

Montana

Summer Food Service Program

Report

Summer 2016

While summer should be a time for children to play in the sun and relax, summer vacation can also be one of the hardest times a year for families struggling with food insecurity. Children no longer have access to the free and reduced price meals they regularly eat at school, adding a significant strain to family food budgets. As a result, children may miss out on the nutrition needed to minimize learning loss over the summer months, known as summer slide. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) addresses both food insecurity and summer slide by offering nutritious meals at no cost to all children ages 18 and under. In addition, many programs offer activities and games, which can further reduce summer learning loss. All children, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from this amazing program.

Fortunately, SFSP has been growing at a steady pace in Montana. During summer 2016, nearly 637,000 meals were served, an increase of over 10% from 2015. In addition, there were 224 sites across the state, 28 more sites than the previous summer. Meals were served an average of 40 days last summer, and over 10,000 kids participated daily across the state! Schools, food pantries, churches, and other community organizations have dedicated themselves to increasing the number of meals served, making sure more children have access to nutritious, tasty meals throughout the summer.



Despite the upward trends in SFSP, there is still plenty of room for growth. Fewer than 25% of students who regularly eat FRP lunches during the school year participated in SFSP. Many factors contribute to the discrepancy between those who qualify and those who participate, and one is lack of access to the program. While there has been steady growth since 2005, there are still 16 counties with no program and 14 that have only one site in the entire county. In addition, families may miss out because they do not realize that a program exists in their area, or know that any child can participate with no signup or verification required.

The Summer Food Service Program is a community resource and community members all have a role to play. From helping to start a new program in an unserved area, to posting flyers for an existing site, organizing volunteer groups, or donating activity supplies, we can all help to improve the reach of SFSP in our state.

County	Number of Sponsors	Number of Sites	Average # of Serving Days	Total Meals served	ADP 2016	% Change in Meals Served 2015-2016	% Eligible That Participate	Rank
Beaverhead	1	1	58	16,749	138	78%	48%	2
Big Horn	5	11	28	30,542	802	6%	43%	6
Blaine	2	4	59	15,862	281	-1%	34%	13
Broadwater	1	1	49	2,883	59	29%	30%	15
Carbon	3	3	32	2,414	51	-4%	15%	30
Cascade	6	11	36	33,516	620	51%	15%	31
Custer	1	2	56	8,829	131	11%	27%	17
Deer Lodge	1	6	43	8,673	108	19%	28%	16
Fergus	2	2	67	6,083	77	-5%	15%	29
Flathead	5	10	40	29,497	402	89%	10%	34
Gallatin	1	12	45	20,831	320	7%	17%	27
Glacier	2	13	44	36,119	449	1%	23%	21
Granite	2	2	42	2,052	47	36%	39%	9
Hill	6	10	47	51,933	598	9%	41%	7
Jefferson	1	1	23	2,440	64	13%	22%	23
Lake	5	10	27	26,246	552	-28%	25%	20
Lewis and Clark	4	12	46	35,212	554	59%	26%	19
Lincoln	4	8	22	7,817	308	-1%	35%	12
Madison	1	1	19	653	22	7%	10%	35
Meagher	0	1	73	6,526	45	35%	46%	3
Mineral	1	2	23	2,580	109	30%	39%	8
Missoula	6	23	37	54,778	769	11%	20%	24
Musselshell	1	1	77	4,933	44	-14%	16%	28
Park	2	3	25	6,763	36	-20%	7%	40
Phillips	1	1	13	646	50	2836%	19%	25
Pondera	2	5	62	23,250	243	3%	65%	1
Powell	0	1	37	1,874	51	42%	15%	32
Prairie	1	1	39	1,496	26	-41%	45%	4
Ravalli	4	4	36	6,754	160	2%	10%	36
Richland	1	1	33	1,443	31	N/A	9%	38
Roosevelt	3	6	38	28,974	520	0%	36%	11
Rosebud	3	5	28	14,697	381	13%	31%	14
Sanders	5	7	23	10,105	249	-1%	36%	10
Silver Bow	3	9	33	16,380	282	20%	23%	18
Stillwater	1	1	41	2,014	26	-25%	10%	37
Teton	1	1	28	1,112	22	10%	7%	39
Toole	1	1	19	1,009	32	2%	18%	26
Valley	1	1	53	4,594	49	74%	11%	33
Wheatland	1	3	35	6,540	65	19%	43%	5
Yellowstone	5	27	43	101,574	1,388	5%	22%	22
Montana	96	224	40	636,393	10,161	12%	23%	-

Average Number of Serving Days: Total number of serving days reported by each sponsor divided by the total number of sponsors.

