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Food Research & Action Center

Effective State Budget Investments in Nutrition Programs to Address Hunger in 2016

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About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition. For more information about FRAC, or to sign up for FRAC's Weekly News Digest and monthly School Breakfast Newsletter, go to: www.frac.org.

Effective State Budget Investments in Nutrition Programs to Address Hunger in 2016

With the 2016 state legislative sessions under way and revenue projects looking more encouraging for many states, now is an opportune time to advance and advocate for state budget investments that reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and use state funds wisely by leveraging federal nutrition program dollars. Americans suffer from intolerably high rates of hunger and no corner of the country is immune from food insecurity.[1] Every state should do more to expand the reach of the federal nutrition programs and invest in efforts to reduce hunger and poverty. This guide offers concrete examples of state budget investments that have proven to connect more food insecure people to federal nutrition programs and address some of the gaps in the reach of these programs.

The federal nutrition programs are the cornerstones of our nation's commitment to preventing hunger and food insecurity. Maximizing participation in these programs – through improved policies, outreach, and adoption of best practices, and public education – equips states with an effective and sustainable strategy not only for reducing hunger, but also for improving health, academic achievement and early childhood development, encouraging healthy eating, increasing family economic security, and drawing millions of additional federal dollars into communities for grocery stores, schools, child care centers and homes, local program providers, and families.

Most of the programs are entitlement programs (exceptions include WIC and the senior nutrition programs) that can add eligible low-income people to coverage with federal reimbursements, without any need for new federal rules or annual appropriations struggles . As benefits in the programs are generally 100 percent federally funded (state-matching funds typically are not required except for some administrative costs), states and local entities can change many policies and practices to enroll more people, or to improve benefits, so long as they fit within the parameters of federal law, without fear of the cost to their own treasuries.[2]

Federal Nutrition Programs:

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

School Breakfast Program

National School Lunch Program

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

Summer Food Service Program

Afterschool Meals Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP, which pays for meals for children in Head Start, child care centers, family child care, and homeless and domestic violence shelters)

The elderly nutrition programs (congregate meals and home-delivered meals)

But while state budget investments often are not a precursor for growing the use of the programs, modest targeted state budget investments can catalyze the considerable strengths of the key federal nutrition programs as well as address some of the gaps in federal nutrition program coverage. This guide identifies a range of investments that states can make to build on the federal nutrition programs' abilities to reduce hunger and poverty, and to reach even more eligible people who struggle with hunger.

I. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP serves as the nation's most direct defense against hunger, connecting families to mainstream systems of commercial food outlets to reduce food insecurity and pumping $1.79 into state economies for every $1 spent in SNAP benefits.[3]

Despite all of SNAP's strengths, there are significant gaps that states can address. These gaps include the inadequacy of benefit levels; arbitrary bars to documented adult immigrant SNAP eligibility; the three-month time limit on certain jobless adults willing to work; and low participation rates, as SNAP misses 15 percent of all eligible people and 59 percent of eligible elderly people.[4]

State budget investments not only connect more residents to SNAP but they also stimulate state economies and increase state revenues.

SNAP: State Budget Investments

Food Supplements to Support Low-Income Working Families: To enhance the food purchasing power of working households, a few states provide funding for a local food supplement that operates like SNAP with benefits loaded onto an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. Since these benefits are a food benefit – not a cash payment – they do not count as income for SNAP purposes. When they are funded with money claimed toward the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement, these food supplements can help families transition successfully to work and increase the state's TANF Work Participation Rate (WPR).[5]

Several states – including California, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Vermont – provide state food supplements to low-income families with parents who are working or who have exited TANF for work. California's state-funded Work Incentive Nutrition Supplement (WINS), for instance, adds a $10 monthly food supplement to the EBT card of eligible families. WINS is targeted to Non-Assistance CalFresh (i.e., SNAP) households who meet TANF work participation hours qualifications. [6]

New Hampshire's Nutritional Supplement for Working Families Program provides working, single-parent SNAP households a flat monthly assistance amount that can only be used to purchase SNAP-eligible items. Because it pays for the supplement with TANF MOE funds, New Hampshire can count the recipients toward its TANF

WPR. In 2014, nearly 7,200 individuals and 2,500 households received such nutrition supplements.

