

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD AND NUTRITION DIVISION

# HEALTHY SUMMER MEALS FOR KIDS

# KICKOFF EVENT TOOLKIT



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**COMMISSIONER SID MILLER**

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# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER KICK-OFF EVENT

Summer sponsors can spark excitement at their meal sites by hosting kickoff events that boost participation, welcome volunteers, and set the tone for a fun summer. As the season continues, creative follow-up events help keep the energy high and families coming back.

## Time and Date

- Set a date in early June. Choosing the first week of your summer meal service can be a good way to promote your program.
- When choosing a time, think about how to maximize community participation—summer kick-off events that coincide with site meal services can help promote the program and get the community involved.
- A July spike event can act as a mid-summer reminder for families and bring attention back to meal sites and as a way to encourage participation.

## Location

- Choose a popular, centrally located, site that is accessible to the community.
- The site should have ample parking or easy access to public transit.
- Make the site appealing and welcoming—try decorating with balloons, banners, or bright t-shirts to attract attention.

## Speakers

- Elected officials—such as the superintendent, school board members, the mayor, or city council members
- Local celebrities, sports figures, media personalities
- Educators
- Local farmers, vendors, or garden clubs

## Example Activities

- Face painting
- Work with your district to showcase student clubs or organizations (FFA, Chess Club, Art Club, etc.)
- Work with partners to show case interactive food demonstrations
- Sack races
- Raffles



## Tips

- Plan for inclement weather! The site should have back up interior space, such as a gym or cafeteria—just in case.
- Make sure you have someone who can get photos and videos of your event!

## Event Promotion

- Get the word out! Be sure to post event information online—websites, social media, community forums.
- Work with the communications team at your district office to help get the word out to the community.
- Work with principals or local PTA groups to alert local families.

## Marketing Materials

- Create colorful marketing materials, such as posters, flyers, or social media, to help get the word out!

## Partners

- Ask media, local officials, and businesses to promote the event online.

## Places for Promotion

- ✓ Mom & pop shops and grocery stores
- ✓ Libraries
- ✓ Community centers
- ✓ Hospitals/doctor's offices
- ✓ Correctional facilities
- ✓ Non-Profits (churches, food pantries)
- ✓ WIC Clinics



# GET THE WORD OUT WITH...

Promoting your event ahead of time is key to building awareness and participation in your community. The tips and best practices below can help engage students, families, volunteers, and staff to ensure a successful kickoff event.

## Social Media



Social media enables sites to share content in real time, connect with different audiences, post photos, and engage with those who may not know about the Summer Meal Programs. Developing a social media strategy can give structure to daily posts and ensure consistent messaging.

## Audience

- Language and content should be tailored to reach your target audience, whether it is parents, kids or the community. This means communicating about a site in several different ways.

## Photos and Videos

- Social media posts that include either a photo or video catch readers' attention more than words alone.
- Video and live streaming offer fun ways to attract peoples attention and get the word out.

## Call to Action

- A call to action is defined as an instruction to the audience that provokes an immediate response. It usually includes an imperative such as “find out more” or “click here.”
- The sample posts section on the next page includes an example of using a call to action.

## Tags

- When someone is tagged in social media with the user's handle preceded by the at symbol (@), it creates a short link to their profile and the post may be added to that person's or group's timeline. This could increase the visibility of the posts beyond an immediate audience.
- Tag TDA on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.  
X: [@TexasDeptofAg](#) Facebook: [@TexasDepartmentofAgriculture](#) Instagram: [@TexasAgriculture](#)
- Be sure to use the following hashtags!  
[#TXSummerMeals](#) [#TXSummerFood](#) [#TXSMP](#)

## Post on Multiple Channels

- There are multiple social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many others, all with different target audiences, but many of the tips from above resonate across all three channels.

## Partnerships

Partnerships can boost your marketing efforts by combining forces and strengths.

### Connecting with Local Officials: Mayors and School Boards

Communities and their local officials offer opportunities for increasing your sites' visibility. Send the "Healthy Summer Meals for Kids" proclamation electronically to the mayor's office and ask the mayor and city council members to present this proclamation at a city council meeting. Sample proclamations are available for download at [SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools](http://SummerFood.org/OutreachTools).

### Connecting with Locally Owned Businesses and Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets, locally owned businesses, and school nutrition vendors can offer unique partnering opportunities. Coordinate with these businesses to display marketing materials to promote the Summer Meal Programs.

### Community- Based Email and Text Communications

Many community partners and organizations send local families newsletters highlighting upcoming events and activities. Newsletters and email campaigns are sent directly to program participants and help increase awareness.

Partner with local organizations to share information through their communication channels. Be sure to include contact information, site locations and times for the Summer Meal Programs. Utilize the template copy and banners available for download at [SummerFood.org/Outreach Tools](http://SummerFood.org/OutreachTools).

## Flyers

### Include the Following:

- ✓ Event address
- ✓ Date and time
- ✓ Celebration description
- ✓ Activities, meals, freebies
- ✓ Call to Action - Join us! Come by, Visit

### Examples of Past Flyers from Summer Sites



# PRESS RELEASE (SAMPLE)

## **[Organization Name] Launches Summer Meal Program with Community Kickoff Event**

For Immediate Release

Date: [Month Day, Year]

[City], TX — [School District/Organization Name] will host a Summer Meals kickoff event on [Date] at [Time] at [Location], welcoming families and community members to celebrate the start of another summer of free, nutritious meals for children and teens.

The Summer Meal Program provides no-cost breakfast and/or lunch to children and teens 18 and younger, as well as enrolled students up to 21 years old with disabilities, throughout the summer months when school cafeterias are closed. The program is administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and delivered locally through schools and nonprofit partners.

“This kickoff event is about making sure families know that healthy meals are available all summer long,” said [Name, Title]. “For many children, summer meals are an essential source of nutrition, and we want every family in our community to feel welcome at our site.”

The kickoff event will feature [activities, theme, food, entertainment, or giveaways], and the event theme is [Theme Name]. Planned speakers and special guests include [Names and titles, if applicable].

Each summer, millions of meals are served across Texas at more than 4,000 approved summer meal sites, helping children stay healthy and ready to learn when school resumes. While participation in the Summer Meal Program continues to grow statewide, access remains a challenge in many areas—particularly in rural communities, where families may live farther from meal sites.

By hosting this kickoff event, [District/Organization Name] aims to raise awareness, encourage participation, and ensure families know where and when meals are available in [City/Community Name].

For more information about the kickoff event or local summer meal sites, contact [Local Phone Number or Email]. Families can also learn more about summer meal programs and other child nutrition resources by visiting [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org).

Contact:

[Name of Media Contact]

[Title / Organization]

[Email Address]