Total Meals Served: Total number of breakfasts, lunches, suppers, and snacks served through SFSP.

Average Daily Participation: Average number of children served per day (see ADP box to the right)

% Change from 2015-2016: Change in total meals served in 2016 compared to 2015.

% Eligible that Participate: Compares the average number of children who ate at least one meal though SFSP each day to the average number of children who ate Free or Reduced Price school lunch during the school year.

Rank: Based on % Eligible that Participate.

Average Daily Participation (ADP): There is no set methodology for determining ADP and calculations often vary between reports. For this report, ADP is calculated by dividing the total number of meals served at the meal with the highest meal count (typically lunch) by the number of operation days reported for that sponsor. County level ADP is the sum of all sponsor ADPs, and state level ADP is the sum of all county level values. MFBN uses only one meal to calculate ADP to avoid counting children who eat multiple meals at each site as two different individuals.

Cool Wheels and Amazing Meals in Great Falls

The food truck culture has been sweeping the state, and the Summer Food Service Program is not immune to its charm. Combining the mobile food service model with parks and other eligible areas maximizes the number of children who can participate in SFSP throughout the summer. Increasingly, more sponsors are adding a mobile route to their program, and Great Falls is a great example of how the program can be successful!

Great Falls Public Schools' Food Service Program incorporated four mobile meal sites into their 2016 program. Their AmeriCorps member scouted sites and coordinated with organizations and individuals to schedule a consistent rotation of activities. Sites were chosen, in part, for their access to restrooms and tables where the children could eat. Meals were prepared and packaged at East Middle School and then packed into coolers in the trailer. The green trailer's friendly mascot welcomed children to 'order' and lunches were served in decorated paper sacks.



The program partnered with businesses, community organizations and private parties to provide activities at their mobile sites throughout the summer. Through a partnership with Great Falls Parks and Recreation, they were able to offer fun activities like dodge ball and soap carving. Offering activities is a great way to not only attract children to your site, it helps to decrease the amount of summer slide that children can experience. Summer slide occurs when children don't engage in educational activities during the summer.

Jennifer Spellman, the Food Service Director, offers some tips for sponsors interested in starting their own mobile meal site.

Plan far in advance! It takes a while waiting for the right vehicle to come up for sale. If you receive a donated bus or vehicle, you will need time to renovate.

Trailer vs. All-in-One food truck: Trailers offer some advantages. If the vehicle used to tow the trailer has mechanical issues, it is easier to find a replacement while the repairs are made. Food trucks are fun and appealing, easier to park, but they require you find one in great shape or have a backup plan in the case the truck suffers any mechanical issues.

Be thoughtful about your mobile locations: Spellman included a park close to a low income housing. Because the activities were planned about an hour before lunch, children were outside and ready to eat. A neighbor said, "It's so nice to see kids outside again."

Estimated Cost: \$25,000.

Funding: \$15,000 No Kid Hungry grant, \$5,000 from Benefis Health Systems, \$2,500 from Benefis Foundation Youth Grant, and \$500 from Uptown Optimist Club.



Spellman's goal was to serve 10,000 meals during the summer. They exceeded the goal and served over 14,000 meals. Great Falls is a powerful example of how well mobile sites and community partnerships work to expand access to summer meals.

For summer 2017 their mobile sites are Gibson Park, Rhodes Park, Lewis and Clark Elementary, and Lion's Park. Their non-mobile site is at Longfellow Elementary.

If you are interested in sponsoring a site, or would like more information about the Summer Food Service Program please contact Tirza Asbell at 406.215.1771 or at tasbell@mfbn.org.

