

# Summer Meals

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY FACT SHEET - 2018 SUMMER

### ABOUT SUMMER MEALS

There are two federally-funded, state-administered summer food programs. **The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** is a reimbursement program allowing sponsors to operate sites that serve free healthy meals and snacks to children and teens in low-income areas. **The Seamless Summer Option (SSO)** enables schools to continue the same meal service through the summer months, using the same rules and claiming procedures as the National School Lunch (NSLP) or School Breakfast Programs (SBP), during the regular school year. Only two locations in Allegheny County participate in SSO. The federal government reimburses each state based on meals served. **In 2018, Pennsylvania missed out on nearly \$13.5 million in federal funding and failed to feed 165,747 children.**

### HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION

Over 75,000 Allegheny County students are eligible for free and reduced price school meals. **Approximately 53,000, or 70 percent, of free or reduced price eligible students eat lunch at school during the school year.** Those children still need access to meals during the summer months, and summer meal programs are designed to fill that need. Summer meals not only ensure children have access to healthy meals, but often offer educational, physical, and recreational activities.

### IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

**There were approximately 33 sponsors and over 300 summer meal sites in 2018.** A sponsor is the administrative agent that enters into an agreement with the state to run one or multiple summer meal programs. The sponsor manages the program, meals, and all reporting. Summer meal sites are locations in the community where children receive meals in a safe and supervised environment. Sponsors identify and staff sites, often with volunteers, for summer meal programs. A site may serve up to two reimbursable meals per day, but cannot serve both lunch and supper. With state agency approval, camp or migrant site sponsors may serve up to three meals each day.

### BREAKDOWN OF SITES

**274 Open Sites** - Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least 50 percent of children residing in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, based on local school or census data. The meals are served free to any child at the site on a first-come, first-served basis.

**24 Closed Enrolled Sites** - Closed enrolled sites operate for a specific group of children who enroll in an organized activity program or who do not reside in an eligible low income area.

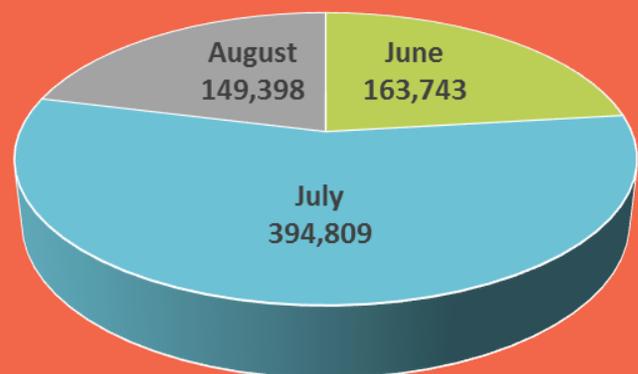
**2 Camps** - Camps are sites that offer regularly scheduled food service along with organized activities for enrolled residential or day campers. The camp receives reimbursement only for meals served to enrolled children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

## In Allegheny County

# 708K

Total summer meals  
and snacks were  
served in 2018

Total Meals Served by Summer Month



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### WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB

**Nationally, participation in summer meal programs has been declining.** According to FRAC's Summer Nutrition Status Report, in July 2018, on an average weekday, the Summer Nutrition Programs served lunch to almost 2.9 million children. This was a decrease of just over 171,000 children, or 5.7 percent, from July 2017.

**In Allegheny County, participation in summer meals has also declined.** Even with an increase in sponsors and sites, the numbers of summer meals and snacks served decreased by 27,000 meals compared to 2014-15. In July of 2018, the peak serving month for summer meals, around 10,000 children ate lunch at a summer meal site. That's less than 20 percent of students who typically eat free and reduced lunch during the school year. Summer meal programs are **missing more than 40,000 children throughout the region.**

### OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME



**Funding:** In Pennsylvania, all funding for summer meal programming comes from federal sources. The reimbursement amount is simply not enough to provide high-quality meals, along with enrichment activities needed to boost participation. For this reason, other states have implemented legislation that provides state funds to summer meal programs. Currently, nearly a dozen states have legislation providing additional state funding to summer meals. [Click here to view them all.](#)



**Quality:** With low reimbursement rates, it's difficult to serve high quality meals. Many states work with sponsors to improve nutrition quality. The District of Columbia and others provide additional reimbursements to sponsors that meet higher nutritional standards.

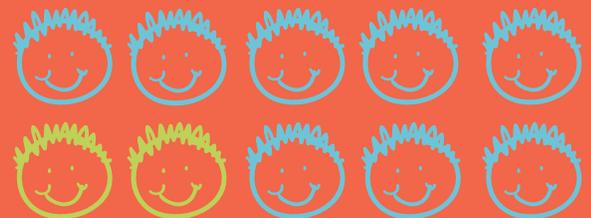
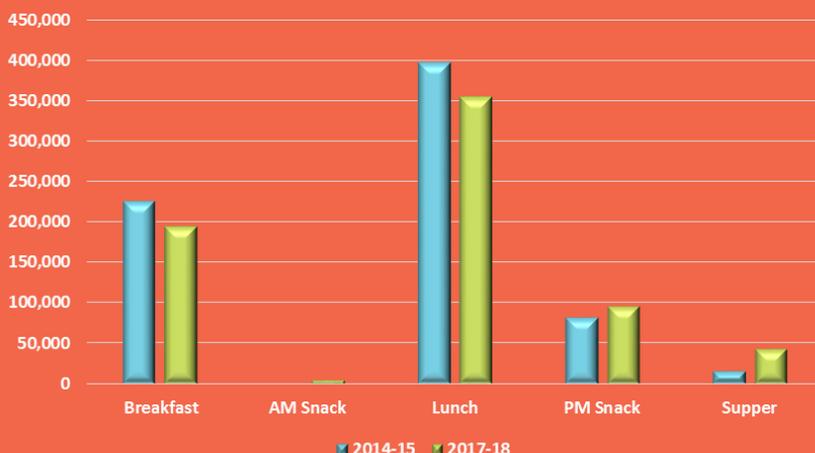


**Awareness gap:** Even with an increase in summer meal sites, participation is declining. Marketing programs early and often is extremely important for success. Sites need to begin marketing before school is out, so that schools can be used as a resource to send information home. Currently, the only tool for finding sites in Allegheny County is the USDA mapping tool. California, Minnesota, and Oklahoma, among others, have launched their own tools, apps and mapping, to help the public find sites.



**Logistics:** Summer meal regulations state that meals must be consumed on-site. Without proper funding to create activities for sites, it can be difficult to attract children and families to a location for the duration of a meal. Implementing a mobile meals program is an effective strategy to reach children in more locations, especially those in rural areas or where summer programming is not centralized. Many communities have developed a "summer meals bus" to deliver meals to multiple sites in eligible areas.

Summer Meals Served



Only **2 out of every 10 children** who eat free or reduced price lunch at school are eating lunch through a summer meal program.