



Center for Public Policy Priorities

Twenty Years: 1985 to 2005

Today is Hunger Awareness Day

Today is National Hunger Awareness Day, the grassroots movement to raise awareness about the hunger crisis in America. In Texas, it is a solemn reminder that we suffer the highest rate of “food insecurity” in the nation, with 16.4% of households at risk for hunger and 4.9% of households experiencing hunger – well above the national average of 11.4% (food insecure) and 3.6% (hungry). Families with children are the most likely to be at risk for hunger. National Hunger Awareness Day also provides an opportunity to raise awareness about an important public-private partnership to keep children healthy and well-nourished – the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

This week, thousands of sites will kick off their summer feeding programs in low-income communities all over Texas. The program is 100% federally funded and meals are provided for free to children in low-income communities. The summer presents a challenge for many low-income families, whose children no longer have access to the free meals they receive during the school year through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Research shows that requests for emergency food from families with children soar during the summer months when school is out and energy bills are high.

In Texas, 60% of all children enrolled in public school are eligible for free or reduced-price meals due to their families’ limited income. Yet of these 2.4 million children, less than 10% are served by the summer food program each day. A combination of factors contributes to low participation, including lack of awareness, lack of transportation, and the fact that most summer food sites are located at schools, which generally shut down in late June or mid-July. Last summer, 30% of feeding sites shut down at the end of June, with 70% closed by July 31.

USDA and HHSC are working hard to address these barriers through an outreach campaign focused on “filling the gaps” in July and August. USDA also awarded special grants to two sponsors in Texas – the Regional East Texas Food Bank in Tyler and the West Texas Food Bank in Odessa – to test strategies

for reducing transportation barriers in rural areas.

To find a summer feeding site in your neighborhood, dial 2-1-1. If you are interested in hosting a feeding site, contact Kay Trigg (kay.trigg@hhsc.state.tx.us) at HHSC. To find out more about the SFSP, see www.summerfood.org. To learn about kick-off events in your area, contact Lynn Manor (lynn.manor@hhsc.state.tx.us) or Geoff Wool (geoffrey.wool@hhsc.state.tx.us) at HHSC. And for local data on the SFSP, contact Celia Hagert (hagert@cphp.org) at the Center for Public Policy Priorities in Austin.

900 Lydia Street | Austin, Texas 78702
(p) 512-320-0222 | (f) 512-320-0227