

Nourishing Our Children Beyond the School Day

September 2014



POLICY BRIEF

Though not always visible, child hunger remains a significant problem in the United States. Millions of families do not have the resources to purchase the food that they need.

In most of these families, parents protect children from hunger. Though their children may not get the nutritional quality or variety that they need for proper health and development, parents reduce their own portion sizes or skip meals to protect children from actual hunger pangs. In a smaller number of households, however, the family's situation is so dire that there is simply not enough food and children themselves go hungry.

The number of children living in food insecure households rose 33 percent in the first year of the recession and has hardly abated since.¹ Over one in five children in America now lives in a household that struggles to put food on the table.² Food insecurity rates among Hispanic and African American children are even more alarming. Nearly one in three African American and Hispanic children live in households at risk of hunger.³

Food insecurity is particularly detrimental for children. They are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of food insecurity and the long-term consequences can be more severe. Poor nutrition and episodes of hunger subject children to increased health risks and impaired cognitive development.

Fortunately, the United States has a robust and complementary set of federal child nutrition programs to protect children from hunger and promote improved nutrition and health. Programs target children at different ages and in different settings. While some programs serve meals to children in child care and school settings, others target children when they are out of school or at home and harder to reach.

Since their implementation in the 1960s, federal child nutrition programs have been successful in reducing the hunger and extreme malnutrition that we saw in the United States until only a few decades ago.

Despite their proven effectiveness, child nutrition programs are only useful when they reach the children who need help. In particular, programs targeting children during out-of-school times fail to reach far too many children in need of food assistance. Our nation could do much more to reduce child hunger and malnutrition simply by reaching more children.

The reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 2015 provides an important opportunity to improve access to and the quality of child nutrition programs. This paper outlines critical areas deserving of Congressional attention in the upcoming child nutrition reauthorization. Subsequent papers in this series will explore the policy issues introduced here in more depth.

PREVALANCE AND IMPACT OF CHILD HUNGER IN THE UNITED STATES

Households with children are at greater risk of hunger than the overall population. Nationally, 20 percent of households with children are food insecure compared to 12 percent of households without children.⁴ Food insecurity is also more prevalent in households headed by a single mother (34 percent) or single father (23 percent) than in married-couple households (13 percent).⁵

Child hunger exists in every county in every state, but Feeding America’s *Map the Meal Gap* research shows that child hunger looks different from one

community to the next, ranging from a low of 6 percent in Bowman County, North Dakota to a high of 41 percent in Zavala County, Texas.⁶ Child hunger is pervasive in rural areas. Fifty-nine percent of the counties with the highest child food insecurity rates are rural, even though rural counties comprise only 43 percent of all U.S. counties.⁷ Although many rural areas may experience child hunger at a higher rate, urban areas can be home to larger numbers of hungry children and may face challenges addressing the sheer number of children in need of assistance.⁸

Children Living in Food Insecure Households by County, 2012

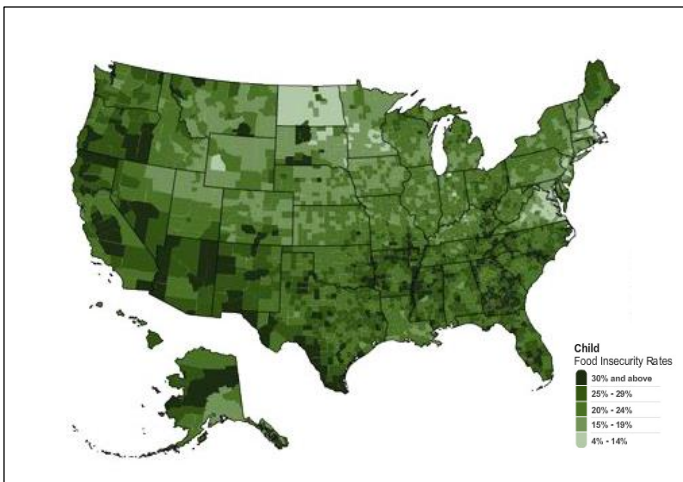


Figure 1 (Source: Feeding America, 2014)

