



Afterschool, Summer Learning and Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Children rely on afterschool and summer learning programs to feed their minds as well as their bodies. Several federal child nutrition programs make it possible for children to get the food they need both in school and during out-of-school time. With these programs up for reauthorization in 2015, we have identified several nutrition reauthorization priorities for afterschool and summer learning programs:

Increasing Access to the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program. Expanded nationally in 2010, the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program is currently only available through the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) which has proved a barrier to many school nutrition programs wishing to provide afterschool meals. Allowing At-Risk Afterschool Meals to be served as an option under the National School Lunch Program (as is currently done with Afterschool Snacks) will ease administrative burden on programs and increase the number of low-income children who have access to nutritious afterschool meals.

Adjust the area eligibility test (for family child care, afterschool and summer nutrition) to match the 21st Century Community Learning Centers level. Federal nutrition programs offer reimbursement for snacks and meals for all children in a family child care, afterschool or summer program in a low-income area, defined as an area with more than 50 percent of children eligible for free or reduced price school meals. Lowering the threshold back to 40 percent (as it is in the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative), would better serve children, and ease the administrative burdens of programs seeking funding streams with incompatible area eligibility tests.

Streamlining the child nutrition programs to enable schools, local government agencies, and non-profits to feed children 365 days a year through one seamless child nutrition program. Increasingly, non-profit community-based and local government afterschool providers are also offering summer learning programs to ensure students have access to enrichment during the summer months. Because the meal programs for afterschool and summer are operated through separate programs, the At-Risk Afterschool Meal program and the Summer Food Service Program, barriers exist to increasing access to healthy meals. Non-school entities are required to operate multiple child nutrition programs, including separate applications and different programmatic rules. Streamlining should allow public and private organizations to do one application so that they can provide children meals after school, during the summer, on weekends, and during school holidays.

Address barriers to providing nutritious meals after school and during the summer in rural, underserved locations. Transportation is a major barrier to summer meals participation due to the distances that children must travel to get to a site. Providing funding through a grant program to get children to Summer Food Service Program that offer high quality educational and enrichment activities is a vital way to support access in underserved areas.

Ensure children in need are provided with ample number of meals. Many children participate in evening enrichment programs during the school year and summer months when their parents are working. Programs should have the option of serving two meals and a snack or three meals so that children can continue learning throughout the day.