



**Mohammed Choudhury**  
State Superintendent of Schools

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CONTACT:** Lora Rakowski, 410-767-0486  
lora.rakowski@maryland.gov

## **Federal Funds Available to Serve Free Summer Meals to Children and Teens**

### **MSDE Strives to Build upon Program's Success**

**BALTIMORE, MD (January 28, 2022)** – The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is seeking public and private non-profit organizations to serve as meal sites for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program that provides free, nutritious meals to children and teens in the summer months when school is not in session.

Organizations participating in the SFSP served over 16.6 million meals to Maryland children and teens at over 200 sites during the summer of 2021. This represents an almost two-fold increase compared to the summer of 2020 and over five-fold compared to the summer of 2019. MSDE continues to explore opportunities to expand access to the free summer meals program. Organizations that serve as summer meals sites, as well as promotional partner agencies, are integral to the program's success.

“The Summer Food Service Program is a critical resource for Maryland children and teens to combat food insecurity,” said State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. “The ongoing challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact families and this program is vital to communities across the State.”

The SFSP is a federally-funded, State-administered program. It reimburses organizations that sponsor meal sites for children in areas where at least 50% of households qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program, or 50 % of the children enrolled in a summer program qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Most organizations may be reimbursed for up to two meals or snacks per child per day. Camps and migrant programs may be reimbursed for up to three meals per child each day. All meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards.

The Program is open to children and teens age 18 and under, and to individuals over 18 who have a mental or physical disability and participate during the school year in a public or private non-profit school.

The deadline for applying to be a summer meal site is June 15, 2022. For more information about the SFSP, please visit [www.eatsmartmaryland.org](http://www.eatsmartmaryland.org). Interested organizations should contact the Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs at 410-767-0199.

The Maryland State Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are equal opportunity employers and providers.

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