

Reauthorizing the Child Nutrition Act and WIC

Ensuring Healthy Foods for Healthy Children

The federal child nutrition programs authorized by the Child Nutrition Act (CNA) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide nutritious foods to millions in the United States every day. These programs are vital resources for vulnerable populations who face economic challenges in obtaining reliable access to nutritious foods. The American Public Health Association (APHA) fully supports measures to continually improve quality and access to the federal child nutrition programs in the CNA and WIC.

Get the Facts

Child Nutrition Programs Address Real Problems

Children are living in poverty without access to adequate nutritious foods.

- 18% of all children (over 13 million) under the age of 18 in the United States live in poverty.
- Over 17% of children (12.6 million) live in households without enough to eat.
- Children who are food insecure are more likely to be overweight or obese.

But all those who are eligible for federal child nutrition programs are not taking full advantage of them because of lack of knowledge about benefits, inefficient or complex application processes, or poor access to programs.

Rates of obesity and diet-related chronic conditions among children are rising quickly.

- The rate of overweight children and adolescents has tripled over the last 20 years, with a 120% increase in overweight African-American and Hispanic children, compared to a 50% increase among white children.
- 46% of all newly diagnosed cases of childhood diabetes are type 2 (formerly known as “adult-onset” diabetes).
- 25% of children ages five to 10 years have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or other early warning signs for heart disease.

Obesity and diet-related chronic diseases in children impose costs now and into the future.

- Annual hospital costs for treating obesity-related diseases in children rose from \$35 million in 1979 to \$127 million in 1999 (based on 2001 constant dollar value).
- Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults; this rises to 80% if a parent is overweight or obese.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, healthier diets could prevent at least \$87 billion per year in medical costs, lost productivity and lost lives.

Access to healthy foods and opportunities for exercise often are limited.

- Over 90% of children and adolescents exceed U.S. Dietary Guidelines for daily sodium intake.
- 85% of children consume more saturated fat than is recommended in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines.
- On average, less than one-third of U.S. children report eating any fresh fruit on a typical day. Less than one-fourth of children report eating any whole grains in a day.
- Only 30% of children attend daily physical education classes.

Get the Facts

Child Nutrition Programs Make a Difference

Federal child nutrition programs serve millions every day in every state.

- Over 30 million school children participate in the National School Lunch Program.
- Over 10 million low-income children receive free or reduced-price breakfasts, and 17.9 million low-income children receive free or reduced-price lunches.
- Over 9 million women, infants and children participate in the WIC program.
- Studies show that nutrition education can contribute significantly to improved dietary practices. Providing a school salad bar and education about healthy food choices results in greater consumption of fruits and vegetables than just providing a salad bar alone.

In addition to providing foods that support good nutrition, these programs help to eliminate hunger and food insecurity, improve nutrition education, and reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity and diet-related chronic diseases.

Local and regional food sources provide ready access to fresh foods and positive economic benefits.

- Studies show that farm-to-school programs contribute positively to students' knowledge, attitudes, and behav-

Programs under CNA and WIC:

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Summer Food Service Program
- Afterschool Snack and Meal Program
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Special Milk Program
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

iors toward local, healthy food; promote healthier dietary choices; and increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.

- The number of farm-to-school programs has grown from six pilot sites in 2000 to over 2,100 programs today involving nearly 9,000 schools in 44 states.
- Most farmers earn 20 cents on every food dollar spent in the United States; farm-to-school farmers can earn 60 cents to 70 cents on each dollar of sales.

Sources: Institute of Medicine; U.S. Department of Agriculture; American Heart Association; Food Research and Action Center; Farm to School

APHA Supports Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization

APHA fully supports the following measures to improve quality and access in the federal child nutrition programs.

Expand access to child nutrition programs. Simplify application processes, including the use of paperless systems in areas with high percentages of qualifying children. Offer free school breakfasts and suppers in after-school programs to all low-income children.

Improve the nutritional quality of children's meals. Increase the reimbursement rate for meals to support improved nutritional quality of the foods served. Require USDA to update nutrition standards consistent with Institute of Medicine School Meals recommendations. Fund programs to strengthen training and technical assistance for staff procuring and preparing foods. Provide grants for schools to purchase food preparation equipment to allow more schools to prepare and serve healthy meals.

Update nutrition standards for competitive foods. Authorize USDA to institute updated standards to limit the sale of junk foods, sugar-sweetened drinks, and other foods available at schools.

Strengthen nutrition education in schools. Provide reliable funding for coordinated and comprehensive nutrition education and promotion programs, and for training for teachers, food service staff and students.

Increase the use of foods from local and regional sources. Establish an initiative at USDA to guide policies for farm-to-institution programs. Provide funding and technical assistance to improve school food purchasing from local and regional food sources.

Strengthen local school wellness policies. Support continued adoption and enhanced implementation of school wellness policies, creation of school wellness committees, and sharing of the policies with parents, students, and the public.

Maintain and increase the quality and effectiveness of the WIC program. Increase funding to meet the needs of all women and children eligible for WIC. Strengthen nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and WIC modernization efforts. Improve regulatory processes to adopt food package updates every 10 years, or as significant changes in nutritional guidance occur.