Children Living in Food Insecure Households by Race/Ethnicity, 2013

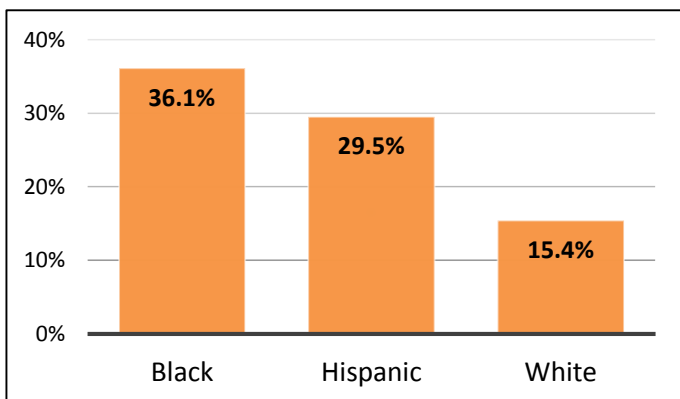


Figure 2 (Source: USDA, 2014)

Child Food Insecurity Rates by State, 2012

Ten Highest		
1	New Mexico	29.2%
2	Mississippi	28.7%
3	Arizona	28.2%
4	Georgia	28.1%
4	Nevada	28.1%
6	District of Columbia	28.0%
7	Arkansas	27.7%
8	Florida	27.6%
9	Texas	27.4%
10	Oregon	27.3%
Ten Lowest		
1	North Dakota	10.6%
2	Minnesota	16.1%
3	Virginia	16.2%
3	New Hampshire	16.2%
5	Massachusetts	16.6%
6	Delaware	18.3%
7	South Dakota	18.5%
7	New Jersey	18.5%
9	Wyoming	19.2%
10	Iowa	19.3%
10	Maryland	19.3%

Figure3 (Source: Feeding America, 2014)

In addition to being at greater risk of hunger, children can also be more susceptible to hunger's ill-effects. Although food insecurity is harmful to any individual, it can be particularly devastating for children due to their increased vulnerability and the potential for long-term consequences.⁹ Good nutrition, particularly in the first few years of life, establishes a foundation for a child's future physical and mental health, academic achievement, and ultimately their economic productivity.

Food insecure children are more likely to experience stomachaches, headaches, colds, ear infections and fatigue.¹⁰ They are sick more often, recover more slowly, and are more likely to be hospitalized.^{11,12} Food insecurity in children under age three can change the fundamental architecture of the brain and central nervous system.^{13,14}

Food insecure children may lack energy to handle complex social interactions or adapt effectively to environmental stresses.^{15,16,17} Children who regularly do not get enough nutritious food are at greater risk for behavioral, emotional, and academic problems and show increased aggression and anxiety.¹⁸ Similarly, teenagers who do not get enough food to eat may have difficulty getting along with other children and are more likely to see a psychologist and be suspended from school.¹⁹

The physical, cognitive, and emotional impacts of food insecurity can have a direct impact on children's ability to perform in school. Food insecurity impairs children's ability to concentrate.^{20,21} Children who do not eat breakfast may experience negative impacts on their ability to think and learn.²² By contrast, children who eat breakfast score better on tests, have better memory retention, and show improved learning skills.²³ Food insecurity has lasting impact on children's cognitive performance. Adults who experienced food insecurity as children have lower levels of educational and technical skills, having a lasting

impact on both individual outcomes and the workforce as a whole.^{24,25,26,27,28}

PROGRAMS TO COMBAT CHILD HUNGER

Federal nutrition programs target low-income children at different ages and in different settings to reduce hunger and promote nutrition. Both the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) serve children from birth to preschool, but CACFP serves meals to children in day care settings while WIC provides families with vouchers to purchase healthy groceries to eat at home.^a CACFP also serves school-aged children, providing afterschool snacks and meals. The School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provide meals to children during the school day.^b The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides meals and snacks to children during the summer.

Together these programs provide the nutrition children need for healthy development and improve their long-term health and educational outcomes. Yet significant gaps remain, particularly in programs that serve children when they are away from school. Schools and day care settings are an effective way to reach children because kids show up at the same location, for the same hours, five days a week and – in the case of school – there are often bus systems to transport them. Reaching children during out-of-school times presents significantly greater challenges. In large part this is because programs targeting children after school, on weekends, and during the summer are designed around the same site-based model.

The specific changes needed to improve quality and access in child nutrition programs varies from one program to the next. Some programs need only minor tweaks while others need more significant changes. Upcoming sections summarize the most pressing policy changes needed for each program.

^a While the vast majority of program participants are children, CACFP also serves a small number of individuals in adult day care and WIC also serves pregnant and postpartum women.