Food Supplements to Promote Food Security for Seniors: Other states have allocated funding to supplement food benefits for SNAP participants who receive the minimum federal SNAP benefit of $16 per month, typically low-income seniors. The minimum benefit was set in federal law in the 1970s at $10 a month and was unchanged until the 2008 Farm Bill. The low benefit is a disincentive to apply by people who expect that they will only receive the minimum (even though they often will not after deductions are computed) and may face red tape, transportation costs to apply, and other expenses and personal costs. Many eligible elderly people in particular refrain from applying for SNAP. States can invest funds to provide a more adequate minimum SNAP benefit.

For several years, New Mexico has invested state dollars to provide a more adequate SNAP benefit level for SNAP recipients who are elderly or have disabilities. Based on data for October 2015, New Mexico expends approximately $90,000 per month for a State SNAP Benefits Supplement to raise benefit levels to $25 a month for more than 11,000 households. [7]

Washington, DC, appropriates more than $1.3 million annually for a locally funded food benefit to ensure no District resident receives less than $30 in monthly benefits. All DC households who receive less than $30 per month in SNAP benefits receive a state-funded food supplement to bring the value of their food benefit to $30 per month. The supplement is on the same EBT card as SNAP. This local supplement benefitted more than 12,000 households in 2015.

A SNAP Replacement for Qualified Immigrants with Legal Status: Before the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, most lawfully residing immigrants were eligible for SNAP benefits on the same basis as citizens. The 1996 law stripped almost all immigrants of SNAP eligibility. Although some categories of lawfully residing immigrants (particularly children) [8] were added back into the eligibility criteria with the 1998 Agriculture Research Bill and the 2002 Farm Bill, millions of immigrants who are here legally do not meet the post-1996 SNAP restrictions that still apply (such as a five-year bar for most legal immigrant adults). Pursuant to a bill Congress passed in 1997, states may use the SNAP EBT card as a platform on which to provide state-funded SNAP replacement benefits to those legal immigrants excluded from SNAP by the 1996 law provisions. California, Connecticut, Maine, Minnesota, Vermont, and Washington fund SNAP replacement benefits for some immigrants with legal status.[9]

State Investments to Help Jobless Adults Who Are Willing to Work to Access SNAP: SNAP benefits for most able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) aged 18-49 are limited to three months out of 36 months unless those individuals are engaged for sufficient hours in work or other qualifying activities. During the last recession, this SNAP time limit was suspended in most states, but in 2016, it will be operative in most areas of the country. Those subject to the time limit typically are at risk of losing $150 to $200 a month in SNAP benefits and typically are unable to qualify for other public benefits. The time limit will apply to many underemployed people as well as people who are unemployed. States can ameliorate the harsh impact of the arbitrary time limit by seeking waivers of the rule in areas with insufficient jobs as well as by targeting funding to serve this population.

Specifically, states can tap two federal SNAP Employment and Training funding streams to provide more work and training opportunities for those persons subject to the SNAP time limit. They do so by fully using allotments that are 100 percent paid for by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and by investing state dollars to leverage additional 50/50 match reimbursements. States can also help organizations create volunteer slots that ABAWDs can fill. In addition, they can increase the capacity of outreach workers and caseworkers to prescreen and screen SNAP applicants for possible exemptions from the time limits. Finally, states can provide SNAP replacement benefits for those adversely impacted by the time limits (under the same approach allowed for states to provide SNAP replacement benefits to immigrants). [10] By making such investments, states can help more unemployed and underemployed people get access to nutrition benefits while they search for full -time work and mitigate the demands on already stretched charitable networks.

Enhancing State SNAP Outreach Plans: To close the SNAP participation gap,[11] especially among working families, Hispanic households, and the elderly, state agencies can ramp up their outreach plans' efficacy by identifying state dollars to effectively double the plan's reach. Investing state dollars in SNAP outreach can draw in federal reimbursements to cover up to 50 percent of the costs for allowable outreach activities and result in more eligible people receiving 100 percent federally funded nutrition benefits. For example, to target childhood hunger in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo and the state legislature increased funding for SNAP outreach and application assistance in the 2012 – 2013 budget by $1 million, bringing New York State's investment to just over $3 million. Hunger Solutions New York, through the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), manages this effort and has significantly increased SNAP outreach across the state. NOEP helped connect an estimated 30,400 households to SNAP, drawing down over $75 million in federal funding for nutrition assistance, in the outreach grant period ending in June of 2015. [12]

Additionally, since state-matching dollars can come from other sources (e.g., nonprofit funds, foundations, food stores), states can work to add more partners like anti-hunger groups, faith-based organizations, food banks, and other nonprofits, who can bring their own dollars to the table to trigger the 50/50 federal reimbursement to the state outreach plan. With new partners bringing their own funding for their outreach efforts, state costs are minimal, typically reflecting the state staffing costs needed to administer adding more partners to the state outreach plan.

