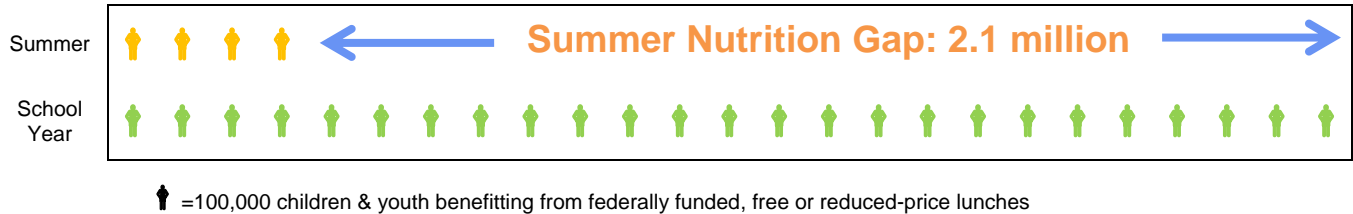


California's Summer Nutrition Gap

When school is out for the summer, children and youth across California are at risk of losing access to nutritious, affordable meals. In 2012, as many as 2.1 million (or 83 percent) of California's low-income children and youth who benefitted from federally funded, free or reduced-price lunches during the school year missed out on such lunches during the summer.



The need for nutritious, affordable meals persists throughout the year, but summer lunches reach far fewer children and youth than school lunches. Summer lunches are also served on fewer days per month than school lunches. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Free & Reduced-Price Lunches	School Year 2012*	Summer 2012*	Difference (School Year vs. Summer)
Average Daily Participation	2,519,350	423,462	-2,095,888
Average Number of Days per Month that Lunch is Served	21	18	-3

*School year statistics are calculated using March and April data. Summer statistics are calculated using July data.

Statewide Decline in the Number of Summer Lunches Served

In addition to the substantial gap between school and summer lunch participation, the number of free and reduced-price summer lunches served across California fell by over 330,000 in July 2012 compared to July 2011. (See Table 2)

This decline is part of a larger historical trend. Since July 2006, the number of free and reduced-price summer lunches served in California has decreased by over 40 percent.

Table 2

Summer Meal Programs	Number of Free and Reduced-Price Lunches Served July 2012 versus July 2011
National School Lunch Program (school sites)	-377,644
Seamless Summer Food Option (school sites & some community sites)	+128,269
Summer Food Service Program (school and community sites)	-82,652
Total	-332,047

Unprecedented Data Now Available

Summer meal sponsors can operate multiple sites within and across counties. As of 2012, the state requires many sponsors to report (a) the monthly number of meals served at each site and (b) the number of days per month that each site serves meals. Previously, only sponsor-level data reports were required.

The unprecedented site-level data help to better describe the reach of summer meal programs and to more accurately identify the number of California kids who are falling into the summer nutrition gap.

A New Way of Tracking Trends

The availability of site-level data has changed our method of calculating average daily participation and allows for more accurate estimates. However, the new method means that comparing average daily summer lunch participation for 2012 with previous years is akin to comparing apples and oranges. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1

New Monthly Data (Required of Many Sponsors in 2012)	Lunches Served per Month by Any One Site	÷	Number of Days per Month the Site Serves Lunch	=	Average Daily Participation by Site
Old Monthly Data (Required of All Sponsors Before 2012)	Lunches Served per Month by Multiple Sites Under One Sponsor	÷	Highest # of Days per Month Lunch is Served Among the Sponsor's Multiple Sites	=	Average Daily Participation by Sponsor

The number of summer lunches served statewide (Table 2) does allow for year-to-year comparisons while average daily participation in summer lunches does not.

Additional Resources

For the full report, policy recommendations, and additional data tables, please visit: cfpa.net/sowa-2013

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