

Background

Millions of Americans are struggling to put food on the table. New Jersey is no different: 9.8 percent of New Jerseyans experienced food insecurity in 2023.¹ For families already struggling to make ends meet, rising grocery prices mean making difficult decisions between necessities like food, rent, medicine, transportation, and child care.

The federal nutrition programs are critical upstream approaches to help reduce and prevent food insecurity. They are often the first line of defense against hunger and are linked to a wide range of positive outcomes, including improving dietary intake and nutrition quality, supporting children's health and development, boosting learning and academic achievement, reducing poverty, increasing family economic security, lowering health care spending, and supporting food retail.²

Too many eligible families are missing out on the many benefits of federal nutrition programs. More must be done to increase participation among eligible populations and strengthen the federal nutrition programs in New Jersey.³

With nearly 10 percent of New Jersey households experiencing food insecurity and high food prices, the federal nutrition programs are more important than ever.⁴

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP serves people of all ages and in all types of communities. Those who qualify receive Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to use to purchase food from authorized food retailers. SNAP allows more families to access and afford the food they need. As more families pay for food locally at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Programs, SNAP not only expands access to nutrition but also supports many aspects of the food chain, from farmers and food producers to long-haul truck drivers, food retailers, and store employees.⁵ Nationally, each SNAP dollar has up to a \$1.80 impact during economic downturns, supporting the supply chain from farmer to



store.⁶ When **New Jersey residents** use SNAP to pay for food, they can use other resources to pay for nonfood basics that often are subject to sales tax. Generated revenue can, in turn, be invested in the community's health.

- SNAP helps 848,204 people in New Jersey put food on the table.⁷
- In fiscal year (FY) 2024, SNAP brought \$1,925,845,112 to the state.⁸
- In FY 2024, SNAP participants in New Jersey received an average of \$194.01 per month in SNAP benefits. This averages \$6.37 per person per day.
- In 2024, over 5,700 New Jersey retailers, including grocery stores, which contribute to local taxes that fund services like schools and health care, redeemed \$1.9 billion in SNAP benefits.⁹

*The **New Jersey Food Security Initiative (NJFSI)** — a resident-led, community-centered effort — brings together state agencies, nonprofits, health care providers, and residents with lived experience to improve equitable access to healthy food. NJFSI grantee projects engage with community members to connect them with federal nutrition programs. Learn more about the reach and effectiveness of their work [here](#).*

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

WIC is one of the largest federal nutrition programs. It provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care to eligible nutritionally at-risk pregnant and postpartum individuals with low incomes and their infants and children up to 5 years old. WIC participants use an EBT card to shop for WIC foods at authorized grocery stores and other WIC-approved vendors.

- 52.8 percent of eligible persons in New Jersey participated in WIC in calendar year (CY) 2022.¹⁰
- 74.4 percent of eligible infants in New Jersey participated in WIC in CY 2022.¹¹
- 46.4 percent of eligible children in New Jersey participated in WIC in CY 2022.¹²
- New Jersey ranked 26th out of all states and the District of Columbia for WIC-eligible individuals participation rates in CY 2022.
- WIC served an average of 162,300 participants in New Jersey each month in FY 2024.¹³
- WIC benefit redemption infused \$159 million into New Jersey in FY 2024.¹⁴

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP offers nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children who are enrolled at participating child care centers, family child care homes, afterschool programs, and homeless shelters.

- CACFP served an average of 90,285 children in New Jersey each working day in FY 2023.¹⁵
- CACFP provided 39.6 million healthy meals and snacks in New Jersey in FY 2023.¹⁶
- CACFP reimbursements infused \$95.9 million into New Jersey in FY 2023.¹⁷

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

NSLP provides reimbursements to schools for lunches served to children at school each day during the school year. Any child who attends a school offering school meals can participate, but meals are provided at no cost or at a reduced price to children based on their household income. High-need schools participating in the **Community Eligibility Provision** program are able to



offer free school meals to all students regardless of their household income.

- 437,001 students participated in NSLP in New Jersey on an average day (2023–2024).¹⁸
- NSLP generated \$342.8 million in federal funding provided to New Jersey in FY 2023.¹⁹

School Breakfast Program (SBP)

SBP provides reimbursements to schools for healthy breakfasts served to children at school each day during the school year. Any child who attends a school offering school breakfasts can participate, but meals are provided at no cost or at a reduced price to children based on their household income. High-need schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision program are able to offer free school meals to all students regardless of their household income.

- Average national daily SBP participation was 15.4 million in the 2023–2024 school year.²⁰
- SBP served 65.3 percent of students who received free or reduced-price school lunch in New Jersey in school year 2023–2024.²¹
- SBP generated \$116,639,737 in federal funding provided to New Jersey in FY 2023.²²

Afterschool Meal Program

CACFP also offers the **Afterschool Meal Program** to help reduce childhood hunger in low-income communities, and to support the establishment, growth,

and quality of afterschool enrichment programs. Through this program, suppers and snacks can be provided at sites in areas where at least half of the children participating are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals.

- 15,792 students in New Jersey participated in afterschool meals supper on an average day in October 2023.²³
- 3,986 students in New Jersey participated in afterschool meals snacks on an average day in October 2023.²⁴
- 3.9 percent of students in New Jersey who received free or reduced-price school lunch during the academic year received afterschool meals.²⁵

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

SFSP provides free meals and snacks to children 18 and under when school is not in session. Sites are located in communities where at least half of the children are from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) or primarily serve children from families with low incomes.

- 95,627 students in New Jersey participated in summer meals on an average day in FY 2023.²⁶
- Just over 103,642 children in New Jersey received a lunch, and just over 75,754 received a breakfast on an average day in July 2023.²⁷
- 29.5 children received a summer lunch in July 2023 for every 100 children in New Jersey who received a free or reduced-price lunch during the 2022–2023 school year.²⁸

Summer EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) Program

Summer EBT is a nationwide program that provides families approximately \$40 a month per eligible child to help with food costs during the summer months.

- Summer EBT provided New Jersey families with \$64.8 million in benefits and served an estimated 540,000 eligible students in FY 2024.²⁹

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP serves older adult populations in New Jersey. The CSFP works to improve the health of older people at least 60 years of age with low incomes by supplementing their diets with a box of nutritious food.

- CSFP served an average of 4,860 older adults in New Jersey each month in FY 2024.³⁰

Home-Delivered Meals and Congregate Senior Nutrition Programs

The Home-Delivered Meals and Congregate Nutrition Programs serve older adult populations in New Jersey. The congregate nutrition program for older adults provides a meal, typically lunch, offering one-third of the recommended daily dietary allowance, in a group setting.

- Congregate Senior Nutrition Programs served 5,485 older adults in New Jersey FY 2021.³¹
- Home-Delivered Meals Programs served 32,081 older adults in New Jersey in FY 2021.³²
- 5 million meals were served by the Home-Delivered Meals and Congregate Senior Nutrition Programs to older people and persons with disabilities in New Jersey in FY 2021.³³

Endnotes

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- ¹⁷ Ibid
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