



A guide to congregational involvement in the Summer Food Service Program

Nearly half of Oregon's students qualify for free or reduced price school meals, based on their family's low income. But how do those 237,087 students get their nutritional needs met during the long summer break?

Project Summer is a partnership of state and local government, non-profits, schools, faith based groups and concerned citizens who are working to give all hungry children access to the federally funded Summer Food Service Program.

Won't you join us, to ensure summer is a care-free time for fun, new friends and growth- rather than one of gnawing hunger and the daily stress of survival?



Summer Food Service Program: The Basics

What is it? This federally reimbursed meal program is designed to assist communities to feed children while they are out of school. The program can be sponsored by a variety of non-profit organizations, including churches, and all meals are served free of charge.

Where? Feeding sites must be located in low-income areas, meaning the majority of children at the nearest school qualify for free or reduced price meals. Food may be served wherever kids congregate- parks, community centers, schools and apartment complexes make great meal sites. So do churches!

Who? All youth ages 1-18 are welcome to share a meal. No registration or proof of income is required and meals are available to all on a drop-in basis.

How? Several organizations often partner in running the meal program, with one preparing meals and another feeding and supervising children. The most successful sites pair the meal service with an activity or enrichment program.



The Outpost : A story of service

“Sonrise Church heard about the free lunch program and saw it as a “no-brainer”; an opportunity to serve our city. We wanted it to be more than just a hand out so we approached the Parks and Rec Dept. of Hillsboro for permission to use one of their parks. They in turn asked if they could provide both the site and the programming, while letting us handle the lunch part. The Outpost was born and now serves 200 kids a day!

This past summer we pitched the lunch service work to our small groups, asking them to “Adopt-A-Week”. The groups provide at least 3 members to transport, set up, serve lunch and clean-up each day for one week. We put out a sign that lets the parents know that Sonrise is serving and have a freebie table with books, flyers, and helpful info. I am asking God to provide a team this year whose job is to support us in prayer.

We met one specific little boy, his disabled grandmother, and very young mother who melted our hearts. They were homeless, and found a homey place to hang out at the Outpost. They rode the “train”, as the little boy called it, every day to get to us, and spent time in the park doing crafts, playing games, reading books, and having lunch. We are so thankful that as a community we were able to be there, even if it was just for him!”

- Cindy Allen, volunteer coordinator of Sonrise Church’s summer feeding program
For more about their program, contact Cindy at: [503.681.6120](tel:503.681.6120) or cindya@ci.hillsboro.or.us

4 Ways you can get involved

1. Sponsor a meal site - *If your organization already provides services to youth and families, and has capable staff and good management, you can administer this program!*

As a sponsor, you will: attend an annual training and complete an application, hire, train and supervise staff (or volunteers), arrange for meals to be prepared, monitor your sites and prepare claims for reimbursement

2. Host a meal site - *Some congregations don't have the ability to administer the program, but they can supervise a food service for children, often in conjunction with programs such as a vacation bible school. Keep in mind that the meals must be offered to all, regardless of religion, in accordance with Federal regulations.*

If you host a site, you will: be trained by your sponsor, supervise the meal service and record how many meals you serve, keep the site clean and sanitary, and create a welcoming environment for children

3. Support a meal site - *The success of the Summer Food Program often relies on the support and engagement of the community. If your congregation can't fulfill the above roles, consider supporting in one of the following ways:*

- Advocate on behalf of expanding the program to all eligible areas. If not currently available in your area, work to recruit a sponsor and meal site. Start with your school district, and let them know you support feeding hungry kids year round.
- If your building has a kitchen that meets local health codes, offer the space to another group who lacks the capacity to prepare meals, but can run a program.
- Consider "adopting" a feeding site. Provide funding, equipment or materials to meet their needs. Help spread the word by passing out flyers. Look for further ways to meet the needs of participants, perhaps by holding a back-to-school or food drive.

4. Volunteer - *As individuals or a group, offer your time at a local feeding site.*

- Large sites often need help feeding and playing with kids, while a small sponsor might need you to deliver meals or stuff lunch sacks. Youth groups can lead special events while retirees, students and parents often have time to help on a regular basis.
- It's a wonderful opportunity to build relationships and serve your local community while providing a fun, rewarding and often moving experience for those involved. Volunteers are encouraged to bring or buy a lunch and eat with those they serve.

See next page for who to call and how to get started.....

Get Started!

Start Early

Begin planning early in the year in order to learn about the local need, form partnerships and meet any deadlines that might apply.

Meet with other interested members of your congregation to discuss what role you will play in feeding the children of your community. Perhaps there's already a committee or existing ministry under which this effort could fall?

If your congregation is located or active in a predominately low-income area that is not being served, consider sponsoring or hosting a meal site. If not, "adopt", support or volunteer at an existing site. It's most helpful if someone from your congregation can coordinate your involvement, as most programs do not have volunteer coordination staff.



Make Contact

- ◆ Contact feeding sites directly to learn how best to support them, and to volunteer. For a searchable map of existing Summer Food sites check out:

www.SummerFoodOregon.org

- ◆ If you're interested in sponsoring a site you'll need to determine your eligibility, attend a training and fill out an application by early spring. To begin the process contact:

[The Oregon Department of Education](#)

Barbara Cracknell- 503-947-5911 or barbara.cracknell@state.or.us

- ◆ For more ideas on how to support the program, to find out what is happening in your community and for additional information on hunger in Oregon, contact:

[The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force](#)

Robyn Johnson- 503-595-5503 or robyn@oregonhunger.org