

Child Nutrition Programs

Growing Healthy Children and Healthy Communities

What is child nutrition reauthorization?

CNR is a broad piece of legislation that includes School Meals, WIC, Farm to School, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and the Summer Meal Programs. These programs employ many Academy members who are leaders in these areas and impact millions of children’s diets on a daily basis. Unfortunately, the diets of most children continue to fall short of recommendations for good health.

These Child Nutrition Programs provide an infrastructure that can be mobilized to improve children’s diets and health on a national scale while also improving **school attendance, test scores** and **educational attainment**. There is evidence of social and economic benefits of the Child Nutrition Programs that extend into local communities. These include improvements in the diet of other family members, healthier options in the grocery store, economic stimulus to communities, stable customers for American agriculture, job creation and poverty reduction.¹

The problem: The diets of most children continue to fall short of recommendations for good health. More than 15 percent of households with children under the age of 18 are food insecure.² Childhood obesity has been rising since the 1990s, resulting in one in five children being overweight or obese.³

The solution: Child Nutrition Programs. These programs are administered in nearly 96,000 of America’s public, private and parochial schools; 42,000 community food sites; 65,000 child care centers; 103,000 home day care sites; and 10,000 WIC clinic sites in community settings.⁴

How can you strengthen these important programs?

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics convened a work group of 13 experts in child nutrition programs to determine the best path forward for Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The following are a list of recommendations developed by the work group.

Nutrition Education and Promotion

- Maintain research that provides evidence-based improvements for comprehensive, culturally appropriate and nationwide nutrition education and promotion approaches that foster healthy behaviors, educational attainment and lifelong health for all children
- Support and provide adequate funds to ensure that strong, comprehensive and culturally appropriate nutrition education and promotion is included in the authorization and then provided for all child nutrition programs
- Provide adequate funds to help all states build a state-level leadership infrastructure for comprehensive nutrition education and promotion led by qualified professionals in which every state would develop a nutrition education and promotion plan to promote, coordinate and provide nutrition education and promotion, and leadership training in all child nutrition programs
- Support efforts to make policy, systems, and environmental changes to maximize the impact of nutrition education and promotion
- Maintain and strengthen WIC Nutrition Education, including breast-feeding support

The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

- Support evidence-based meal and nutrition standards that align with the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans and are reviewed and updated as necessary and on an established time line
- Support and amplify the voices of Academy members leading the way in providing healthy, appealing school meals to children
- Support strong professional standards requirements for school nutrition professionals
- Provide adequate funding for schools to purchase, prepare and serve healthy, quality foods and beverages for school meals and snacks
- Continue and increase USDA Foods support for the School Breakfast Program
- Provide adequate funding to USDA to provide training and technical assistance to support maintenance and attainment of nutrition standards, as well as the skills necessary to run a successful program
- Increase funding mechanisms for updated infrastructure and equipment to school kitchens

- Cease and desist the enforcement of the Paid Lunch Equity provision of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act until USDA can further explore the reason for the decreased participation in the National School Lunch Program
- Support equal and equitable access to school meals for all children by expanding and strengthening provisions that support universal school meals and the Community Eligibility Provision
- Urge USDA and the US Department of Education to develop best practices and guidance to ensure school schedules provide students adequate time to eat healthy school meals

The Summer Nutrition Programs

- Strengthen and improve access to and participation in summer meal programs
- Support efforts to and funding for partnerships and collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote innovative approaches to feeding children in the summer, especially among rural or remote areas and other high-risk areas where summer meal participation has been low

The Special Supplement Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

- Support nutrition and breast-feeding counseling as successful cost-effective health care services
- Support expansion of funding for breast-feeding peer counseling services
- Support the evidence-based, prescriptive WIC food package
- Support efforts to invest in improvements to information systems and technology to better serve WIC participants including online, texting, telehealth, and app tools to support breast-feeding and nutrition education, and enhance the clinic and shopping experience
- Continue to support efforts to conduct program evaluation including data collection, research, and innovation
- Support programmatic changes that will improve maternal and child health outcomes

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

- Support the successful implementation of the new healthier nutrition standards for meals and snacks in CACFP
- Support adequate funding for CACFP nutrition and wellness education and other training efforts led by qualified staff
- Support efforts to increase access to additional reimbursable meals and snacks for children in full day child care
- Streamline access to healthy meals for all children, such as those identified in the CACFP Paperwork Reduction Report Recommendations

The Farm to School Grant Program

- Provide funding and support to build upon the success of and growing demand for the Farm to School Grant Program, including continued expansion to early care and education settings, summer, after school and tribal communities

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

- Strengthen and expand the reach of the successful Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for elementary students from predominantly economically disadvantaged families to support a reduction in chronic disease through improved dietary quality
- Support the current criteria for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program by requiring that all fruits and vegetables provided must be fresh

Contact the Academy's Senior Director of Legislative and Government Affairs Liz Campbell at ecampbell@eatright.org with any questions or to receive more information on the Academy's recommendations.

¹IOM (Institute of Medicine). (2012). Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

²US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Food Security Key Statistics and Graphs. www.ers.usda.gov. Accessed June 2019.

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Childhood Obesity Facts: Prevalence of Childhood Obesity. www.cdc.gov. Accessed June 2019.

⁴Congressional Research Service. (2019). School Meals, Programs and Other USDA Child Nutrition Programs: A Primer.