



# *News Release*

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## **Hunger Doesn't Take a Summer Vacation** More Partners Needed to Make a Real Difference in the Lives of Hundreds of Thousands of Hungry Michigan Children

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The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is looking for community partners, sponsors, and potential site locations to participate in Michigan's *Summer Meet Up and Eat Up*<sup>™</sup> initiative and run summer food programs to prevent more than a half million children in Michigan from going hungry when school lunchrooms close for the summer.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) could fill the summer hunger gap for hundreds of thousands of children if there is an increase in community awareness, local government involvement, sponsors to run the program, and sites to serve meals. Last year, out of the 563,000 low-income Michigan children who received meals during the school year, just more than 98,000 (17.5%) were able to eat free meals or snacks at approved summer meal sites in their neighborhoods.

In stressing the importance of sponsoring these crucial summer food programs for children, State Superintendent Mike Flanagan said: "Many families across Michigan are struggling, and we can't have children going hungry in the summer when programs like this are available. I am calling on schools, churches, and local government and civic organizations to step up and have a positive impact on the lives and health of children in their community by supporting the Summer Food Service Program."

Research shows a direct relationship between good nutrition and learning. *Meet Up and Eat Up* is a key building block in Michigan communities to develop healthy, happy kids who are ready to learn.

"There is a desperate need and the food is available," Flanagan said. "We just need more awareness of the program's availability, more community members to get involved, and additional locations around the state to serve children."

Sponsors receive federal payments for both the meals served to children and the administrative costs of serving the meals. New sponsors will receive free training and technical assistance from MDE.

The Summer Food Service Program serves nutritious meals to children up to age 18 living in low-income areas (where 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced price school meals). The program can operate in schools, public housing centers, playgrounds, camps, parks, and faith-based facilities.

Sponsors can be public school districts or nonprofit private schools; public or private nonprofit residential summer camps; local, county or state government agencies; colleges or universities; or private nonprofit organizations.

If you are interested in more information about how you can help feed your community this summer, please contact MDE by March 1, 2015. Program information may be obtained from MDE's Office of School Support Services, Summer Food Service Program, 608 West Allegan Street, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, Michigan 48909, (517) 373-3347; or on the MDE website at [www.michigan.gov/sfsp](http://www.michigan.gov/sfsp).

The Summer Food Service Program, administered by MDE through funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is available to children 18 and under regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

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