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**SFSP Sponsoring Organization Media Release**

**Schools, Governments and Private nonprofit organizations provide free meals to NM Children and Youth**

**SANTA FE** – The New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (NM ECECD), is proud to announce the availability of the Summer Food Service Program for Children (SFSP). The SFSP combats the hunger gap in children’s nutritional needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, during the summer months, and at other times when school meals are not available.

The SFSP is a federally funded program administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered at the State level by the NM ECECD. The primary purpose of the Program is to provide free meals to children, 18 years of age or under, from needy areas during the periods when area schools are closed for vacation during the summer months, during USDA authorized extensions of the Program and at other times when unanticipated school closures occur. No registration or enrollment is required. A person over 18 years of age who has a mental or physical disability (as determined by a State or local educational agency) and who participates during the school year in a public or private non-profit school program (established for the mentally or physically disabled) is also eligible to receive free meals.

In recent months Program has been provided with many flexibilities to address the social distancing measures needed to slow the spread of the coronavirus while at the same time maintain uninterrupted meal service for children and youth throughout the State. Free meals are available statewide. Operators of the Summer Food Service Program encourage adults to advocate for daily meal availability to both non-school age and school age children and youth.

For a current list of free meal locations in your area, please visit <https://summerfoodnm.org> or call 1-800-EAT-COOL (1-800-328-2665). You can also contact your local school district for information regarding possible bus-route meal drop-off availability and meal grab-and-go locations at area schools.

Organizations interested in administering and operating the Summer Food Service Program at their local level, should contact the NM ECECD, Early Care Education and Nutrition, Family Nutrition Bureau at (505) 841-4856 or contact us by email via <https://summerfodnm.org>

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