals
- Congress could make changes to help programs reach more kids

AUSTIN, TX – Texas has increased the number of low-income children served by federally funded summer nutrition programs since 2000, but still lags far behind the performance of most states, according to a new report released today by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) in Washington, D.C. Texas uses two federally funded meal programs to feed children for free during the summer: the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

According to the FRAC report, “Hunger Doesn’t Take a Vacation,” between 2000 and 2004, the number of Texas children fed by these programs increased by 5.9 percent. Texas also served 5.5 percent more meals in summer 2004 than in 2003. Despite these modest increases, in 2004 the summer food programs still only reached 8.2 percent, or 198,365, of the over 2.4 million low-income Texas school children who are eligible for free summer meals.

Texas lags far behind other states in the number of eligible children reached by summer food programs. Nationwide, 19 percent of eligible low-income children, on average, were served by the summer food programs in 2004.

Texas ranks 45th in the nation in the percentage of eligible children reached by these programs. This gap means not only that a significant number of low-income children may go hungry during the summer, but also that Texas is continuing to leave federal funds (Texas taxpayers’ money) in Washington, D.C.

Texas misses out on more federal money for summer food than any other state, according to the FRAC report. The report estimates that if Texas reached 40 percent of eligible schoolchildren (a goal reached by the top-performing states in the past few years), Texas summer food programs could feed another 578,798 low-income children, which would draw down almost \$30 million in additional federal funds. These funds could be used in poor neighborhoods as the foundation for broader summer programs that combine food with recreational and educational activities.

In summer 2004, Texas drew down \$24.9 million in federal funds to serve more than 11.4 million meals to low-income children.

“We applaud the progress Texas has made in ensuring that kids eat right during the summer,” said Celia Hagert, senior policy analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “But, more is needed. This is not the time to leave federal dollars in Washington.”

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