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More than 1,400 kids fall into Nevada County's summer nutrition gap

When school is out for the summer, low-income children across California lose access to critical resources, including healthy, affordable school meals. California Food Policy Advocates has released a report showing that 85 percent of children in the state who receive federally funded free or reduced-price school lunches miss out on similar meals during the summer. In Nevada County, the summer nutrition gap affects 1,406 children (or 90 percent of kids who benefit from free or reduced-price school lunches).

Research shows that rates of food insecurity, particularly among households with children, increase during summer break. At the same time, the number of sites serving federally funded meals to children dramatically declines. Those sites that do serve summer meals operate for fewer days each month and serve far fewer lunches than sites operating during the school year.

School's Out...Who Ate? is an annual state and county-level report published by California Food Policy Advocates to examine the reach of federal summer meal programs. The report demonstrates that California has made moderate progress: July 2015 saw a two percent increase in the number of free and reduced-price summer lunches served compared to 2014. Despite this change, the state's summer nutrition gap still affects more than 1.7 million low-income children.

"Research and common sense tell us that all children need access to nutritious meals no matter what the time of year. We know California's most vulnerable kids miss out on essential resources when school is not in session. Fortunately, our state and federal leaders can fix this problem. By strengthening summer meal programs and implementing proven solutions like Summer EBT for Children, we can close the summer nutrition gap," said Tia Shimada, California Food Policy Advocates' director of programs.

Summer EBT for Children is federal nutrition assistance used to purchase groceries when school is out of session and school meals are not available. Federal demonstration projects have launched SEBTC in eight states and two tribal nations, but not in California. Rigorously evaluated, SEBTC is shown to improve children's diets and prevent the most severe form of food insecurity among one-third of children who would otherwise experience it. Federal and state leaders could take immediate action to bring Summer EBT to California:

- Congress could extend and expand Summer EBT for Children through Child Nutrition Reauthorization.
- The United States Department of Agriculture could expand the existing SEBTC projects to include California.
- The California State Legislature and Governor Brown could enact AB 2054 (Thurmond), which would prepare California to effectively and efficiently implement federally funded SEBTC.

To access the full School's Out...Who Ate? report and summary documents, visit: <http://cfpa.net/sowa-2016>. To find the nearest summer meal location, visit: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/summersites.asp>.