



[Home](#)

[Archive](#)

[Special Coverage](#)

[Health](#)

[Tune In](#)

[About](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Produced by
KQED

Search

Sometimes When School Is Out, So Is The Food



Kids line up for a free summer meal through a Chico Unified School District program. (Photo: Patrice Chamberlain)

To understand some of the powerful hunger issues in our state, go no further than the [Silicon Valley YMCA](#).

The Y runs summer youth programs in Gilroy. Vice president of programming and community development Mary Hoshiko Haughey says last summer they had a boy in the middle school group who wasn't eating his lunch.

"This was the first day of the program, and our staff asked 'Why aren't you eating?' 'What would you like?'" Haughey recalled. "And he said, 'I can't eat because I need to make sure my brother and sister are eating. Do they have food in their program too? Otherwise I have to save it for them.' And finally we put him on the phone with them at another site and they said 'yes, we're eating,' so he finally did too."

Haughey paused. "It's an example of the adult issues that our young children are taking on. He wasn't going to eat unless he knew his siblings would."

It's also an example of the importance of the summer meal programs that are offered throughout the state. Some school-based programs directly continue the work of the [School Lunch Program](#) and [Summer Food Service Program](#) that serves free and reduced meals to low income students throughout the year. Others are sponsored by food banks or summer youth program sites.

The Silicon Valley Y is part of the [California Summer Meal Coalition](#), which is working to increase awareness of the USDA summer nutrition programs offered through the California Department of Education.

Part of the problem, says Patrice Chamberlain who works with the coalition, is that there are not enough sites serving the meals. Last year the state COULD have received \$36 million more in federal reimbursements had more sites signed onto the program.

School budget cuts, she says, are making things worse. "More school districts have been faced with a dwindling budget where they've had to cut summer school programs and there has been a decline in participation in summer meal programs," Chamberlain says.

He said, "I can't eat because I need to make sure my brother and sister are eating. Do they have food in their program too? Otherwise I have to save it for them."

A recent report by [California Food Policy Advocates](#) tracked the number of children in federally funded summer nutrition programs and found the number of California students served in July 2011 declined six percent from June 2010, nearly 30 percent compared to July 2008 and over 50 percent from July 2002. They tied it directly to cuts in school summer programming.

Chamberlain says that's why the coalition is [working to get the meal programs in other locations](#). Last year, for example, the city of Oakland worked with the Alameda County Community Food Bank to serve summer meals at libraries in low-income neighborhoods.

State Superintendent Tom Torlakson has been [working to spread the word](#) about the need for summer meal locations. The awareness campaign may be paying off. This summer, the California Department of Education has indicated

that there is a 60 percent increase in the number of summer meal sponsors.

Chamberlain says part of the reason to prioritize this issue is the summer connection to childhood obesity. A **new report** from the **National Summer Learning Association** found that kids gain weight two to three times faster during the summer than during the school year.

“Without the structure of the school year, and the additional barriers that impact many low-income neighborhoods, access to healthy food is really limited,” Chamberlain says.

This map has a comprehensive list of summer meal sites in California.

Related posts:

1. **Kids, Food Ads, and The First Amendment**
2. **Congress Delays Guidelines to Limit Junk Food Marketing to Children**
3. **California Advocates For Healthy Food in U.S. Farm Bill**
4. **Progress on the Fresh Food Front in Nation’s Salad Bowl**
5. **Are Poor Neighborhoods Really Food Deserts?**

MORE POSTS ABOUT	<u>California Budget Proposal Would Move 880,000 Children Off Healthy Families</u>
Policy	Jacqueline Dandeneau understands why children's health advocates are so upset. The Humboldt County resident, and mother of a 12-year-old and a 6-year-old, was a longtime subscriber to Healthy Families. That's California's medical insurance program for kids whose parents make just ... <u>Read More</u>
Children's Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Demystifying Questions Around the Supreme Court's Coming Health Care Decision</u> • <u>Turning Health Data Into Information</u> <p><u>view all Policy posts</u></p>