

D.C. Free Summer Meals Program Keeps on Growing Participation in the program has more than doubled over past six years

Washington, D.C. – July 30, 2008 – The D.C. Free Summer Meals Program continues to expand its reach in providing healthy food to low-income children when school is out – and top the nation in reaching eligible low-income children. In July 2007, more than 30,000 eligible low-income children were served by the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program, according to *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) latest look at participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs.

"D.C. has an extraordinary record of success with the Free Summer Meals Program. Part of its success is due to a city-wide commitment, led by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, to make this program available to all eligible low-income children," said Alex Ashbrook, director of D.C. Hunger Solutions, an initiative of FRAC. "As costs for food and energy continue to rise, this program is especially important for struggling families by making sure their children have access to healthy meals throughout the summer."

Since 2002, the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program has more than doubled its reach. In 2002, only 14,848 District children participated in the program. With efforts to increase meal sites, reduce administrative barriers, conduct outreach to parents and children, and boost public awareness of the program, participation grew rapidly over the following years. As a result, more low-income children have access to healthy meals during the summer. Out of every 100 D.C. children that eat lunch during the school year, 96 children received summer meals. Nationally, the program only reaches 17 percent of eligible children, according to FRAC.

The Summer Food Program is especially important for the thousands of low-income District children (and their families) who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year to help keep hunger at bay. Families with tight budgets find themselves especially strapped during the summer – even more so this summer as food and energy costs have risen dramatically over the past year.

About the report:

Data for Washington, D.C. came from an annual report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a national anti-hunger advocacy and research group. The FRAC report, *Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation*, gives data for all states and looks at national trends. The report measures participation in the summer nutrition programs by comparing the number of children receiving summer meals to the number of low-income children receiving school lunch during the regular school year. FRAC measures national summer participation during the month of July, when typically all children are out of school throughout the month and lose access to school meals. The report is available online at www.frac.org/pdf/summer_report_2008.pdf.