



# CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

NO KID HUNGRY IN SUMMER



## SUMMER IS THE HUNGRIEST TIME OF YEAR

Summer can be the hungriest time of year for many kids from low-income families. Schools close, and the school meals many kids rely on are no longer available. This can have far-reaching consequences on academic achievement, brain development and overall health.

## TOO MANY KIDS AREN'T GETTING THE SUMMER MEALS THEY NEED

The federal summer meals program was created forty years ago to ensure that America's children in need get enough nutrition during the summer months. While America has changed dramatically since 1975, the policies surrounding the way we feed kids in summer have not. Today only 1 out of 6 kids who may need these meals are actually receiving this critical nutrition.

## IT'S TIME TO UPDATE THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

As Congress considers the reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 2015, it has the opportunity to improve the summer meals program so it meets the needs of children from low-income families, no matter where they live.

For many kids, summer vacation comes with a thrill of anticipation. Weeks stretch ahead filled with dreams of bike rides, swimming pools, family vacations and long, lazy days hanging out with friends. For millions of kids in America, however, it's a much different story. For kids in families struggling to put food on the table, summer's bright promise has been replaced with worry, anxiety and the threat of hunger.

Summer puts additional strain on family budgets. According to a survey conducted by No Kid Hungry and APCO Insight, low-income households spend an additional \$300 a month on groceries during the summer months, putting additional pressure on their already limited finances and forcing trade-offs between food and rent, medical bills and utilities. As a result, summers can be a time of anxiety, hunger and stress with far-reaching consequences on a child's future.

The federal Summer Food Service Program was created in 1975 to help children facing hunger get the healthy food they need during the summer months. These healthy meals are available to kids at thousands of sites across the country. They are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, administered by state agencies, and held at local organizations like schools, churches and community centers.

For some children, this program is a critical lifeline. In too many communities, however, the program does not reach the kids who need it. There are many barriers that block kids from accessing meals. Excessive red tape discourages many organizations from becoming meal sites. Kids are required to eat their meals at the sites, but with many parents at work and school buses out of service for the summer, transportation can be impossible. In rural areas and the suburbs, kids can live miles away from meal sites. Summer storms and extreme heat close sites.

As a result, for every kid who eats regularly at a summer meals site, there are five more who miss out. Five for every one. That adds up to millions of hungry kids.

### **It's time to update the way we feed kids in the summertime.**

States and communities need flexibility to meet rural, suburban and urban children's needs. We need to use the most efficient and effective policies and reach hungry kids, no matter where they live.



5 out of 6

kids who need summer meals are missing out.



30%

of eligible kids live in communities not allowed to serve free meals at open sites because of outdated program rules.



\$300

is the additional amount low-income families spend on groceries each month during summer.

Today's summer meals program operates under a set of **one-size-fits-all** regulations that can make it more difficult to reach hungry children. Here's a look at some of the barriers blocking kids from accessing free meals in the summertime, and recommended **policy updates** that can ensure the summer meals program reaches the hungry children, no matter where they live.

## CURRENT PROGRAM BARRIERS

## SUMMER POLICY SOLUTIONS

CONGREGATE FEEDING REQUIREMENTS

The **"congregate feeding requirement"** in the current law requires that children eat their meals on the premises of the sites where they are served. This leads to a variety of barriers, such as:



Provide states more options to implement effective and efficient summer meals programs that meet the needs of their communities.

### Meals Unavailable

Poverty today looks very different than it did 40 years ago. In the past, poverty tended to be concentrated in specific neighborhoods. Poverty today exists in economically diverse communities, including the suburbs, rural communities and cities. The current program reflects the reality of the past, with summer meals only available to children living in places of concentrated need (where at least 50% of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals). This ignores nearly a third of kids in need who live in communities with more varied incomes.

Permit more flexibility for states around where kids eat their meals, allowing them to pick up meals from sites and eat them at home.

### Sites Not Accessible

It can be tough for many kids to find transportation to summer meal sites, especially during the day when their parents are at work. Many kids in rural communities live miles away from sites; many kids in urban communities face unsafe city streets and dangerous traffic.

Give states the option to provide low-income families with a grocery credit during the summer months, allowing parents to purchase the food their kids need. Pilot programs have demonstrated this is an efficient, direct method to feed hungry children in summer.

### Summer Weather

Kids are required to eat their meals on site, but in many communities across America, skyrocketing summer temperatures, thunderstorms or other severe weather patterns can make it extremely unpleasant, especially when the sites are located outdoors.

Ensure that states have the ability to implement flexible, home delivered meals programs that bring food to kids where they live rather than requiring that kids come to the food (similar to what Meals On Wheels does for seniors.)

RED TAPE

Schools and community groups provide meals for kids from low-income backgrounds outside of school hours through various programs, including summer meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the National School Lunch Program. The **red tape** involved in having to operate multiple programs can be a time-consuming and expensive hurdle.



Reducing red tape would streamline the way we connect kids in need to meals when they aren't in school. We recommend:

### Bureaucracy

The different meal programs run at different times of year. Each has a different set of requirements. Each needs a different set of paperwork. This creates an administrative burden that prevents many faith-based organizations, schools and other kid-focused groups from consistently planning and providing meals to kids in need.

Streamlining out-of-school meal programs into a single program and aligning program rules to eliminate red tape for community organizations and schools.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Ensuring that America's children consistently have enough to eat isn't simply the right thing to do; it's also the smart thing to do. When kids don't get the nutrition they need during the summer months, it has long-term impact on their health, development and ability to learn. Simply put, when we allow our nation's children to go hungry, it robs this country of the best minds and talent for the future, while also leading to expensive health issues, lower academic achievement and lost productivity costs.

*"Too many of my students do not get regular meals when school is out of session. You can see a real learning gap at the start of the school year between the students who had enough to eat over the break and the ones who struggled. The ones who haven't been getting consistent meals are more stressed out. They take longer to ramp up and get into the swing of the school year. They've forgotten more from the year before. It makes a real difference in their progress."*

— PRINCIPAL YOLANDA STANISLAUS  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

## CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN AMERICA

A snapshot of summer hunger  
in the United States:

1 in 5

The number of kids in  
America who struggle  
with hunger

22 million

The number of kids in  
America who are able to rely  
on school lunches to meet  
their daily nutrition needs

4 million

The number of kids in  
America who are also  
getting free meals during  
the summer months

345  
MILLION  
ADDITIONAL  
MEALS

### NO KID HUNGRY IMPACT

No Kid Hungry works closely with governors, local nonprofits and business leaders to connect kids to the food they need all year long. Since the campaign's launch, **No Kid Hungry and our partners have connected kids struggling with hunger with more than 345 million additional meals.**

### ABOUT SHARE OUR STRENGTH'S NO KID HUNGRY CAMPAIGN

No child should go hungry in America, but 1 in 5 kids will face hunger this year. Using proven, practical solutions, No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger today by ensuring that kids start the day with a nutritious breakfast and families learn the skills they need to shop and cook on a budget. When we all work together, we can make sure kids get the healthy food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength.

Learn more at [NoKidHungry.org/summer](https://NoKidHungry.org/summer)



Join us at [NoKidHungry.org](https://NoKidHungry.org)