



## PRESS RELEASE

### REPORT FINDS FEWER OHIO CHILDREN ACCESSED SUMMER MEALS *Participation has also stalled nationally after three years of growth*

COLUMBUS, Ohio [June 14, 2016] – Nationally, nearly one in six eligible children participated in the Summer Food Service Program in 2015. In Ohio, that number was one in ten. The [Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation report](#) released today by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) found that modest growth from 2013 to 2014 in the percentage of eligible children participating in the Summer Food Service Program in Ohio was erased in 2015.

“Nonprofit agencies, faith-based organizations, schools and local governments are doing what they can to help low-income children with the resources they have through the Summer Food Service Program,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “Thanks to the efforts of those community partners, and the leadership of the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio gained additional sponsors and sites last summer. But unfortunately, the program model itself is a hindrance to effectively serving kids in our state.”

The federal Summer Food Service Program requires that children consume meals on-site, and provides only a modest reimbursement to sponsors for the cost of providing that meal. Ohio struggles to keep up with other states in reaching children that normally rely on subsidized school meals during the school year. The report found that among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Ohio's rank nationally fell to 40, from 38 in summer 2014.

“We believe that this program needs to be modernized to help sponsors and sites successfully reach children in need,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Ohio has a wide mix of rural, suburban and urban areas that all face unique challenges in serving meals on-site to children. Without reliable access to public transportation, safe streets to walk to local feeding locations and accessible facilities to consume meals, Ohio children will always be at a disadvantage because of the way the program is currently structured.”

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks has partnered with Governor John R. Kasich, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Education for the last four years on the [Governor's Summer Meals Programs](#) to fill in some of the many gaps left by the federal Summer Food Service Program. The association completed a [survey of parents/guardians of participants](#) in one of those programs, the Rural Delivery Meals Program, which delivers a week's worth of shelf-stable meals for children to consume at home when they don't have access to a traditional meals site. The survey found that because their children received meals through the program, 82 percent of families could afford other things that they needed that they otherwise would not have been able to buy. Most (85 percent) said it is more difficult for their household to afford food on their own during the summer, but the same number of respondents said they were either not aware of or did not have access to another summer meals program nearby.

The association also partners with the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) to deploy AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate members to help summer meals programs serve more

kids. More than 60 AmeriCorps VISTA members began their 10-week national service term last week, serving at summer meals sites in Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and surrounding areas, Dayton, Defiance, Marietta, Ravenna, Sciotoville, Toledo, Wellston, Westerville, Willard and Youngstown. They will receive a modest living stipend set at the poverty level in return for their full-time service helping to strengthen and raise awareness of critical summer meals programs.

“We know that more must be done, and thousands of hard-working volunteers, community leaders and public agencies continue to step up to promote and expand summer meals programs,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “But we know the most effective solution needs to include options like those outlined in the Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act, which would allow nonprofits to deliver meals for kids living in hard-to-reach areas to consume at home. We continue to urge Congress to adopt solutions that lead to more nutritious meals for more at-risk children when considering Child Nutrition Reauthorization and other legislation.”

To read the full *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation* report, visit [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).

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#### **About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks**

*The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2015, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 197 million pounds of food and grocery items. The association also serves as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank and operates the state's largest navigator program for the Affordable Care Act. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at [www.ohiofoodbanks.org](http://www.ohiofoodbanks.org).*

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