II. Early Childhood Nutrition Programs: the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

As Congress continues to grapple with Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR), states are taking action to promote the nutrition of young children by investing in the reach of WIC and CACFP through the allocation of state dollars.

WIC: As a federal discretionary program, WIC suffers from one important shortcoming: its inability to benefit all eligible, nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children. Moreover, the participation rates vary drastically by category of eligibility: 71 percent of eligible pregnant women, 77 percent of post-partum women, 85 percent of infants, but only 53 percent of children aged 1 to 4 were receiving the benefits in the most recent published USDA data (2013). Without more funding at the federal or state level, WIC will be hard-pressed to serve millions of participants who need support to access a nutritionally appropriate diet. WIC is an evidence-based intervention to promote healthy births and healthy bodies and minds during infancy and early childhood periods of rapid growth.

WIC: State Budget Investments

Supplemental Funding for WIC to Connect More Eligible Women, Infants, and Children to WIC Benefits: Since WIC funding is capped at the federal level, seeking state supplemental funding for WIC can be used to grow participation and strengthen supports in WIC. State funding investments have ranged from under $100,000 in states like Maryland, Nebraska, and West Virginia (e.g., leasing of additional office space, breastfeeding support, or providing a match for the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) to New York's investment of approximately $30 million (e.g., helping meet caseloads' needs, supporting program management, and providing nutrition education). Evidence is strong that WIC participation reduces Medicaid costs. Funds to promote breastfeeding can result in less money spent on formula, and monies spent on data systems can help streamline operations and promote efficiencies, helping shift more federal funds to increase participation. State funds invested in WIC can reap financial savings.

To reduce hunger, advocates should particularly focus the investment of state funds on targeted efforts to connect more eligible women, infants, and children to the WIC food package (i.e., more funding for WIC to provide food packages to more eligible children; or outreach targeted to qualifying families with children up to age 5 to help address the drop in WIC participation as young children turn 2, 3, or 4). Of note, Massachusetts and New York provide funds to support caseloads so that additional families can access the WIC-tailored food packages.

Contingency Funding for WIC: Contingency funds serve as a spending cushion and are used only if the state agency exceeds its federal budget for WIC. It is virtually impossible for a state agency to spend the exact amount of federal WIC allocations. To avoid overspending, too often, state agencies feel a need to spend their WIC dollars conservatively since the state is responsible for any expenses over the federal allocation. Investing in a WIC contingency fund – as New Jersey and Iowa have done – can provide needed assurance to WIC state agencies that when staff work to grow WIC participation, there will be available state funding to cover the costs.

Child and Adult Care Food Program: CACFP ensures that young children have access to the nutrition they need to thrive and allows child care centers and homes, and families with limited budgets, to redirect funds previously spent on food to other needs. Children in CACFP-participating child care centers have higher intakes of key nutrients, and fewer servings of fats and sweets, than children in nonparticipating care.

Only about half of the licensed child care centers and family child care homes in the U.S. are participating in CACFP, leaving approximately 61,000 centers and 120,000 homes unserved and hundreds of millions of federal dollars on the table that could be invested in the nutrition of our youngest children. CACFP is a well-documented success, but states need to do more to connect children to healthy meals, including allocating state dollars to strengthen the benefits and incentivize centers and homes to participate.

CACFP: State Budget Investments

A Third Meal for Young Children In Care All Day: Current CACFP laws restrict federal dollars to participating child care centers and family homes to serving up to two meals and a snack per day, no matter how many hours an infant, toddler, or young child is in care. States can invest in providing funding for child care centers and homes to serve a third meal or a snack, an investment that simultaneously supports child nutrition and rewards work. While the 2016 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act may include funding for CACFP centers and homes to be reimbursed for an additional snack, this provision would not be implemented until FY 2018 at the earliest and would likely cover an additional snack, not a third meal.

Washington, DC, through its DC Healthy Tots Act, allocates funding to provide a third meal to eligible children who attend child care centers or homes and spend long hours in care while their parents work or attend education or job training programs. This funding not only provides young children with vital nutrition, but also creates an incentive for more child care centers and homes to participate in CACFP.