^b To make it easier for schools to operate out-of-school time programs, schools may also use NSLP to provide afterschool or summer feeding programs.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO SUMMER FOOD ASSISTANCE

Research has found that children consume up to 50 percent of their total daily calories at school during the school year.²⁹ Families with limited resources may struggle to make up that 50 percent on a summer day. While some of those families have access to summer feeding sites in their communities, many do not. In fact, summer feeding provides the most striking access gap among the federal nutrition programs.

For every 100 school lunch programs sites, there are only 43 community-based summer food program sites.^{30,c} As a result, we are reaching only a fraction of children in need. While 21.5 million low-income children receive lunch assistance during the school year,³¹ only around 3.5 million – or about 16 percent – receive food assistance through a summer feeding program.^{32,d}

The current summer feeding model requires children to consume meals at a designated feeding site. For reasons discussed below, it can be difficult to operate a site-based model during the summer, so there are far fewer access points during the summer than during the school year.

To close an access gap of this magnitude, we need a two-part strategy. First, in areas where the site-based model is viable, we need to make it easier for community-based partners to operate a program in order to increase the number of access points available to children. Second, we need to recognize that a one-size-fits-all model will not work in every community and give communities alternative program models for reaching kids when school is out.

Make it Easier to Open More Summer Food Sites

In some communities, the site-based summer feeding model works well, for example when schools stay open for summer school, community organizations provide enrichment programs, or churches operate a day camp. Program sponsors may operate either an enrolled or an open site. At an enrolled site, sponsors document that at least half of the children participating are low-income (at or below 185 percent of poverty) and then are reimbursed for all of the meals served at the site. Summer camps (residential and non-residential) can collect income information and be reimbursed for the meals served to low-income children.

Alternatively, open sites operate in low-income communities and are open to all children under age 18. To qualify as an open site, a site must the area eligibility test – located in an area where at least 50 percent of school children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (at or below 185 percent of poverty). While sponsors keep track of the number of children and meals served each day, they do not collect individual income-eligibility data. This reduces the sponsors' paperwork, increasing their likelihood of participation and allowing them to focus on site enrichment activities and nutritious meals.

The open site area eligibility test works best in population-dense areas like cities. However, in suburban and rural areas where children travel greater distances to get to school or in areas with greater socioeconomic diversity, communities may have a large number of children in need but fail to meet the area eligibility test. Historically, the area eligibility threshold in the Summer Food Service Program was set at 33 percent but it was raised to 50 percent in 1981. The 50 percent area eligibility test is too restrictive, preventing otherwise willing sponsors from operating an open summer food site. Lowering the area eligibility requirement from 50

^c This does not include school-based sites that offer summer meals as part of the National School Lunch Program.

^d This statistic compares the number of children receiving free or reduced-price lunch during the 2012-2013 school year (21.5

million) with the number of children receiving food assistance through either SFSP (2.427 million) or NSLP (1.066 million) during summer 2013.

percent to 40 percent would maintain the program's focus on areas with above average numbers of low-income children while opening up new access points for underserved families.

Provide Communities Flexible Options for Serving Kids During the Summer

Under the current program model, the ability to serve children depends on the willingness and ability of community partners to open and staff their facilities during the summer. Even when there are willing local partners to operate programs, it can be difficult to get children to a summer feeding site. School buses do not run on the weekend or during the summer. In some areas, children may be able to safely walk to a program in their neighborhood, but in suburban or rural areas, programs may be too far for children to walk or bike, and in urban areas it may be unsafe for children to walk even if programs are close.

In recognition of the summer hunger gap, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operated a series of demonstration projects to explore alternative models for feeding children during the summer. The first simply waived the congregate rule requiring that children consume meals on site. In areas where it was challenging for children to come to a program site, communities were free to explore strategies to send meals home with children instead.

In one project in Ohio, children were able to access a summer feeding site but the site was not able to operate every day of the week. Under this demonstration project, children ate meals at the feeding site, and went home with a backpack's worth of nutritious meals for the weekend or when the site was not open. In another project in rural upstate New York, site-based programs were not available because of the long distances families would have to travel, making daily meal service unworkable, whether on-site or pick-up. As part of this demonstration project, families traveled to a

convenient pick-up site twice a week where children were sent home with several days' worth of prepared, nutritious meals.

USDA also experimented with a program model that bypassed a community provider and connected families with children directly with food assistance during the summer. The model leveraged the infrastructure of other existing federal nutrition programs operating in retail settings.

