

# Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network

Bread for the World ◻ The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program ◻  
Connecticut Association for Human Services ◻ End Hunger Connecticut! ◻ Food Research and Action Center ◻ Hunger Action  
Network of New York State ◻ Nutrition Consortium of New York State ◻ Project Bread–The Walk For Hunger ◻ Rhode Island  
Community Food Bank ◻ Southern New Hampshire Services, Inc. ◻ URI–Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America ◻ Vermont  
Campaign to End Childhood Hunger ◻ The Vermont Foodbank ◻

## Child Nutrition Reauthorization Recommendations

The Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network recommends the following federal changes to the law that governs the child nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast Program, the National School Lunch Program, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC).

### All Child Nutrition Programs

1. **Improve food quality for school meals, SFSP, CACFP and WIC.** By aligning meal pattern requirements with current dietary guidelines and IOM recommendations and by mandating regular updates in conjunction with dietary guideline updates, the quality of food served through the federal child nutrition programs would be greatly improved.
2. **Increase funding for per meal reimbursements for school meals, SFSP and CACFP.** Under the current rates, food service directors and sponsors often operate at a deficit, due to food and labor costs. Given that the costs of food, labor, fuel, and all related services have grown tremendously since 2004, new per meal reimbursement rates are essential, particularly to help food service directors and sponsors serve the most nutritious food possible.
3. **Provide financial incentives for school meals, SFSP, CACFP and WIC to serve increased amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially those that are locally grown.** Fruits and vegetables are more expensive than many other food items, and food service directors need additional funding and support to ensure fresh, local produce is included in meals.
4. **Establish pilot programs for school meals, SFSP and CACFP to fund food service and preparation equipment and tie equipment purchases to healthier meals requirements.** Food service directors who use fresh, local produce need the equipment necessary to incorporate the food items into their meals.
5. **Provide funds for outreach for school meals, SFSP, CACFP and WIC.** Underutilization of the child nutrition programs may be attributed largely to a lack of public awareness about the program and an insufficient number of programs. Outreach is necessary in order to expand the program and increase child participation and is a proven, successful method for increasing program participation.

6. **Increase efficiency by requiring direct certification through electronic data matching.** Increased direct certification through electronic data matching would increase the number of children participating in the programs.
7. **Align statutory and paperwork requirements for all child nutrition programs.** Currently, each program has its own set of rules and regulations, which can be burdensome for agencies administering more than one program.

### **School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program**

1. **Eliminate the reduced-price meal category and make meals free for students up to 185 percent of poverty.** The money a child needs to pay for a reduced-price meal is a barrier to that child's participation in the nutrition programs. Eliminating this barrier would increase participation.
2. **Make breakfast after the bell a regular part of the school day.** When breakfast is served during the official school day it increases access and reduces stigma. Also, research has shown that eating breakfast closer to instruction time has a greater impact on academic success.
3. **Establish nutrition regulations for competitive food and all food sold at school.** Any food sold outside of the federal nutrition programs competes with the federally reimbursed meals and should be as nutritious as possible.
4. **Define a maximum percentage that can be charged to food service departments for indirect costs.** These programs have been asked to take on additional fees unrelated to their meals service such as utilities and janitorial services when school districts struggle financially. Given the tight budgets and low meal reimbursement rates, food quality often suffers in order for the food service departments to remain solvent in these scenarios.
5. **Adjust the commodity entitlement calculation to include meals served at breakfast in addition to lunch.** A district's commodity entitlement is currently based on lunch participation only. Therefore, schools that are trying to increase participation in the underutilized breakfast program are not receiving commodities to cover the increase in total school meals they are serving. Districts are forced to rely entirely on purchased product, which increases the financial cost of breakfast.
6. **Allow school food service authorities to serve dinners.** Providing federal reimbursement through the National School Lunch Program for dinners served during extended day and school sponsored remedial programs would reduce paperwork, streamline the provision of meals and increase student access to healthy meals.
7. **Provide funding for the implementation of automated Point of Service programs.** These programs make it harder to tell if a student is paying for their meals themselves or are receiving free or reduced-price meals and eliminate the stigma surrounding this issue.

