Summer Food Service Program Expanded to Provide Meals During the Pandemic

USDA has extended the program to help feed children during the fall, winter, and spring

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NASHVILLE – The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is announcing an extension to its summer program to provide meals to children. With the recent approval from the USDA, sponsors of Tennessee's Summer Food Service Program now have the ability to offer meals to their communities throughout the entire 2020/2021 school year.

The goal of the Summer Food Service Program is to ensure children 18 and younger, who benefit from meal programs during the school year, continue to have that same access to nutritious meals when schools are closed, or students are unable to attend school in person. TDHS partners with organizations, governmental institutions, schools, and religious entities who serve as program sponsors and serve millions of free meals to children in their communities.

This USDA extension allows sponsors who were approved for the program in 2020 to continue receiving funding to serve meals through the end of June 2021.

Additionally, sponsors will have new flexibility to provide "grab and go" meals to children along with meal bags containing more than one day's worth of food. This flexibility will also allow sponsors, including schools that serve as sponsors, to serve meals when schools are closed to meet the needs of their communities.

"Schools have become places children depend on for daily nutrition, and that access has been impacted all across the state by the COVID-19 pandemic," said interim DHS Commissioner Tony Mathews. "This extension of our Summer Food Service Program gives our partners the resources they need to meet these needs in their communities and provide important support for families."

Parents interested in finding a Summer Food Service Program feeding location close to them are encouraged contact the TDHS Summer Food Service Program main line at 615-313-4749 or contact their local school.

In addition to children of school age, adults 19 and older with a mental or physical disability are eligible to receive free meals if they participate in a school program established for individuals with disabilities during the prior school year.

For more information on the Summer Food Service Program, please visit our website .

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