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RELEASE: Gov. Reynolds, Iowa HHS announce 'Healthy Kids Iowa' summer program to feed more school children

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Governor Kim Reynolds ★ Lt. Governor Chris Cournoyer

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Gov. Reynolds, Iowa HHS announce 'Healthy Kids Iowa' summer program to feed more school children

DES MOINES— Today, Governor Kim Reynolds announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service has approved a demonstration project submitted by Iowa Health and Human Services for the state's own summer food pilot program. **Healthy Kids Iowa** is an alternative to the summer EBT program that serves Iowa children healthier foods at a lower cost by leveraging Iowa's already-existing, successful network of summer feeding programs and community providers.

"Our goal has always been to ensure all Iowa children have access to nutritious, balanced and wholesome food, while promoting healthy eating habits," Gov. Reynolds said. "I'm grateful to the USDA and Secretary Rollins for partnering with the State of Iowa and placing their trust in our statewide network of meal providers. Together we're building on the strong foundation already in place to better meet the unique needs of Iowa's children and families."

In 2023-24, Iowa received over \$12 million in USDA meal reimbursements for summer nutrition programs administered by the Department of Education. Building on that success, Governor Reynolds invested an additional \$900,000 last year. As a result, 61 new meal sites were added in 2024, bringing the total to more than 500 access points statewide.

"I want to thank Governor Kim Reynolds of Iowa for her incredible leadership. With USDA's full support, Iowa is launching a new program to provide healthy foods to low-income, school-aged children during this summer break," USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins said. "State-led innovation across all of USDA's nutrition programs is simply the right thing to do and we are encouraging governors across the entire country to explore creative ways to provide food for those in need while also doing right by the American taxpayer."

With the state's summer feeding demonstration project, each family will be able to select \$40 worth of fresh and nutritious food for each eligible child per month. Families will be able to choose their monthly items, respecting their preferences and cultural and dietary needs. Distribution sites across the state will offer a selection of foods that are healthy and kid- friendly. Sites will be selected in partnership with the Feeding America Foods Banks and will be established based on demonstrated need.

"Healthier children are more likely to lead more successful lives," said Iowa HHS Director Kelly Garcia. "We must forge a new path and lead the way on promoting healthier lifestyles in our children, so they choose fruits and vegetables over unhealthy options. We are excited to partner with the regional food banks across our state to meet the unique needs of their communities."

"In partnership with our dedicated network of community-based providers, the Healthy Kids Iowa initiative builds upon our well-established summer feeding programs," said McKenzie Snow, Director of the Iowa Department of Education. "Together, we can grow the reach and impact of our vital child nutrition programs, providing young Iowans with no-cost, healthy meals and food options that best meet the needs of our families."

Under the Healthy Kids Iowa Pilot Program:

- Households must meet the federal poverty level of 185% or below AND have children ages 4-18 in their care.
- Households will be allowed to choose from a selection of nutritionally balanced foods each month at their local participating pantry.
- Foods will include fruits, vegetables, dairy items, whole grains and proteins.

The Healthy Kids Iowa pilot program will run during the months of June, July and August 2025. More information can be found [here](#).

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