Nutrition Improvements for CACFP Meals: USDA will be releasing its final rule in 2016 governing the new and enhanced nutrition requirements for CACFP meals as well as a range of recommended best practices. Almost half of all states—including Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas – have already taken action by implementing enhanced nutrition standards including more whole grains, more whole fruits and vegetables, less juice, leaner meats or protein sources, and less sugar (including limiting high-sugar cereals). To help centers and homes implement these enhanced standards, state agencies provide training and technical assistance, clear policy, educational materials, practical models menus and food specifications for catering, adequate time for implementation, and additional funding in the form of federal Team Nutrition grants.

Investing state dollars can build on these efforts and incentivize more centers and homes to participate in CACFP as well as provide support to help centers and homes to quickly transition to the upcoming new federal nutritional requirements and recommended best practices. Washington, DC, provides an additional 10 cents for each breakfast, lunch, and supper as well as 5 cents for a local unprocessed food component served during a breakfast or lunch to help support CACFP providers in meeting heightened nutrition requirements. Grants are also available to child care providers participating in CACFP to improve the nutrition and wellness of young children.

III. School Meal Programs: Breakfast and Lunch

For tens of millions of low-income children across the country, the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs provide healthy meals that keep them nourished, healthier, and ready to learn. With opportunities for children to access these nutritious meals throughout the school year, the health and educational benefits of these programs cannot be overstated.

To improve access to school meals, states have passed a range of legislation, including fiscal initiatives to incentivize schools to offer breakfast, serve breakfast after the bell in high-poverty schools, eliminate the reduced-price copayment for school meals, or adopt free breakfast to all. Generally, school meal legislation is linked to the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. For a summary of school meal legislation for each state, refer to the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)'s chart on state school meal legislation: http://frac.org/pdf/state_leg_table_scorecard_sy2013-2014.pdf.

School Meals: State Budget Investments

Eliminating the Reduced-Price Copayment for Breakfast and Lunch: Students whose families qualify for reduced-price meals must pay a 30-cent copayment for breakfast and a 40-cent copayment for lunch. These fees can often constitute a barrier to low-income children's access to healthy meals. The national rollout of the Community Eligibility Provision in high-poverty schools during school year 2014 – 2015 has meant more and more children – including children who used to have to pay reduced-price copayments – are able to eat free meals at such schools, backed by federal funding. That also means that the costs to the state in eliminating the reduced-price copayment in the remaining schools will be significantly less than taking this step before the advent of community eligibility or the adoption of breakfast free to all mandates.

Ideally, states should follow the lead of Minnesota, Oregon, and Vermont and eliminate the copayment for both breakfast and lunch for all students certified for reduced-price school meals. While Colorado and Washington have eliminated the reduced-price fee for breakfast in all schools, in order to reduce the costs of implementing the elimination of the reduced-price copayment, both states only fund the elimination of the reduced-price fee of 40 cents for lunch in targeted grades. Colorado funds the elimination of the reduced-price fee in grades pre-K – 5, whereas Washington targets grades K – 3.

Other states have reduced costs by eliminating the reduced-price copayment for just breakfast or lunch. Washington, DC, provides funding for the elimination of the reduced-price copayment for lunch (DC also requires all schools to offer free breakfast to all). States – including Maine, North Dakota, and North Carolina (elementary schools only) – have eliminated the reduced-price copayment for school breakfast, paving the way for more schools to serve breakfast in the classroom.

Incentives for Schools to Increase Participation in School Breakfast: Many states tie budget investments for school breakfast to legislation intended to increase school breakfast participation by requiring all or only high-poverty schools to serve breakfast, offer free breakfast to all, eliminate the reduced-price copayment for breakfast, or adopt alternative breakfast service models. School breakfast is a positive whenever it is served. But increasingly, schools and policymakers recognize that serving it in the cafeteria before school starts means many children don't participate. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom, from carts in the hallways, or before second period, breakfast after the bell greatly increases participation.

Investing state funds can serve as incentives for schools to increase breakfast participation and adopt breakfast after the bell models that can increase participation dramatically. State funds to finance implementation costs (e.g., additional refrigeration, “grab and go” carts, insulated bags, supplies) related to starting a breakfast in the classroom or other alternative breakfast models can greatly facilitate the adoption of these alternate service strategies. Likewise, state funding for schools to increase school breakfast participation is another way of kick-starting expansion in school breakfast and drawing in more federal funds.

New Mexico adopted legislation requiring breakfast after the bell in elementary schools with 85 percent or more of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals, providing $1.9 million for elementary schools required to implement breakfast after the bell. As a result, New Mexico now consistently ranks among the top-three performing states in the country for school breakfast participation.

