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### **Participation in Summer Meals in Missouri Continues to Fall Short**

(JEFFERSON CITY, Mo) June 2, 2014 – Participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs continues to fall short in Missouri, with only 28,090 low-income children receiving summer meals on an average day in July 2013, according to a new national report released today. This was a decrease of 1.2 percent from the previous summer. The Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW) noted that summer meals reached only 7.9 students for every 100 low-income children who got regular school year meals.

Missouri's drop in participation comes as the national rate saw its first increase in ten years, according to *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, an annual analysis by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). The report measures participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs by comparing the number of children receiving summer meals to the number of low-income children receiving school lunch during the regular school year.

The FRAC report finds that summer meal participation nationally reached nearly three million students in July of 2013, up 161,000 children or 5.7 percent from 2012, providing welcome momentum for the Summer Nutrition Programs.

"Missouri is failing to close the summer hunger gap, and children are paying the price," said MASW director Jeanette Mott Oxford. "It is in everyone's best interest to ensure that children have adequate nutrition during the summer so they stay healthy and are ready to learn."

Low participation means missed meals for children and missed dollars for the state. If Missouri were to reach 40 children with summer food for every 100 children from households with low incomes who get school lunch during the regular school year, an attainable goal, Missouri would have fed 114,028 more children every day in July 2013 and brought in \$8.5 million more federal dollars to do so.

It's not too late for states and communities to make a difference this summer. State and community leaders can follow the lead of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which has launched an aggressive campaign to increase participation. This summer, Missouri is one of six targeted by USDA for increased assistance in growing the number of children eating summer meals. USDA's Summer Food Service Program Week (June 2 to 6, 2014) starts today, and aims to raise awareness of the program.

"The national increase in summer food participation is good news, but Congress will need to fix some of the underlying barriers in the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization to truly repair the Summer Nutrition Programs," said FRAC President Jim Weill. "Congress needs to act to strengthen the programs so they are able to reach more low-income children, and help the program more effectively address hunger and meet increased need."

The Summer Nutrition Programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program, should be filling the food gap for the thousands of low-income Missouri children who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year to help keep hunger at bay. These

programs provide free meals at participating summer sites at schools, parks, other public agencies, and nonprofits for children under 18.

Missouri families can find nearby summer meal sites [here](#) or by calling 888-435-1464. New this year from USDA is “SummerFoodRocks,” a free web-based application that features a site locator and search tool, and works on devices such as iPads, iPhones, Blackberrys, and Androids. Visit [www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks) to locate nearby summer meal site near you. This app is available nationwide on June 2, 2014.

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**About the report:**

Data for Missouri come from the 2014 version of the annual report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the lead advocacy organization working to end hunger in America through stronger public policies. The FRAC report, *Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation*, gives data for all states and looks at national and state trends. FRAC measures national summer participation during the month of July, when typically all children are out of school throughout the month and lose access to regular school year meals. The report is available online at [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).

**About MASW:**

MASW ([www.masw.org](http://www.masw.org)), founded in 1901, provides leadership, research, education, and advocacy to improve public policy and programs impacting the health and welfare of all Missourians. MASW played major roles in the initiation of the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, the reduction of sales tax on food by three cents, development of the Missouri Housing Trust Fund, and lawsuits leading to the creation of the Missouri Foundation for Health and provision of non-emergency transportation to Medicaid clients, plus many other social justice victories.