



Rural Development

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TO: State Directors
Housing and Community Program Directors
Rural Development

FROM: Richard A. Davis /s/ **Richard A. Davis**
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SUBJECT: Hosting the U.S. Department of Agriculture Summer Meals Program
at Rural Development-Financed Housing Properties and Community
Facilities

This Unnumbered Letter (UL) is to promote the participation of Rural Housing Service (RHS)-financed housing properties and community facilities in the [Summer Food Service Program](#), operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and also known as the Summer Meals Program. The Summer Meals Program provides low-income children with healthy 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. Summer Meals are provided by local sponsoring organizations, which are reimbursed by FNS for the meals served to children. (Find your local sponsoring organizations by contacting the State Agency that administers your state's Summer Meals program at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts>.) The role of RHS is to provide sites where meals can be served—a function we fill very well since the housing and facilities we finance are community anchors across rural America and can be the perfect home bases for providing vital services to children.

RHS has been a strong participant in Summer Meals in recent years, primarily by recruiting Multi-Family Housing (MFH) properties to serve as meal sites. This works well in many rural communities, allowing local sponsoring organizations to deliver meals directly to the properties where children live. In 2016, we far surpassed our goal by enrolling 305 MFH properties, an all-time high. This was 121 more properties than we were able to serve the year before, and almost triple the number from 2014. Attachment A lists the number of MFH properties that served as meal sites in each state in 2016.

EXPIRATION DATE:
February 28, 2018

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Housing Programs

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In 2017, we intend to feed more children than ever in rural communities by expanding Summer Meals participation across all of RHS.

MFH properties continue to be anchors for the Summer Meals Program in rural America. In 2017, we're aiming for a 25 percent increase in the number of participating properties over our total from 2016. In other words, our goal is to enroll 381 properties as meal sites. This means each state should recruit one to two additional properties over last year. 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 kids to a nearby meal site regularly throughout the summer.

- **For the first time in 2017, we are working with staff to reach out to Community Facilities borrowers and grantees in their states to encourage them to enroll as Summer Meals sites.** RHS-financed Community Facilities can serve as meal sites in areas that lack Multi-Family Housing but have great need for meal programs. Many types of Community Facilities—such as community centers, schools, libraries, and daycares—are natural gathering places for families and children, and some may already host summer youth activities to which they could add meal services with the help of a local sponsoring organization. **In 2017, we are setting a goal of enrolling a minimum of one RHS-financed Community Facility in each state as a meal site.** Many of you are already working with your CF borrowers and finding interest in this opportunity. Since this is a new element of RHS' participation in Summer Meals, we will be following up with further information and materials.
- In some cases, Self-Help communities that have common spaces for residents could also serve as Summer Meals sites. **If there is a Self-Help partner in your state that might be interested in this opportunity, we encourage you to share it with them.**

In order to strengthen our participation in Summer Meals and feed more kids, we need to boost our outreach on this important program and track the properties and facilities that sign up. We have created a new Summer Meals SharePoint site, and we ask that you keep it updated with information about the participating properties and facilities in your state: https://ems-team.usda.gov/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, such as Strikeforce counties, and to extend outreach to those areas to identify possible sites.

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

- The MFH Portfolio Management Division at (202)720-1604;
- Community Facilities: Geoffrey Armes at (202)720-1498; or
- Single Family Housing: Andria Hively at (360) 753-7724

More information on Summer Meals can be found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>.

Four Steps to Encourage Property Owners/Managers and Borrowers to Sign Up for Summer Meals

1. Contact your FNS Regional Office and the State Agency coordinating your state's Summer Meals Program to learn how to bring the program to your housing properties and community facilities. You may want to ask about the dates of your state's Summer Meals planning meetings. Contact information for FNS Regional Offices can be found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>. [Contact information for State Agencies is located at: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-contacts).
2. Send a letter inviting your property owners/managers and borrowers to participate in the Summer Meals 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 DEVELOPMENT MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PROPERTIES
PARTICIPATING IN THE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM IN 2016**

State	# MFH Properties Participating
PR	75
VA	40
KY	23
TX	21
TN	18
CA	17
OH	17
SC	14
NV	13
OR	9
FL	8
NM	7
NC	6
DE	5
NH	5
MO	4
NJ	4
WY	4
ME	3
AR	2
CO	2
ID	2
PA	2
HI	1
IA	1
KS	1
WV	1