Virginia has two different state funding streams to incentivize schools to increase breakfast participation. Annually appropriated funds are available to reimburse school districts for each breakfast served in excess of a participation baseline set in the 2003 – 2004 school year. In FY 2016, $4.2 million was appropriated for schools to receive $0.22 for each breakfast served above the baseline. In addition, elementary schools with 45 percent or more students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals are eligible to apply for a reimbursement of $0.05 cents per breakfast if breakfast is served after the bell. For FY 2016, $537,000 was appropriated. The appropriation for this breakfast after the bell fund was doubled to $2 million dollars in the governor’s proposed 2016 – 2018 biennium budget.

California offers school breakfast grant funding to school sites with at least 20 percent free and reduced-price certified students, with an annual allocation of $1 million. This competitive grant program awards up to $15,000 per school for nonrecurring expenses incurred in initiating or expanding a school breakfast program.

To spur breakfast participation, New York helps schools operate breakfast programs by providing a reimbursement of all expenses exceeding revenues in the first year of breakfast implementation in public schools.

IV. Summer and Afterschool Nutrition Programs

The federally subsidized meals and snacks provided through the Afterschool and Summer Nutrition Programs keep hunger at bay while attracting children to out-of-school time programs, where they can be active, engaged, and safe while their parents are at work.

Unfortunately, these programs are underutilized. Nationally, only one out of six children who receive free and reduced-price lunches during the school year continues to receive them during the summer months. And during the school year, too many enrichment programs offered after school, on weekends, and during school holidays are not accessing federal funding to feed children healthy meals. States can help expand the use of these programs in many ways.

Summer and Afterschool Nutrition Programs: State Budget Investments

Start-up and Expansion Grants for Summer and Afterschool Nutrition Programs: State funding can help recruit new out-of-school time program sponsors and sites and encourage existing sponsors to expand the reach of existing program sites or add more sites. Funds can be allocated for grants to program sponsors to purchase equipment for meal service (e.g., refrigerators, insulated bags, tables), cover transportation costs, enhance site enrichment programming to draw more children to meals, or recruit new sites or sponsors.

A handful of states provide funding to expand participation in the afterschool and summer nutrition programs. Oregon's legislature has designated state funds for the expansion of these programs through noncompetitive grants of up to $20,000 available throughout the 2015 – 2017 biennium for current and new sponsors. California provides grants of up to $15,000 per school on a competitive basis, up to the annual appropriation, for summer nutrition start-up and expansion expenses for schools in which 20 percent or more of students are certified to receive free and reduced-price meals. To promote expansion, Washington allocates $100,000 to support Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors that participated during the previous summer. The funding is distributed based upon the proportion of the meals each sponsor served during the previous summer. Nebraska grants of up to $15,000 per school are available on a competitive basis, up to the annual appropriation, for SFSP start-up and expansion expenses. Vermont has allocated $50,000 for activities or transportation in order to increase participation in its SFSP program.

Funding for Outreach to Connect More Children to the Summer Nutrition Programs: A steady and strong focus on aggressive outreach and promotion is key to increasing program participation. States receive federal funding to administer the Summer Nutrition Programs, some of which can be dedicated to conducting outreach; however, for many states, this funding is insufficient to mount an aggressive state campaign to recruit sponsors and sites and to inform families about the availability of the programs. Providing funding to support broad promotional and communications efforts is a state investment that will result in additional federal assistance to feed hungry children and support summer programs that help address the summer learning gap.

A few states have invested nonfederal funding for summer meal outreach. For example, Washington, DC, typically allocates $40,000 in nonfederal funding for summer meals outreach which the city uses to develop and place advertisements about the availability of summer meals on metro buses, bus shelters, subways, and radio stations. As a result of $250,000 per year in state funding, the Massachusetts Department of Education contracts with Project Bread to conduct outreach for both summer meals and school breakfast. Looking forward, states can build on the Massachusetts model by expanding and maximizing outreach funding investments to promote a range of child nutrition programs. For instance, a state could contract with a state anti-hunger group to promote several child nutrition programs simultaneously (e.g., encouraging a school to participate in summer food, provide afterschool and weekend meals, and implement community eligibility).

Reimbursements to Serve a Third Meal to Children or Provide a Free Meal to the Adult Caregivers of Children Participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): SFSP sites can serve children 18 years old and younger a maximum of two meals per day. However, for the many summer meal sites that provide all-day child care for working parents, providing only two meals leaves children without enough nutrition to get through the day, or it forces sites to buy food with limited program dollars that could otherwise be spent for general services. Sponsors need to be able to offer three meals when they are open all day.

