



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM SEEKS SPONSORS

Roseville – The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is looking for organizations to sponsor the 2010 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) that will provide free meals to at-risk Minnesota children during the summer.

At-risk children are from low-income families who rely on free or reduced-price school breakfasts and lunches during the school year. During the summer, most school lunch programs don't operate. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program helps fill the "nutrition gap" for children through age 18.

"It is incredibly important that at-risk children do not lose access to nutritious meals during the summer months," said MDE Commissioner Alice Seagren. "The Summer Food Service Program provides funding to sponsors for free meals and snacks served to eligible children, helping them to return to school in the fall ready to learn."

There are many underserved areas in need of a sponsoring organization to operate a summer feeding site. In 2009, there were 91 SFSP sponsors with 423 sites that provided over 1.5 million meals, up 8.7 percent from 2008. Qualified sponsors receive federal payments for the meals served to children. New and returning sponsors also receive training and technical assistance from MDE.

A sponsoring organization must be a:

- public or nonprofit private school food authority;
- public or nonprofit private residential summer camp;
- unit of local, municipal, county or state government;
- public or nonprofit college or university; or a
- private nonprofit organization.

A sponsoring organization or site often offers activity programs, such as at local schools, community centers, recreations centers and faith-based organizations.

Interested schools and nonprofit organizations are invited to attend the 2010 Summer Meals Kick-Off Event on Tuesday, March 2 from 1 - 3 p.m. at MDE in Roseville. Current sponsors of SFSP will share their experience and knowledge, and FNS staff will be available to provide information and answer questions. Register on the MDE website.

For more information about the SFSP or to find out how you can help improve access to summer meals by being a sponsor or by partnering with an existing sponsor offering the SFSP in your area, contact MDE Food and Nutrition Service, 651-582-8526, 800-366-8922 or email to fns@state.mn.us. Also, visit the MDE website, www.education.state.mn.us.

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