



## Summer Meals in San Bernardino County: County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) Collaboration and Collective Impact

### Intervention Summary

Summertime brings a break from school, but the need for good nutrition doesn't take a break...and hunger never takes a vacation. In 2013 only 5% (1 in 20) of those children and youth participating in free or reduced school meals during the school year, participated in summer meals in San Bernardino County as compared to the national average of 17% (1 in 6). It is also estimated that 1 in 4 children living in San Bernardino County experience food insecurity, and 68.5% are eligible for free/reduced price meals. When brought to the attention of the County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) collaborative, steps were taken to address this disparity during both the summers of 2014 and 2015. **In early 2014**, CNAP members were introduced to and educated regarding the USDA funded summer meal program (administered by the California Department of Education) and took action to promote the summer meal sites through agency websites and social media, connecting residents with 2-1-1, email announcements and posts, and partners encouraging past sponsors to continue and/or expand their services.

**In 2015**, this effort was enhanced by CNAP supporting and hosting a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Outreach and Technical Assistance Workshop in Fontana conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE). Over 70 community leaders attended the event, with participation outnumbering the other sites conducted in California. Furthermore, a CNAP Summer Meals Subcommittee was formed that met six times to prioritize, strategize, plan, implement, and evaluate summer meals in San Bernardino County. One of these meetings was attended by the Inland Desert Training Resource Center (TRC) staff to help identify approaches to increase summer meal participation and develop media messaging. In addition, the CNAP coordinator was trained by the Inland Desert TRC sponsored "Spokesperson Training to Elevate Your Work" workshop conducted by Brown Miller Communications. Through the CNAP Summer Meals Subcommittee, a summer meals kick-off event was planned and implemented. With direct support from six sponsoring agencies (Helping Hands Food Pantry, Alliance for Education, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Inland Empire Job Corps, Child Care Resource Center, and San Bernardino County Department of Public Health - Champions for Change), over 30 partners/exhibitors, and

55+ volunteers, attention was brought to summer meal programs county-wide. An afternoon of healthy (free) food, physical activity and games, nutrition education, family resources, and prizes were enjoyed by over 470 attendees. Chairman James Ramos of the Board of Supervisors gave opening remarks, voicing his support of nutrition and health in alignment with the County's Community Vital Signs Initiative. And for a month following the kick-off, Chairman Ramos posted the Summer Meals event as his cover photo on his Facebook page! Radio Lazer, a Spanish-speaking radio station provided a live remote and prizes (soccer balls). Additionally, in response to a press release sent out to media, K-Frog radio station interviewed the CNAP Coordinator and CX<sup>3</sup> staff. More coverage was highlighted in The Sun Newspaper, Press Enterprise, San Bernardino City News, El Chicano weekly, and Child Care Resource Center Perspectives Newsletter, which printed articles featuring the event and/or summer meals program information.

In addition to the kick-off, CNAP partners and their connections promoted summer meals within their organizations, including Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County, WIC, Transitional Assistance Department/CalFresh, Healthy Heritage, El Sol, UC Cooperative Extension EFNEP, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Catholic Charities, Child Care Resource Center, 2-1-1, Inland Empire Health Plan, Healthy Communities, and multiple cities and school districts. Nutrition students from Loma Linda University, California State University San Bernardino, Patton State Hospital Dietetic Intern Program, and Cal Poly Pomona were used to teach nutrition and promote physical activity at summer meal sites.

Early outcomes and successes were seen in the following:

- Increase in the total number of summer meal sites (including open sites) and cities served. Since 2013, the number of summer meal sites has more than doubled from 87 to 197 (117 additional sites).
- Summer meal sponsors have increased by twelve from 2013 to 2015. There was a decrease by one in 2015 as compared to 2014, however in a survey conducted by a Loma Linda University Masters student, many sponsors increased the number of sites in 2015 (one sponsor added 16 additional sites in 2015). Many organizations opted to be a site rather than a sponsor due to the administrative work involved.

	Summer 2013	Summer 2014	Summer 2015
Number of total sites	87	147	197
Number of open sites	N/A	121	165
Number of camp/closed sites	N/A	26	32
Number of sponsors	20	33	32
Number of cities served	15	24	26

- Increase from serving 5% (1 in 20) in 2013 to 10% (1 in 10) in 2014, doubling from the previous year. Statistics for 2015 are currently being tabulated by the California Department of Education.
- Fontana Unified School District, one of the Summer Meal Subcommittee members and summer meal sponsors, reported serving 20,000 more meals in 2015 as compared to 2014.
- Four libraries were added as first time summer meal sites in 2015.
- An evaluation of Summer Meals in San Bernardino County in 2015 was conducted by a Loma Linda University Masters in Public Health Student/Dietetic Intern and results were reported.

