



FACT SHEET (May 2021)

Feeding America's 2021 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) Priorities

In almost every county in the United States, children experience food insecurity at higher rates than the general population. **Feeding America estimates** that 13 million children (1 in 6 children) may experience food insecurity in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before and during the pandemic, child nutrition programs have played a critical role in safeguarding millions of children against hunger – but the programs are only as effective as their ability to reach children in need. **To ensure every child has access to the meals they need to grow, learn, and thrive during our nation's recovery and beyond, our lawmakers must pass Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation that strengthens Child Nutrition Programs, especially during out-of-school times when children are hard to reach.**

What is Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)?

- CNR is the process Congress uses to update Child Nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Summer and Afterschool Nutrition Programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- CNR generally occurs every 5 years, but Congress has not passed CNR legislation since 2010 – leaving programs without significant improvements.
- CNR is a significant opportunity for Congress to improve programs and help end child hunger.

Learn About Child Nutrition Programs Firsthand

There is no better way to learn about child hunger and see how child nutrition programs are working than to visit a child feeding program. Feeding America food banks in your state partner with schools and nonprofits to feed

children after school, on weekends, and during the summer. Contact your food bank to arrange a visit and learn how programs could be strengthened to better meet your constituents' needs: www.feedingamerica.org/foodbank.

Congress Can Strengthen Child Nutrition Programs Through CNR

Child nutrition programs target children from families with low incomes at different ages and in different settings to reduce hunger and promote nutrition. WIC reaches children from birth to preschool, while school breakfast and lunch programs serve school-aged children. Food banks and other nonprofits operate summer, afterschool, and weekend programs to make sure children have nutritious food when school is out. These successful, cost-effective nutrition programs play a critical role in helping children in families with low incomes achieve access to quality nutrition, childcare, and educational and enrichment activities while improving their overall health, development, and academic school achievement.

Through CNR, Congress has a pathway to strengthen the Child Nutrition Programs – helping to improve the health, nutrition, and well-being of millions of children across the country. Congress should improve program access and support participation by underserved children, ensure nutrition quality, and simplify program administration and operation.

Strengthen Summer Feeding Sites

■ **Streamline regulations for community-based providers so they can feed children year-round:** Right now, community-based organizations like food banks and other nonprofits have to switch between operating the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide meals during the summer and after school. Congress can allow organizations to operate SFSP all year to eliminate duplicative administrative processes and ensure organizations are able to focus on feeding kids.



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Feeding America is a nationwide network of food banks that feeds more than 40 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities across America and leads the nation in the fight against hunger.

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■ **Align the area eligibility requirement for summer feeding and educational programs to allow more learning programs to offer meals in the summer:** The area eligibility test works best in population-dense areas, but 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. Reducing the area eligibility threshold from 50 percent of area children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals to 40 percent would allow more community providers to offer meals in the summer. This change would reduce sponsors' paperwork, increasing their likelihood of participation and allowing them to focus on site enrichment activities and nutritious meals. Also, allowing more programs to offer meals in the summer means more children can receive meals without having to go too far from home.

Allow Alternate Strategies to Help Feed Children When Schools Are Closed

■ **Provide a Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) grocery card to families with children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals during the summer months and when schools are closed to supplement their household food budgets:** Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), like Summer EBT pilots before it, provides families with funds on an EBT card to make up for meals missed at school due to disruptions. Evaluations of both programs prove they are effective at lowering food insecurity among children and lead to more nutritious meals. Making a program like these permanent will ensure children in need can access the healthy meals they need to thrive.

■ **Allow kids to consume meals off-site, which would enable communities to adopt innovative program models to reach children who lack access to a summer feeding site:** Site-based models for food delivery to kids aren't always accessible, especially since children are dispersed during the summer. Some children are at day camps and enrichment programs, but others are at home – making them harder to reach through a single, site-based delivery model. During the pandemic, Congress allowed non-school food providers to use alternate delivery models to serve kids

in hard-to-reach areas – a change we should keep.

Strengthen Access to School Meal Programs and WIC

■ **Strengthen access to and quality of school meals:** The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs play an important role in reducing child hunger, improving nutrition and health, and supporting learning. Congress should improve and simplify access, moving more schools to offer free school meals to all students by expanding community eligibility and increasing opportunities to directly certify children for free meals. Congress must also continue to support schools as they strive to improve the nutritional quality of meals by providing support, equipment, and training to meet guidelines set in past CNR legislation.

■ **Increase participation of eligible families in WIC:** WIC provides pregnant and postpartum mothers and young children who are low-income with health and social service referrals and culturally appropriate nutritious foods that contribute to their overall health and well-being. **Fewer than half of eligible children ages one to four participate in WIC.** Congress must ensure families' access to the benefits WIC provides by expanding eligibility, streamlining and extending certification, and supporting continued integration of technology to modernize service delivery.

Have questions or need more information?

■ Email the Feeding America Government Relations Team at policy@feedingamerica.org

■ Visit FeedingAmericaAction.org

■ Follow the Feeding America Government Relations Team on Twitter at [@hunger](https://twitter.com/hunger)



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