



Afterschool and Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Children rely on afterschool programs to feed their minds as well as their bodies. Various 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 this year, we have identified several child nutrition reauthorization priorities for afterschool and summer programs:

- **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 child care centers, afterschool programs or summer programs in a low-income area. A low-income area is currently defined as an area with more than 50 percent of children eligible for free or reduced price school meals. Lowering the threshold to 40 percent (as it is in the 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program), would better serve children, and ease the administrative burdens of programs seeking funding streams with incompatible area eligibility tests.
- **Expanding the Afterschool Supper Program to all states and the District of Columbia.** Currently, only ten states are included in this crucial program, which provides funding for an evening meal, in lieu of a snack, at afterschool programs located in low-income areas. (Snacks are provided in all states.) The program is needed to ensure low-income children have access to nutritious meals in afterschool programs when their parents work and commute long hours and hold non-traditional jobs, requiring programs to run into the late afternoon and evening.
- **Feeding children in summer, when they are most likely to be hungry.** Even though child hunger is a year-round problem, cuts have been made in the Summer Food Service Program. The recent enactment of the “Simplified Summer Food Program” will help, but a bigger boost is needed to get the program back on track. A significant investment that increases reimbursement rates at least to restore 1996 funding levels, adjusted for inflation, will mean that many more programs will be willing to provide summer food. Additional funding for outreach and to cover transportation costs will ensure that children know about programs and also are able to get to them.
- **Allowing all meals served through the child nutrition programs to receive the commodities currently provided for school lunch.** Currently, meals served through the Summer Food Service Program or School Breakfast Program do not receive any of the support from the commodities program that regular year school lunches receive. This limits the resources available to provide nutritious meals through School Breakfast and Summer Food.
- **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.** Currently, they must operate multiple child nutrition programs in order to feed children during the school year, after school, on weekends and during the summer. The redundant paperwork required to participate in multiple nutrition programs does not improve program integrity, but raises administrative costs and discourages eligible sponsors from participating, resulting in only a fraction of eligible children receiving meals and snacks year-round. Streamlining could be done by making child nutrition programs look seamless from the viewpoint of schools and other eligible sponsors. (Food Research and Action Center, February 2009)

For more information on afterschool, visit the Afterschool Alliance at www.afterschoolalliance.org. For additional information on these and other nutrition reauthorization priorities, visit the Food Research and Action Center website at www.frac.org.