Families with school-aged children that qualify for free or reduced-price meals during the school year were provided an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card with \$60 per month per child, roughly the equivalent of the cost of a month's worth of school breakfasts and lunches. Families could redeem benefits at retailers authorized through either the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or WIC. This model was highly effective at reaching eligible children and was found to both improve nutritional intake and reduce very low food insecurity among children by 33 percent.^{33,e}



Given that the current site-based summer feeding model only reaches about 16 percent of children who receive lunch assistance during the school year, communities should have the flexibility to choose a model that best meets their needs, whether operating a program site, providing meals and groceries that children take home with them, or giving families a grocery card to supplement their household food budget.

^e In the annual report, *Household Food Security in the United States*, USDA identifies two levels of severity within the food

insecure population: low food security and very low food security.

ALLOW FLEXIBILITY TO BETTER REACH KIDS DURING WEEKENDS

Many low-income children struggle with hunger over the weekend but current program requirements make it difficult for communities to support them. CACFP can be used to provide meals to children when school is not in session, but children are required to consume meals on-site. Similar to summer, without designated space to house a program or a busing system to transport children, the logistics are usually too difficult to operate a weekend feeding site. Similar to the successful demonstration projects waiving the congregate requirement in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), communities should be allowed to innovate more effective ways to reach kids on weekends, such as sending children at risk of hunger home from school with a backpack of nutritious meals or child-friendly groceries on Friday afternoons.

Some communities have leveraged private funding to operate programs that send children home with child-friendly groceries on the weekend. The idea for a weekend backpack program originated with a school nurse in Arkansas. When children ended up in the nurse's office on Monday mornings complaining of stomachaches and dizziness, the community realized that the children had had little to eat since their school lunch on Friday. The school partnered with a local food bank to provide backpacks with child-friendly groceries that children could take home with them to ensure they had enough to eat over the weekend.

The weekend backpack program has been successfully replicated across the country with private funding. However, because funds are limited, programs are not available in every community. Even in communities where weekend backpack programs are operating, the program may not be available in every low-income school or have sufficient funding to serve every child in need. It is often left to teachers or the school nurse to

determine which of the school's low-income children are most in need of a weekend backpack, turning away children when all the bags have been distributed.

By waiving the congregate requirement in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), community organizations could be reimbursed for meals sent home with low-income children to feed them over the weekend, enabling them to reach more children in need.



STREAMLINE REGULATIONS FOR COMMUNITY BASED PROVIDERS

While the site-based program model may not work everywhere, many communities effectively leverage this model to serve children after school and during the summer. In addition to providing nutritious meals and snacks, site-based programs often provide academic, enrichment, and physical activity curriculum. They also offer adult supervision and a safe place for children while parents are at work.

In some communities, schools operate these programs, but often they are provided by community-based organizations like food banks, parks and recreation departments, public libraries, YMCAs, Boys & Girls clubs, or other charities. While schools have the ability to operate after school and summer feeding sites year round through one program, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), community based organizations must operate separate programs.

In order to serve children year round, community-based organizations must operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) after school and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during the summer, even though they may be serving the same kids, often at the same sites. In addition to requiring duplicate applications, paperwork, and program audits, the two programs also sometimes have inconsistent program requirements. In a handful of states, CACFP and SFSP are administered by different state agencies, further increasing inefficiency and duplication.



The option to operate one program year round should be available to community-based organizations in all states. This will allow these important public-private partners to focus on feeding hungry kids, not pushing paperwork. Congress has allowed community-based organizations in one state, California, to operate the Summer Food Service Program year round to serve children in out-of-school settings. This structure provides streamlined resources to community groups and an incentive to extend operations to serve more children throughout the year.

At a minimum, Congress should examine opportunities to align program rules or eliminate duplication for organizations operating both programs. Established community-based providers with a strong record of program management should be allowed to operate under a set of streamlined administrative requirements in recognition of their history of operating programs in good standing.

LEVERAGE SCHOOLS BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY

Schools provide children with nutritious breakfasts and lunches each school day, but school facilities can also be leveraged to feed children when school is out. Many schools operate after school and summer feeding programs themselves. Other schools are important partners in feeding children after school, during the summer, and on weekends by opening up their facilities to community nonprofits to operate programs. Local nonprofits use school kitchens to prepare meals or use school libraries and playgrounds to offer enrichment or physical activities for children. Food banks partner with many schools to distribute weekend backpacks or to operate school-based pantries for families with children.

