

The Child Nutrition Act

Introduction

Every five years Congress works on reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act, the major federal legislation that essentially determines school food policy and resources. The programs in the Act are:

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

The Child Nutrition Act:

- a) is to help meet the nutritional needs of children,
- b) has been in operation since 1965, and
- c) is an outgrowth of the successful national school lunch program that has been present since 1946.

First Lady Michelle Obama called for an end to childhood obesity in a generation and President Obama's proposed a budget increase (\$1 billion for 10 years) for child nutrition and increased public awareness of the role that school food plays in student health and learning.

Background

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010, also known as the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, aims to establish state childhood hunger challenge grants. The grants would provide qualifying states with funding to develop innovative programs to ensure all kids in need have access to federal nutrition programs.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act would add \$450 million a year, \$4.5 billion over 10 years to child nutrition programs, expand the afterschool menu program to all 50 states, and provide incentives to improve the quality of school meals. The President has requested that \$1 billion be appropriated to fund these programs. The bill aligns with President Obama's goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015.

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) spends about \$60 billion annually on domestic food and nutrition assistance programs to ensure access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans. Children make up the largest share of the beneficiaries of those programs. About 50 percent of the recipients of the

largest program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program), are children under 18. The second and third largest programs, the National School Lunch Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), focus primarily on children.

Hunger and Children

In 2008, 49.1 million people lived in food insecure households, including 16.7 million children. Findings of 13 studies on child health and development outcomes associated with food insecurity and food insufficiency found the following conditions to be more likely for children in food-insecure or food-insufficient households than for children in otherwise similar food-secure households¹:

- Poorer health of children, as reported by parents
- More stomach aches, frequent headaches, and colds among children
- Higher hospitalization rates of young children
 - Iron deficiency anemia in young children
 - Behavioral problems in 3-year-olds
 - Lower physical function in children ages 3-8
 - Poorer psycho-social function and psycho-social development in school-age children
- Higher rates of depressive disorder and suicidal symptoms in adolescents
- More anxiety and depression in school-age children
- Higher numbers of chronic health conditions in children
- More "internalizing" behavior problems in children
- Lower math achievement and other achievement gains in kindergarteners
- Lower math and reading gains from kindergarten to third grade
- Lower arithmetic scores and higher likelihood of repeating a grade for children ages 6-11².



Food security—access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life—is an important foundation for good nutrition and health. Food security is especially important for children because the nutritional content of their diets affects not only their current health, but also their physical, mental, and social development—and thus their future health and well-being¹.

Food Security/Food Insecurity³

Food security includes at a minimum:

—*Readily available nutritionally adequate and safe foods.*

—*Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).*

Food insecurity is limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.



The food security status of each household lies somewhere along a continuum extending from high food security to very low food security. This continuum is divided into four ranges, characterized as follows:

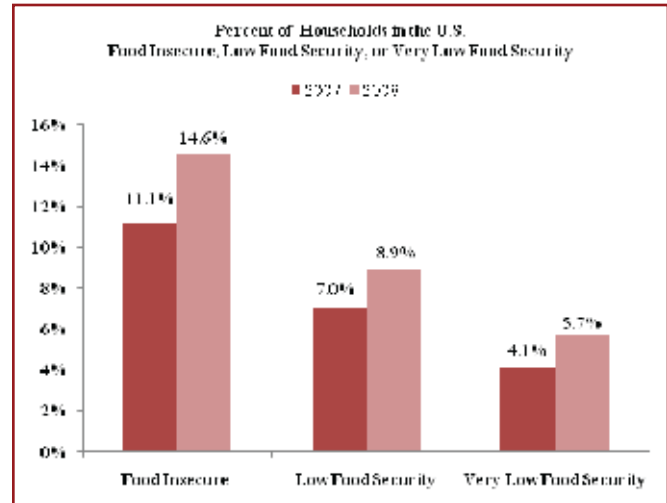
1. **High food security**—Households had no problems, or anxiety about, consistently accessing adequate food.
2. **Marginal food security**—Households had problems at times, or anxiety about, accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, and quantity of their food intake were not substantially reduced.
3. **Low food security**—Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.
4. **Very low food security**—At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food. (In reports prior to 2006, these households were described as “food insecure with hunger.”)