Additionally, site sponsors often highlight the dilemma of not being able to provide meals to adult caregivers who bring young children to summer meal sites. Under SFSP rules, these adults are not eligible to eat a free meal, which can pose a problem to summer site staff, who have to deny a meal to a hungry adult.

To address these gaps in the reach of SFSP, some sites have secured private funding to offer a third meal or serve meals to adults who accompany children to summer meal sites. For instance, the Family League of Baltimore received a $35,000 grant from United Way of Central Maryland to serve adult meals at their mobile SFSP meal sites in the summer. Offering a meal for adults helped draw more children eligible for free summer meals to the mobile meal site. In Milwaukee, Kohl's Serving Up Suppers for Kids program provided funding for a third meal served at 98 sites in 2015. Exploring state funding for a third meal for children or a meal to targeted adult caregivers is a promising strategy to explore for state fiscal investments.

V. Nutrition Programs: Home-Delivered Meals and Congregate Meals

The threat of food insecurity among seniors is on the rise. One analysis says that 9.6 million Americans over the age of 60 (15.5 percent of all seniors) faced the threat of hunger in 2013. [13] Yet, while SNAP can expand to reach every eligible senior, other federal nutrition programs – like home-delivered meals and congregate meals, which are designed for seniors – are underfunded and failing to reach hundreds of thousands of seniors in desperate need of nutritional support. Title III of the Older Americans Act (OAA) provides limited annual funding to states for home-delivered meals and congregate meals. The congregate meal program offers free and low-cost meals to residents age 60 or over at sites where participants can socialize and learn how to improve overall health and well-being. The Home Delivered Meal Program provides homebound or isolated residents age 60 or older, their spouses, and any household members with a disability, a delivered meal.

While there is no income test to participate in either of these programs, federal funding is not intended to reach every eligible individual or designed to cover the costs of running the programs. States are required to invest state-share funding each year to participate in these programs. These programs are not means-tested; however, preference is given to seniors with the greatest economic and social need, with particular attention to low-income older individuals, including those that are low-income minorities, have limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas.

Advocates can ensure these programs reach more low-income seniors by championing state funding investments for:

- **Home-Delivered and Congregate Meals Expansion Targeted to Low-Income Seniors:** Investing in expanding the capacity of the home-delivered meals program and the congregate meal program to reach more seniors is a promising strategy to address senior hunger. These state dollars should be prioritized for serving seniors who do not have the financial means to pay for home-delivered meals or congregate meals. When the waitlist in Washington, DC, for home-delivered meals reached more than 280 seniors, its policymakers increased budget allocations by $1.2 million to help more homebound seniors benefit from these meals. Texas invests state dollars in its Texans Feeding Texans Home-Delivered Meal Grant Program to help governmental or nonprofit agencies deliver more meals to seniors or people with disabilities.

Conclusion

Even moderate levels of food insecurity can cause serious harm to both children and adults. States can reduce hunger and food insecurity through maximizing the use of the federal nutrition programs. These programs are proven, effective ways to help struggling families access needed nutrition and income support. With the exception of WIC and the OAA-funded elderly nutrition programs, the programs discussed in this guide are entitlement programs that can grow to serve every eligible individual in need of nutrition support and without placing financial obligations on the state.

However, the strength of the federal nutrition programs, and the sustainable federal funding streams available to support the programs, do not relieve states of the need to invest state funds to reduce hunger. By allocating state funding to promote and grow these federal nutrition programs, and to close the gaps in programmatic reach, states can more ably ensure that fewer Americans have to face the devastating impacts of hunger.

Endnotes

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[5] These state food supplements are not intended to replace the smart strategy of using the national SNAP policy option that states can adopt to help former TANF families transition to work. When families *exit* TANF, advocates should promote states adopting the option under which the state provides up to five months of automatic "transitional food stamps" to most households who stop receiving TANF. These benefits are 100 percent federally funded. See Transition Benefit for TANF Leavers, 7 C.F.R. § 273.26 (2011).

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[11] A precursor to effective outreach is improving SNAP administrative capacity, efficiency, and customer service so that applications are correctly and timely processed. States can generally pull down 50/50 federal-match dollars for administrative expenses, including caseworkers support and system upgrades. Through December 2018, an enhanced Medicaid match rate of 90/10 will apply to states' expenditures for designing, developing, and implementing integrated eligibility systems, which may include SNAP. A letter from the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, explains further and can be found at: https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/by-topics/data-and-systems/downloads/medicaid-90/10-funding-extension.pdf.

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