In some communities, access to school infrastructure can make the difference between being able to operate an out-of-school program or not. We should reward schools that harness their facilities as a shared community resource to nourish children beyond the school day.

Competitive grants awarded to schools to upgrade their kitchen equipment should give preference to schools that leverage their facilities to feed children beyond the school day.

The Healthier U.S. School Challenge recognizes schools that have created healthier school environments through the promotion of nutrition and physical activity. Criteria could be added to further recognize schools working to promote nutrition and physical activity for children outside of the school day, for example by operating or allowing access to their facilities for the operation of out-of-school programs.

Recognizing the role that schools play in promoting student health, local education agencies (LEA) participating in federal nutrition programs are required to establish a local school wellness policy

for schools under their jurisdiction. While school wellness policies are focused on the school environment, they do not have to be limited to the school day. Wellness policies should consider how schools can promote nutrition and wellness for children when school is out.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act emphasizes training for food service personnel related to program integrity, nutrition, health, and food safety. Adding food insecurity training would give LEAs and food service personnel the tools to better identify and respond to the needs of food insecure students.

Encouraging schools to make their facilities available to local nonprofits as a shared community resource and rewarding schools for leveraging their facilities to meet the needs of food insecure children beyond the school day would strengthen communities' ability to nourish children in and out of school.

STRENGTHEN ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS AND WIC

While the most glaring gaps in child nutrition programs can be found during out-of-school times, there are also important areas for improvement in school breakfast and WIC.

Only half of children receiving lunch assistance eats school breakfast, and more can be done to improve access to this most important meal of the day. While 21.5 million children received federally assisted lunches during the 2012-2013 school year, only 11.2 million received breakfast.³⁴

Many potential factors could cause an eligible child not to participate in a breakfast program, but one of the most basic relates to scheduling challenges and stigma associated with traditional cafeteria-based breakfast programs. Adopting alternative models can provide access to breakfast in effective but nontraditional ways. For example, rather than providing a service-line breakfast in the cafeteria where children sit down to eat, schools can provide

meals that students pick up at kiosks or carts, or are delivered to classrooms so that children can eat breakfast at the start of their school day. Meals can be prepared off-site and can be served hot or cold, depending on school facilities.



In addition to removing the stigma associated with eating school breakfast, these alternative models are an effective solution when bus schedules do not deliver students to school in time to eat a cafeteria-style breakfast before class. By taking breakfast out of the cafeteria and making it part of the school day, more students participate and experience the benefits of school breakfast, such as reduced school tardiness, disciplinary referrals, and visits to the nurse's office.³⁵ Further, the increase in participation through these alternate models allows the program to leverage economies of scale and bring additional resources to schools.

Another strategy to increase participation is eliminating the reduced-price meal category. This enables schools to provide meals free to low-income children who normally would have to purchase them for a reduced fee, which promotes participation and leads to more resources to schools.

The public health benefits of WIC are well documented, increasing nutrient intake, improving growth and development, and reducing medical problems. In particular, a 40 percent reduction in obesity among preschool age children over the last decade has been credited in part to WIC.³⁶

Unfortunately, children's participation in WIC decreases significantly as age increases, and many young children miss out on this important nutritional supplement. Only 53.6 percent of eligible children age one to four participate in WIC, compared to 83.4 percent participation among infants.³⁷ We must ensure that families with young children have access to the important nutrition and health benefits that WIC provides.

One of the best ways to promote access to WIC is through a state option that allows families who are enrolled in Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (TANF) to be certified as eligible for participation in WIC. Recognizing that families eligible for one program are frequently eligible for – and in need of – benefits from another program, this important policy option reduces caseworker burden for states by eliminating the need to process multiple sets of paperwork for the same families. It also helps connect families with the multiple lines of support that they need.

Greater alignment of program eligibility rules and enrollment procedures is smart policy, providing a

win for both states and low-income families. Congress should encourage the coordination of programs.

CONCLUSION

For all of our efforts to promote child health by improving the nutritional environment in schools, far too many children lack access to adequate, nutritious food when school is out. Community based providers are a critical partner in efforts to protect children from hunger during out-of-school times, but rigid program models and duplicative and inconsistent program requirements mean that nonprofits are hamstrung in their ability to reach children in need. Instead, they expend limited resources pushing paperwork that could be better allocated to serving more children.

