

What is the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act?

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act authorizes all of the federal school meal and child nutrition programs, which provide funding to ensure that low-income children have access to healthy and nutritious foods. The child nutrition programs touch millions of children each day, and improve educational achievement, economic security, nutrition and health.

Although the programs are permanently authorized, every five years Congress reviews the laws governing these programs through the reauthorization process; the current law, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296), is set to expire on September 30, 2015. The School Breakfast, National School Lunch, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Special Milk Programs are authorized permanently, subject to Congress funding their operations. All of the other child nutrition programs could expire on September 30, 2015 without congressional action.

Reauthorization provides an opportunity to improve and strengthen the child nutrition and school meal programs so they better meet the needs of our nation's children in pre-school, school-based and out-of-school time settings.

The reauthorization amends two existing statutes: the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry S. Truman in 1946, created the National School Lunch Program "as a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children." Twenty years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 into law, which established the School Breakfast Program. Not long after, programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and other child nutrition programs were added to the National School Lunch Act.

What child nutrition programs are up for review?

- The **National School Lunch Program** guarantees that millions of low-income children receive a healthy lunch during their school day. All children can participate in the program, but low-income children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch also qualify for the School Breakfast Program.
- The **School Breakfast Program** ensures that children across the country can get a healthy breakfast at school. As with the case of school lunches, children are eligible for free, reduced-price or paid breakfasts based on their families' incomes.
- The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** reimburses child care centers, Head Start Programs, family child care homes, homeless shelters and afterschool programs for snacks and meals served to children. Generally, children under the age of 12, as well as certain disabled adults can participate, but homeless shelters and afterschool programs can serve children 18 and under.
- The **Summer Food Service Program** ensures that children (18 and under) who depend on school lunch and breakfast during the school year still have access to free, nutritious meals and snacks during the summer when school is out. It provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and private nonprofit organizations that serve free meals and snacks to children at sites located in low-income areas or that serve primarily low-income children.
- The **Afterschool Snack and Meal Program** bridges the hunger gap between lunch and dinner for children who participate in afterschool programs. It provides federal funds to private nonprofit and public organizations (including schools) so they can serve nutritious snacks and meals as part of afterschool programs.

Child nutrition programs up for review, continued

- The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to age 5. The monthly WIC food package is a combination of foods that improve nutrition for pregnant women, new mothers, and children.
- The **WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program** issues coupons to WIC recipients that can be used to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables at participating local farmers' markets.
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program** provides fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to children during the school day. Only elementary schools in which at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals can apply to participate in the program.
- **The Special Milk Program** supports serving milk to children in schools and child care institutions that do not participate in other nutrition programs.

In Congress, who has responsibility for Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

In the House of Representatives, the House Education and the Workforce's Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education has jurisdiction over the child nutrition programs. In the Senate, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry's Subcommittee on Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Food and Agricultural Research has jurisdiction over the programs.

Who benefits from Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

Millions of low-income children benefit from the healthy food provided by the child nutrition programs. Schools, afterschool and summer programs, and child care providers also benefit from the valuable funding that helps cover the costs of providing nutritious food to hungry children.

- According to the latest USDA data, 15.8 million (21.6 percent) children lived in households facing a constant struggle against hunger.
- In 2012, 16.1 million children, or 21.8 percent of all children under age 18, lived in poverty.
- On an average day during the 2012-2013 school year, 10.8 million low-income children received free or reduced-price breakfast and 20.8 million low-income children received free or reduced-price lunches.
- In July 2012, 2.8 million low-income children received summer meals.
- In 2013, 8.6 million women, infants and children participated in the WIC program.
- In 2012, 1.7 million WIC participants received Farmers Market Nutrition benefits.
- In 2013, 551 million meals were served in CACFP homes.

What happened in the last Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 was signed into law in December 2, 2010. The legislation expanded the availability of nutritious meals and snacks to more children in school, in outside school hours programs, and in child care. It also contained a number of provisions to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in schools and preschool settings and to simplify the application process for children and their parents. It also made “competitive foods” offered or sold in schools more nutritious.

👉 Visit FRAC's Legislative Action Center (www.frac.org/Legislative/action_center) for the latest on Child Nutrition Reauthorization.



Food Research and Action Center | 1200 18th St., NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: 202-986-2200 | www.frac.org