FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ALABAMA SEEKS AT-RISK AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM SPONSORS

Program provides nutritious snacks or meals to children at eligible sites

Montgomery, Ala. – When school is out and parents are still at work, children need a safe place to be with their friends, with structured activities, supportive adults, and good nutrition.

The At-Risk Afterschool Program gives children and teenagers the healthy snacks or meals they need and draws them into constructive activities that are safe, fun, and filled with opportunities for learning. The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), is currently seeking sponsors to operate the 2015-2016 At-Risk Afterschool Program for Alabama children.

Qualified sponsors are reimbursed for preparing and serving meals to eligible children at their sites. Meals and/or snacks may be served to children in places such as schools, learning centers, community centers, and churches.

Alabama school systems that currently serve as at-risk after-school sponsors are pleased with the impact the program has had in helping meet the nutritional needs of their students and in promoting student achievement.

The Fairfield City School System, for example, initiated its supper program as part of At-Risk Afterschool, piloting the program at two of the district’s four schools during the last academic year. From April 7, 2015, to May 28, 2015, approximately 7,049 were served, according to Fairfield City Schools Superintendent Dr. Walter Gonsoulin.

“The program was a huge success partly because the school district knew the needs of the community and diligently worked to meet those needs,” Gonsoulin said, adding that through the supper program the system also created an opportunity for high school students to receive their food handler’s certification.

In addition, Gonsoulin noted the successful pilot year of the supper program extended far beyond the cafeteria – it even had an impact on attendance at Fairfield High Preparatory School.

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“The average daily attendance rates increased as much as 3 percent from the previous month and even greater when compared to the same time period the previous school year,” Gonsoulin said, and as a result the supper program will be offered at all four Fairfield City schools for the 2015-2016 year. “We are proud of the success of this program and our community has expressed a genuine and sincere appreciation for the school district because of our efforts.”

Other school systems across the state are hoping to have similar success stories.

Alabaster City Schools opted to provide At-Risk Afterschool for the first time this year, with the program serving as an extension of the district’s summer feeding program. Alabaster school officials have said the program will be a great help to parents who worry about their children eating late in the evening, especially if the child participates in after-school activities or if the parents work late.

The supper program will be open to all after-school program participants, including sports teams and the Thompson High School band, as well as all students in the community. All dinner meals will be prepared at Thompson High School and will be transported to each school’s after-school program site.

In addition to school systems, non-profit organizations and units of local, municipal, county, or state governments may qualify as At-Risk Afterschool sponsors if they are located in eligible areas where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

To be eligible, sponsors must:
• Be organized primarily to provide care for children after school or on weekends, holidays, or school vacations during the regular school year
• Provide organized regularly scheduled activities
• Include education or enrichment activities
• Be located in an eligible area
• Show financial and administrative capabilities for operating the program
• Attend training

Potential sponsors may contact Kimberlei Bowen, Education Specialist, Alabama State Department of Education, 5302 Gordon Persons Building, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL, 36130-2101; call 334-242-9376; or e-mail kbowen@alsde.edu.

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