



Rural Development

February 8, 2019

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TO: State Directors
Housing and Community Program Directors
Rural Development

FROM: Joel C. Baxley /s/ **Joel C. Baxley**
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Rural Housing Service

SUBJECT: Hosting the U.S. Department of Agriculture Summer Meals Program at Rural Development-Financed Housing and Community Facility Properties

This Unnumbered Letter (UL) is to promote the participation of Rural Housing Service (RHS) financed housing and community facility properties in the [Summer Food Service Program](#) (SFSP), operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The SFSP provides low-income children with nutritious meals at no cost during the summer when school is out. This program is critically important for many rural children, who may be at risk of going hungry when they do not have access to free and reduced-price school meals through the National School Lunch Program. Summer meals are provided by local sponsoring organizations and are reimbursed by FNS. You can find your local sponsoring organizations by contacting the State Agency that administers your state's Summer Food Service Program at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>. RHS financed housing and community facility properties are community anchors across rural America and can serve as the perfect location for providing vital meal services to children.

RHS has been a strong partner in the Summer Food Service Program in recent years, primarily by recruiting Multi-Family Housing (MFH) properties to serve as meal sites. This serves many rural communities well by allowing local sponsoring organizations to deliver meals directly to the properties where children live. In 2018, we far surpassed our previous year total by enrolling nearly 487 properties: 426 MFH properties and 51 Community Facilities' (CF) Program properties. This is an all-time high with over 100 more properties than we were able to serve the year before and triple the number from 2014. Attachment A lists the number of properties that served as meal sites in each state in 2018.

EXPIRATION DATE:
February 29, 2020

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Housing Programs

In 2019, we intend to feed more children in rural communities by promoting SFSP participation across all RHS properties.

- MFH properties continue to be key partners for the Summer Food Service Program in rural America. In 2018, MFH hosted nearly 426 property sites and this year we are aiming to continue to build upon on this partnership. We will meet this objective by continuing to encourage MFH properties to enroll in the program and recruit additional properties as appropriate. Transportation can be a challenge in the Summer Food Service Program. Along with hosting meal sites at their properties, property owners and managers can also participate by working with their local sponsoring organizations to transport resident children to a nearby meal site regularly throughout the summer. The SFSP is not just for Section 515 properties, as it can also be beneficial for our Section 538 properties. We encourage you to share this information with the Section 538 Lenders in your state that might be interested in this opportunity.
- CF properties are also a key partner for the Summer Food Service Program in rural America. In 2018, 51 CF properties participated in the Summer Meals Program. As in the previous year, CF staff in each state will be encouraged to recruit borrowers and grantees in their states to partner with the Summer Meals Program. Many types of RHS-financed community facilities - such as community centers, schools, libraries, and daycares are natural gathering places for families and children. Several may already host summer youth activities and will be encouraged to add summer meal services with the help of a local sponsoring organization.
- In some cases, Self-Help communities that have common spaces for residents could also serve as Summer Food Service Program sites. We encourage you to share this information with Self-Help partners in your state that might be interested in this opportunity.

To strengthen our participation in the Summer Food Service Program and feed more children, we intend to boost the outreach of this important program and track the properties and facilities that sign up. We have created a new Summer Food Service Program SharePoint site, and we ask that you keep it updated with information about the participating properties and facilities in your state:

https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/RD_HCFP/SummerMeals/SitePages/Home.aspx

We also encourage you to get involved and spread the word early. State agencies and sponsoring organizations hold planning sessions months before the summer begins and taking part in these can help maximize participation in your state. We also encourage you to work with your state partners, RD Community Economic Development (CED) leads, and FNS colleagues to identify areas not currently being served and in need of meal services and to extend outreach to those areas.

We stand ready to support you and your property owners and managers in this important endeavor and will provide additional tools and resources over the winter. If you have any questions regarding this UL, please contact:

- Multi-Family Housing: Gina Wepplo (202) 407-6404
- Community Facilities: Geoffrey Armes at (202) 720-1498
- Single Family Housing: Andria Hively at (360) 999-0252

More information on Summer Meals can be found at:

https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/RD_HCFP/SummerMeals/SitePages/Home.aspx

Four Steps to Encourage Property Owners/Managers and Borrowers to Sign Up for Summer Food Service Program

1. Contact your FNS Regional Office and the State Agency coordinating your state's Summer Food Service Program to learn how to bring the program to your housing and community facility properties. You may want to ask about the dates of your state's SFSP planning meetings.
 - a. Contact information for FNS Regional Offices can be found at:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.
 - b. Contact information for State Agencies can be found at:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>.
2. Send a letter inviting your property owners and managers to participate in the Summer Food Service Program.
3. Follow up on the letter with phone calls and site visits.
4. Customize the template op-ed with state-specific information and submit to local media outlets.

**NUMBER OF RURAL HOUSING SERVICE SITES
PARTICIPATING IN THE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM IN 2018**

States	MFH Sites	CF Sites	Total Sites
AK	1		1
AZ	3		3
CA	20	17	37
CO	2		2
DE	4		4
GA	4	1	5
HI	2		2
ID	3		3
IN	1		1
IA	1	15	16
KS	1		1
KY	92	2	94
MD	5		5
MN	3		3
MS	3		3
MO	70		70
MT	0	0	0
NE	1		1
NV	16		16
NH	4		4
NJ	6		6
NC	17		17
OH	29		29
OK	4		4
OR	3		3
PR	60		60
SC	17		17
SD	1		1
TX	8		8
VA	32	16	48
WA	5		5
WV	4		4
WY	5		5
Totals	427	51	478