



Washington
Child Nutrition
Reauthorization
Coalition

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Priorities Washington State 2010

What's at stake for Washington?

This year's reauthorization comes at a time when Washington families are facing tough economic times, with hardship unseen for a generation. Many new faces have joined the perennially hungry ranks; their health suffers and, for children, performance in school suffers, too.

- Nearly 300,000 Washington households, including approximately 377,000 children, live in households **struggling to put food on the table**.
- Food banks and other emergency food providers are swamped – they are seeing up to **30 percent more needy families** than at this same time last year.
- Parents of 433,000 Washington school children signed them up for free or reduced-price school meals in fall 2009.

Federal child nutrition programs play a key role in connecting children to nutritious meals where they live, learn and play:

- **School lunch** serves 490,000 children on an average school day in Washington, but doesn't serve another half million.
- More than 285,000 low-income children miss out on **school breakfast**.
- The number of Family Child Care Homes participating in the **Child and Adult Care Food Program** has steeply declined.
- Only 11% of low-income students participating in the school lunch have access to nutritious meals during the summer months.

Key themes for Congressional action are:

- Improve access to the programs
- Modernize enrollment and administration
- Improve nutritional quality

Washington Child Nutrition Reauthorization Priorities:

The following priorities for child nutrition reauthorization were developed by a coalition of organizations in Washington who every day feed hungry children in school, child care, after-school and summer programs; at churches, parks, apartment complexes, clinics, schools and community centers. Members of this coalition include:

Children's Alliance
Northwest Harvest
School's Out Washington
Food Lifeline

Solid Ground/Seattle Food Committee
Nutrition First
Washington Association for the
Education of Young Children

Recommendations for Reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs

Washington kids deserve a great start – first and foremost, Congress must invest additional funds in improving access and increasing meal quality. All of the cornerstone nutrition programs are underfunded and, with the exception of WIC, operating under outdated nutrition standards. Reauthorization 2010 can and must move us closer to ending childhood hunger by 2015.

WIC Program:

The WIC Program began implementation of a new food package last fall. Congress approved adding funds to provide the full Institute of Medicine fruit and vegetable allocation to all women in the program; in 2010 Congress needs to build upon that increase in the following ways ---

- Provide full funding so all WIC families can participate in the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.
- Maintain adjunct eligibility for WIC based on participation in other programs, streamlining eligibility and access.
- Allow state the option of certifying a child for one year rather than six months.
- Support evaluation of biochemical screening requirements for WIC.
- Increase funds appropriated for Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Programs.
- Provide additional funds to provide the full Institute of Medicine recommended amount of fruits and vegetables to children in the WIC Program, and continue to incentivize breastfeeding and support the health of breastfeeding women and their babies by increasing the fruit and vegetable allocation for exclusively breastfeeding women.

National School Lunch Program / School Breakfast Program:

School meals play a key role in addressing both childhood hunger and childhood obesity. First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* initiative recognizes the essential role of Child Nutrition Reauthorization in increasing access to school meals and in improving nutrition quality. Essential steps for 2010 include ---

- Expand paperless application options for school meals and encourage universal breakfast and lunch, including:
 - Requiring school districts to utilize data from Medicaid and SCHIP to directly certify more students that are eligible for free school meals.
 - Improving state performance in enrolling eligible children in school lunch programs by setting a performance standard for directly certifying students for school lunch programs (reaching 95 percent of students required to be directly certified) and providing incentives to high performance states.
 - Allowing schools or districts serving a high proportion of low-income children to serve free meals to all students and be reimbursed based on socioeconomic data rather than individual applications.

- Creating a grant program to assist schools in implementing universal breakfast and breakfast in the classroom programs.
- Regulate sale of foods of minimal nutritional value during the school day by:
 - Updating the definition of Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value to correspond with current nutrition science.
 - Expanding the time and place rule, allowing the Secretary of Agriculture to have authority over competitive foods (foods and beverages sold on the school campus during the school day that compete with the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs).
- Expand the commodity allocation to the School Breakfast Program and increase lunch commodities to improve meal quality and overall resources for meal programs.
- Streamline the programs and expand access by eliminating the reduced-price category completely and providing all low-income students with free meals, following the example of the Washington State Legislature which has provided funds to eliminate the co-pay for all school breakfasts and school lunches in grades K-3.

Afterschool and Summer Meals:

Kids who rely on school meals during the school year often go without the nutrition they need during the summer months. We know how to solve childhood hunger any time of the year – surround our children with nutritious meals where they live, learn and play.

- Extend eligibility to more neighborhoods. Nearly 300 more schools in Washington would qualify as “open sites” for summer meals if eligibility were extended to schools where 40-49% of students qualified for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Expand the pilot allowing afterschool programs to serve an evening meal nationwide.
- Expand the California Community Seamless Summer Food Program pilot nationally, allowing non-school entities to operate year-round nutrition programs through a single agreement.
- Redirect funds away from red tape and toward improved food quality by eliminating overly burdensome auditing and regulation, including rules precluding taking non-perishable food off site.
- Require and fund smarter outreach for summer programs to insure that eligible families are aware of the availability of summer meals for children.
- Reward states with performance bonuses for expanding summer meal access and participation.

Child and Adult Care Food Program:

The Child and Adult Care Food Program should play an important role in expanding access to and improving the quality of child care programs in local communities.

However, since the program was cut and redesigned in 1996, participation of Family Child Care Homes in the program has plummeted. Congress is missing a key opportunity to help young children and their families experience and learn about the role of good nutrition in healthy development.

- Washington child care providers are unanimous in their opposition to the tiering system implemented in 1997 for Family Child Care homes which added layers of complexity and reduced reimbursement. They support streamlining and simplifying program and paperwork requirements for states, sponsoring organizations, child care providers, and parents.
- Meal patterns and nutrition standards for CACFP must be revised and updated and funding increased for meals and snacks. A third meal or snack option for children in child care setting for long hours should be implemented.

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