



NEWS RELEASE

Center for Public Policy Priorities

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REPORT: HUNGER COSTS TEXAS \$9 BILLION A YEAR;

THIS HUNGER AWARENESS DAY, TOO MANY TEXAS KIDS AT RISK OF HUNGER

Austin, TX—According to a report released today, Hunger Awareness Day, hunger doesn't just take a toll on the 1.3 million Texas families who experience food insecurity, but it costs the state more than \$9 billion a year. The study, by the University Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University, estimates this cost by calculating the annual cost for charity, illness, and lowered productivity for the nation related to food insecurity.

Children are at the highest risk of hunger, especially during the summer, when they can no longer eat breakfast and lunch at school. More than 2.1 million low-income Texas kids rely on free or reduced-priced meals during the school year.

There is a federally funded summer food program, administered by schools, nonprofit organizations, and local government agencies. However, less than one-fifth of the Texas kids who rely on meals during the school year (17%) are eating summer meals on any given day. That number falls even lower in the month of July, when only 8% of these kids participate in the Summer Food Program, according to the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

The reason so few kids participate in the summer food programs is that there are too few feeding sites in Texas, and too many sponsors close their feeding sites at the end of June – well before children go back to school. Currently there are 475 summer food sponsors in Texas and over 3,000 sites in Texas. However, 78 counties didn't have any summer food sites in 2006, and 40% of sites only operated in June.

"Low-income Texas children need to eat right all year round, not just during the school year," said Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities in Austin. "Making sure kids eat right during the summer should be a priority for Texas. We need to nourish kids' bodies as well as their minds so they can go back to school prepared to learn."

To find a summer food program in your area, call 2-1-1 or visit www.summerfood.org. To view Dr. Brown's study, see www.sodexhousa.com. For more information about the summer food programs in your county and to see where your country stacks up, visit <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=685>.

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.