

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS

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As Winter Season Ends, Anti-Hunger Community Focused on Feeding More Low-Income Children during Summer Months
Increasing participation in summer food programs the focus of statewide summit

COLUMBUS – In Ohio, about 44 percent of all school-aged children receive free or reduced-price school meals through the National School Lunch Program. The Summer Food Service Program is designed to help those same children access healthy meals during the summer months. Yet according to the most recent summer nutrition report from the Food Research and Action Center, only about one in ten eligible children in Ohio participated in the Summer Food Service Program.

About 250 federal, state and local stakeholders came together Tuesday for the third annual statewide Summer Food Service Summit, held at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank in Grove City. Attendees participated in breakout sessions focused on best practices for program outreach, meal planning and food procurement and even summer meals preparation demonstrations.

Many experts in child nutrition programs and policy, including U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, addressed the crowd about the importance of summer nutrition programs for Ohio's children and how upcoming Child Nutrition Reauthorization could impact the ability of local organizations to provide those important services.

"I know the challenges that you face getting the students and the parents notified and always trying to reach out to people who have a hundred things going on in their lives," said Senator Brown. "The work you're doing is so important. You're showing people every day what you stand for and what you believe and there's no better way to do it than to feed hungry children."

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, stressed how damaging a lack of adequate nutrition can be to a child's ability to succeed during the school year.

"Only about one in ten of our children who participated in our school lunch and breakfast programs were able to access the Summer Food Service Program last year, so we've got a lot of work to do," said Hamler-Fugitt. "We don't need any more research on this. We have decades of research that tells us that a lack of adequate nutrition can deter health outcomes as well as educational attainment. We must commit as a community and as a state to provide for the basic nutritional needs of our children."

Schools and organizations interested in learning more about the Summer Food Service Program can visit the [Ohio Department of Education website](#) or call 877-644-6338 for more information.

About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2013, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 173 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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