## **Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions**

One of the greatest barriers in promoting and increasing participation in summer meals in San Bernardino County is related to the vast area and diverse landscapes that the County covers. Geographically, the county extends over 20,000 square miles (larger than 17 states) and is divided into three regions: Valley, Desert, and Mountains. The proposed solution to this barrier is to prioritize different regions each year. In 2015, the focus was placed on the Valley region, the most populous of the three. The cities of San Bernardino and Fontana were targeted, especially since Fontana was a strong supporter on the CNAP Summer Meals Subcommittee, and the city of San Bernardino had greatest need. Outreach through partners did extend to the High Desert and other cities, but the majority of resources were concentrated on the prioritized cities. Future efforts will target both Desert and Mountain communities and/or where greatest need is identified.

The 2015 Summer Meal Kick-off was a first-time event, so there was a tremendous learning curve to planning and implementation. Surprisingly, it “blossomed” into a bigger event than what was initially envisioned, with each partner contributing above and beyond expectations:

- Helping Hands Food Pantry – Donated graphic artist time and printing of Kick-off flyers and postcards, mail out to 2,000 residents; food to feed 400+; table and chair rental; location (and much more)!
- Inland Empire Job Corps – Provided 12 culinary students (all with food handlers cards), 18 student volunteers (assisted in parking, assisting exhibitors in set-up and tear down, clean-up, playing games with the kids), and three faculty to supervise. Culinary students prepared and served a healthy lunch which included barbeque chicken, baked beans, watermelon, and corn (yum)!
- Child Care Resource Center – Identified potential exhibitors and solicited their participation at the Summer Meals Kick-Off event. Over 30 exhibitors participated and were educated on the summer meal program. Several exhibitors incorporated healthy food and beverage messaging.

- Alliance for Education – Donated 250 Rubiks-like speed cubes to use as incentives for children and youth to participate in the physical activity games and visit exhibitor booths. At the event, speedcube experts from the Inland Empire area amazed crowds with one-handed, 10 second, and blind-fold solves. Children and teens were shown how to complete early steps in speedcube solving. The following day, the San Bernardino City Feldheim Library (first time summer meal site) hosted a summer meals kick-off event in collaboration with the World Cube Association (WCA) and the Alliance for Education. This was the first ever WCA competition in the Inland Empire and a world record was broken at the library summer meal kick-off event!!
- Volunteers from schools (Cal State University San Bernardino, Loma Linda University, Patton State Hospital Dietetic Intern Program) and many other organizations provided additional manpower. Greater than 55 volunteers were recruited.
- Other CNAP partners advertised the event and the summer meals program on their websites, through social media, via direct contacts with clients/residents, and through own partner networks.

Another barrier is measuring the direct impact of CNAP summer meal efforts. To what extent can CNAP directly and indirectly attribute the actual success and growth in summer meal sites, participation, etc., to its interventions? This evaluation will be a future focus as CNAP continues to collaborate with Loma Linda University (LLU). In 2015, an evaluation of the summer meals program in San Bernardino County was conducted by a second year LLU MPH nutrition intern who completed a 10 week field practicum with the Health Department, supervised by the CNAP coordinator. Findings from interviews conducted with participants, parents, food service workers, site supervisors and sponsors were summarized to offer recommendations to better assist stakeholders and partners involved with promoting the Summer Meals Program and incorporating nutrition education and obesity prevention (NEOP) messaging. Findings from the completed report will guide future strategies to improve and promote the Summer Meals Program in 2016 and incorporate additional opportunities for NEOP related activities and enrichment. Continued collaboration with Loma Linda University will help to address further questions including those previously mentioned that need to be evaluated.

## **Future Directions/Sustainable Success**

Future directions include the following:

- Expand the geographical target of CNAP summer meal efforts to the High Desert (short term) and Mountain Communities (long term) and forge additional partnerships to increase access to healthy food, physical activity, and nutrition education through the summer meal programs in these areas. Working with the SB County NEOP sub-contractor St. Mary Medical Center and their community coalitions, as well as the Healthy City groups, school district food service, community based organizations and colleges represented in the high desert communities will be key to the successful promotion and increase in summer

meal sites as well as provide additional venues for NEOP messaging in that region.

- CNAP will continue to partner organizations with summer meal sites and/or sponsors to promote healthy foods, nutrition messaging, and physical activity. In addition, efforts will be made to introduce sponsors and site supervisors to activity toolkits and other resources to improve nutrition and physical activity focused programming.
- Summer meal sponsors will incorporate locally grown fruits and vegetables into summer meal site menus and/or summer meal sites will provide access to fruits and vegetables. This may be accomplished by working with local Farmers' Markets, Old Grove Orange (fruit and vegetable food hub) and/or Family Service Agency's Mobile Fresh Bus (produce market on wheels).
- Continued collaboration with Loma Linda University to evaluate CNAP summer meal efforts. (See Barriers Encountered and Identified/Proposed Solutions section) From the evaluation conducted by the LLU MPH intern, one of the key findings revealed that most sponsors were satisfied with the success of their Summer Meals Program and rated their program a 4 out of 5. Additionally, first time sites represented in the survey, indicated that 100% would like to continue the Summer Meals Program next year. This information is encouraging, as it would indicate that once additional sites are brought into the program, it is highly likely that in subsequent years they will sustain efforts and continue to nourish and nurture the bodies and minds of the youngest and most vulnerable segment of our population.

## Contact information about this Narrative

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