8. **Develop alternatives for schools to establish free and reduced price meal eligibility such as utilizing census tract data.** Districts with consistently large low-income populations struggle to administer the School Meal Application process due to the large volume of applications that must be collected and verified. Many of these districts have consistently large low-income census tracts that could be used to qualify the district for low-income nutrition programs without the added burden of School Meal Applications.
9. **Fund school wellness councils.** School wellness committees often don't have the resources to properly enforce wellness policies, making them ineffectual.

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

1. **Expand the open-site eligibility threshold from areas where 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced meals to areas where 40 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced meals.** Lowering the SFSP open-site eligibility to 40 percent will allow the program to serve more children who truly need it during the summer months. Lowering area eligibility to 40 percent will simplify the program for large city sponsors and allow rural sponsors to serve more areas.
2. **Allow SFSP sponsors to serve three meals a day or two meals and a snack.** Working parents feel more pressure to work two or more jobs, or are putting in longer hours in response to the increased cost of living. Frequently, one or two incomes in a household is not enough to make ends meet, creating the need for all-day park programs and camps. These programs should have the option to receive reimbursement for serving an additional meal or snack.
3. **Lengthen the time allowed for meal service.** This would eliminate the requirement for sponsors to obtain waivers for extended meal service. Sponsors serving large numbers of children often need more than two hours to distribute lunches.
4. **Establish a pilot program to encourage innovative approaches to increasing access in rural areas.** This would address a population that is seriously under-served because rural sponsors have a difficult time reaching and/or attracting children to open sites.

### **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

1. **Expand the eligibility threshold from 50 percent to 40 percent nationwide.** A Nebraska pilot project expanded area eligibility for family childcare in rural areas by decreasing the area eligibility threshold from 50 percent to 40 percent of students eligible for free and reduced price meals at school. Expanding this program nationwide would increase the number of rural areas eligible for higher, Tier 1 reimbursements.
2. **Expand the At-Risk After-School Supper Pilot to every state.** The at-risk supper program pilot was a great success. Expanding this program for implementation nationwide would allow CACFP

funds to be utilized to serve free suppers to children under nineteen at schools with after-hours programs in areas where 40 percent or more of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

3. **Eliminate tiers in CACFP reimbursement.** The tiered reimbursement system that went into effect in 1998 resulted in a steady decline in program participation among home providers. Although many tier-II providers serve low-income children, they found that the new rates no longer adequately covered food costs. Eliminating reimbursement tiers will serve to lower costs, decrease paperwork and reduce other administrative burdens faced by CACFP family day care providers.
4. **Add reimbursement for a third meal for children in family day care programs.** This would ensure access to good nutrition for children of working parents who rely on day care for extended hours.
5. **Eliminate block-claiming requirements.** New block-claiming requirements should be eliminated in order to decrease administrative costs.
6. **Reduce the administrative burden of CACFP.** Implement the outstanding recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Report released in February 2007.

### **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

1. **Structure WIC funding to ensure that all eligible women, infants and young children are able to participate.** WIC continues to achieve excellent results with a particular focus on reaching working families through outreach, extended office hours, and out-stationed staff.
2. **Increase funds for nutrition services and administrative tasks.** Current nutrition service funding levels will not be sufficient to maintain WIC Nutrition Education services in times of prolonged economic hardship and could result in less time spent on nutrition and breastfeeding education and support; fewer WIC clinics being available; fewer education materials being purchased; and fewer bilingual and multicultural nutrition education and outreach materials being available.
3. **Increase WIC management information system funding.** Additional management information system funding is essential to assuring the success of vendor cost containment requirements and the implementation of mandated health changes to the WIC food packages that are essential to combating obesity and addressing nutrition and health risks of participants.
4. **Mandate and fund WIC advisory councils at the state level.** The implementation of WIC Advisory Councils at the state level will ensure that all states have an opportunity for partnerships in the development of WIC services from a wide range of affiliated professionals, including state and local government; dietetic associations; anti-hunger advocates; vendor relations; and local WIC providers.