



# 2022 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Primer

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## What is the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act?

**T**he Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act authorizes all of the federal child nutrition programs. The child nutrition programs reach millions of children each day and improve educational achievement, economic security, nutrition, and health. Although most of the programs are permanently authorized, about 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), expired on September 30, 2015. The annual appropriations process maintains program funding for the child nutrition programs that are not permanently authorized for funding, such as the Summer Food Service Program and WIC, continuing operations when a reauthorization is delayed.

Reauthorization provides an opportunity to improve and strengthen the child nutrition programs so that they better meet the needs of the 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 and authorized the School Breakfast Program. Not long after, programs — such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and other child nutrition programs — were added to the National School Lunch Act.

## Which Child Nutrition Programs are up for Review?

The **School Breakfast Program** and **National School Lunch Program** both guarantee that millions of children receive a healthy breakfast and lunch during their school day. All children can participate if their school operates the programs, but in most schools, children living in low-income households are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals. High-need schools can offer meals at no charge to all students primarily through the Community Eligibility Provision. The School Breakfast Program is underutilized, reaching just over half of the children who participate in school lunch.

The **Summer Food Service Program** helps ensure that children 18 and under who depend on school lunch and breakfast during the school year have access to free, nutritious meals and snacks during the summer when school is out. The program 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 children living in low-income households. Schools also can provide summer meals through the Seamless Summer Option available through the National School Lunch Program.

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, only children under the age of 12, as well as certain adults living with disabilities, can participate, but homeless shelters and afterschool programs can serve children 18 and under.

The **Afterschool Meal Program** is available through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and bridges the hunger gap for children who participate in afterschool programs. The program provides federal funds to private

nonprofit and public organizations, including schools, so they can serve nutritious meals and snacks at afterschool programs located in low-income areas. Snacks also can be provided after school through CACFP or by schools through the National School Lunch Program.

**The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to age 5 living in low-income households. The monthly WIC food package is a combination of foods that improve nutrition for pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young 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.

The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program** provides fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to children during the school day. Only elementary schools with at least 50 percent of the students eligible for free or 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.

## Who in Congress is Responsible for Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

In the House of Representatives, the Education and Labor's Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services has jurisdiction over Child Nutrition Reauthorization. In the Senate, the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry's Subcommittee on Nutrition, Agriculture Research, and Specialty Crops has jurisdiction over the reauthorization.

## Who Benefits From Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

Millions of children, especially children living in low-income households, 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 provides nutritious food to children experiencing hunger.

- Food insecurity and the need for the child nutrition programs have only grown during the pandemic. According to Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research, in January 2021, an estimated 27.8 percent of adults living with children experienced food insecurity.
- In 2020, 11.6 million children, or 16.1 percent of all children under age 18, lived in poverty, up from 14.4 percent in 2019.
- On an average day during the 2020-2021 school year, 14 million children received a breakfast and 19.8 million children received a lunch.<sup>1</sup>
- In Fiscal Year 2021, the Summer Food Service Program provided more than 3 billion million meals and snacks during July.<sup>2</sup>
- In FY 2021, 4.8 million children and adults were served 1.85 billion healthy meals and snacks through the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- In FY 2021, 6.2 million women, infants, and children participated in WIC.
- In FY 2020, 1.2 million WIC participants received more than \$22 million in benefits through the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

## What Happened in the Last Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 was signed into law on December 2, 2010. The legislation expanded the availability of nutritious meals to more children in school, children participating in out-of-school time programs, and children in child care. It also contained a number of provisions to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in schools and preschool settings, such as making "competitive foods" offered or sold in schools more nutritious, and simplified the application process for children and their parents, and it also made "competitive foods" offered or sold in schools more nutritious.

Visit FRAC's [Child Nutrition Reauthorization](#) page or Feeding America's [Child Nutrition Reauthorization](#) page for the latest on the current Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

<sup>1</sup>These numbers include meals provided through the Summer Food Service Program, the Seamless Summer Option, and the traditional school nutrition programs, which are the programs that schools and other entities used to provide meals during the 2020-2021 school year.

<sup>2</sup>This represents a significant increase from summers prior to the pandemic due to the impact that the child nutrition waivers had on program access in the summer of 2021