

As Schools Close, Summer Meals Opens

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By Roxanne Henry,

New York City kids have now been on summer break for a full week. While more than a million [children across the city](#) are most likely still celebrating their newfound freedom, for parents and caregivers who struggle to afford food, this can be a time of heightened anxiety and concern. To get the most out of limited food budgets, many families depend on free or low-cost school meals for their children when school is in session. It's no coincidence that the summer months see a spike in need among children at [food pantries and soup kitchens](#).

But with approximately 825,000 New York City public school students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals, emergency food alone cannot make up the loss. The federally funded [Summer Food Services Program](#) (SFSP, also known as Summer Meals), however, provides a free breakfast and lunch at schools and other venues throughout the city, and is available to all children. Because too many families do not access the program due to a simple lack of awareness, the Food Bank For New York City works to connect low-income families to this great resource that helps keep food on the table for their children when school meals are not available.



Breakfast at a soup kitchen.

To increase awareness and participation, the Food Bank:

- Works with the [NYC Department of Education](#) to recruit members of our [citywide network of soup kitchens and food pantries](#) to help provide summer meals at their sites.
- Provides information about the program, and the locations of SFSP sites to all food assistance programs in our network, creating a broad outreach effort within New York City's low-income neighborhoods.
- Collaborates with a coalition of governmental agencies and anti-hunger organizations to aid in a citywide collaboration to expand the program.

The Food Bank's goal is to ensure that as many children as possible receive free summer meals, which are also available at schools, parks, libraries, pools and other sites across the city.

For a full list of Summer Meals sites, [click here](#). Wondering which site is closest to you? Check out our maps of site locations in [Brooklyn](#), the [Bronx](#), [Manhattan](#), [Staten Island](#), and [Queens](#). To learn more about the Food Bank's comprehensive efforts to fight child hunger throughout the year, [click here](#). Roxanne Henry is the Food Bank's Community Outreach Manager.