Providing flexible program models, reducing administrative inefficiencies, and promoting awareness of the needs of children during out-of-school times will improve communities' ability to nourish children beyond the school day and finally close the hunger gap.

Federal Child Nutrition Programs

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides children with nutritious meals and snacks in a variety of settings, including public or private nonprofit day care centers, Head Start programs, child care homes, and some for-profit day care centers serving lower-income children. CACFP may be used by emergency shelters to provide free meals to all residents age 18 and younger. Children in households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level qualify for free meals, and those with family incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Sites receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying meal or snack served to children.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool provides nutritious snacks and suppers to low-income children in afterschool settings. Sites must provide educational or enrichment activities and must be located in areas where at least half of the children in the school attendance area are certified for free or reduced-price meals. At-Risk Afterschool sites may be operated by schools, government agencies, summer camps, churches, or community based organizations like food banks, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, or the United Way. Sites receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying meal or snack served to children.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides nutritious lunches to children in public and private schools. Children in households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level qualify for free meals, and those with family incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents. NSLP operates in over 100,000 schools nationwide. Schools receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying lunch or snack served to children. In addition to school lunches, schools can use NSLP to operate afterschool snack programs and summer feeding sites.

School Breakfast Program (SBP) provide nutritious breakfasts to children in public and private schools. Children in households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level qualify for free meals, and those with family incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 30 cents. SBP operates in 89,000 schools nationwide. Schools receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying breakfast served to children.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides a monthly food package to nutritionally at-risk women, infants and young children with family income at or below 185% of the poverty level. The program serves pregnant, nursing, and postpartum women and children up to age 5. The food package is designed based on the participant's age and nursing status to provide nutrients typically missing in the diets of the target population. WIC also provides nutrition education and counseling as well as health care screening and referrals.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children during the summer months when school is out. SFSP sites may be operated by schools, government agencies, summer camps, places of worship, or community based organizations like food banks, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, or the United Way. These sites qualify if they are located in low-income areas or serve primarily low-income children (those who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year). Sites receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying meal or snack served to children. SFSP operates at 42,700 sites nationwide.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service



Charitable Child Nutrition Programs

Feeding America's Weekend Backpack Program provides backpacks filled with nutritious foods in child-friendly packaging. Children take a backpack home with them on Friday afternoon, ensuring that they have enough food to eat over the weekend. Food banks pack backpacks and deliver them to schools. Schools in turn distribute the backpacks to children in need of food assistance. In FY2013, 160 food banks operated over 8,900 Weekend Backpack Program sites, serving nearly 41 million meals to over 452,000 children.

Feeding America's School Pantry Program provides groceries for children and their families to eat at home. By operating a grocery distribution program on the grounds of a school, school pantries provide an accessible and discreet source of food assistance for families with children. Pantries may have a permanent set up within a school building or may operate through a mobile distribution where food is brought to the school campus. School pantries are consistently in the same location and have set distribution schedules. In FY2013, 74 food banks operated over 800 School Pantry Program sites, serving nearly 22 million meals to about 110,000 children and 68,000 families. The School Pantry Program is one of the fastest growing programs in the Feeding America network. Since 2010, the number of food banks operating school pantries has tripled and the number of pantry sites has almost doubled.

In addition to privately-funded, charitable programs, Feeding America food banks also operate the **Child and Adult Care Food Program** and the **Summer Food Service Program** to help feed children after school and during the summer. In FY2013, Feeding America food banks operated 1,851 (CACFP sites) afterschool and 3,140 (SFSP sites) summer feeding sites.

Source: Feeding America

ABOUT FEEDING AMERICA

Feeding America is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief charity, with a network of 200 food banks across the country. Each year, Feeding America secures nearly four billion pounds of food and grocery products for distribution through a network of 46,000 agencies, including food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and senior feeding programs. Our network provides emergency food assistance to 46.5 million individuals in need annually, including 12 million children and 7 million seniors. Feeding America food banks also work to combat hunger by connecting clients with federal nutrition programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and by operating federal child nutrition programs Summer Food Service Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program to reach children afterschool, during the summer, and over the weekend.

Our strength is derived from our member food banks, which serve all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, reaching nearly all metropolitan, suburban, and rural communities. Hunger does not discriminate, and neither does the Feeding America network – our members serve people regardless of their race, age or religion.

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