Knowledge about the extent of food insecurity in households with children and the characteristics associated with food insecurity contributes to the effective operation of these and other programs that

support the well-being of children.

Statistics on Food Security

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service reported these statistics for 2008⁴:



For 2008 - Food Insecure: 17.1 million households, Low Food Security: 10.4 million households, Very Low Food Security - 6.7 million households.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) compiled data by state (2006-2008 average) on the prevalence of household-level food insecurity and very

State	Food Insecurity	Very low Food Security
North Dakota	6.9%	2.6%
Wyoming	9.2%	2.9%
South Dakota	10.3%	4.1%
Minnesota	10.3%	4.1%
Nebraska	10.4%	4.0%
Montana	10.9%	4.4%
Iowa	11.6%	4.8%

low food security by state. The table shows South Dakota and its surrounding states in comparison with the U.S. average⁵.

Feeding America in its Hunger Report 2010 noted this about the clients in South Dakota⁶:

- 36% of the members of client households in South Dakota are children under 18 years old.
- 36% of client households include at least one employed adult.
- Among households with children, 54% are food insecure and 14% are food insecure with very low food security.

Information about Federal Food Programs⁷

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP (formerly Food Stamps): provides monthly coupons (or funds through and Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system) to eligible low-income families that can be used to purchase food. SNAP is targeted toward those most in need. One of the strengths of SNAP is its ability to respond to local, state, and national economic changes and emergencies.

An article appeared in the New York Times in June 2009 focusing on food stamp (SNAP) usage across the country. "The number of food stamp (SNAP) recipients has climbed by about 10 million over the past two years, resulting in a program that now feeds 1 in 8 Americans and nearly 1 in 4 children"⁸. Their interactive map showed the percent of children on food stamps for every county in the United States. The map shows data for South Dakota counties.

National School Lunch Program: enacted in 1946, provides the opportunity for children across the United States to have at least one nutritious meal every school day.

School Breakfast Program: started as a temporary measure in 1966 and became permanent in 1975. It provides children with one-fourth or more of their Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for key nutrients.

Summer Food Service Program for Children: provides a nutritious meal to low-income children when school is not in session. It is often in conjunction with

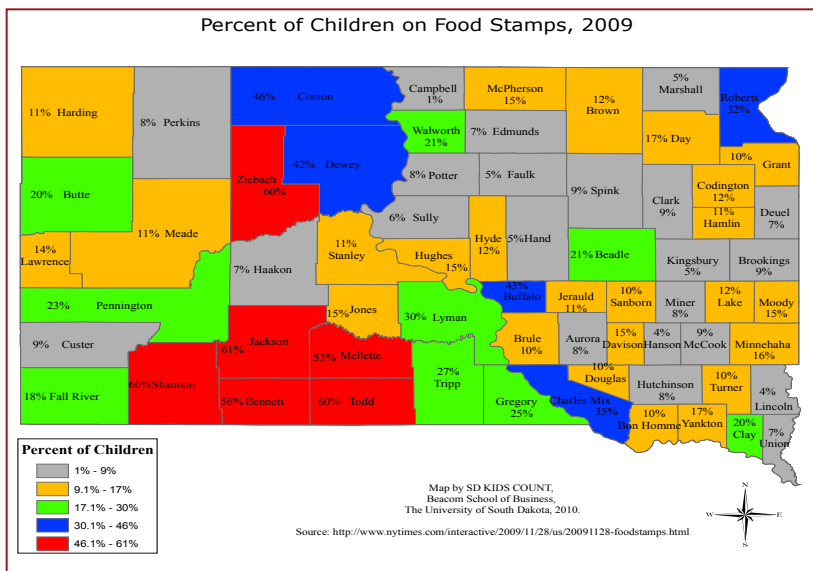
educational, recreational and developmental activities and supplies one-third of the RDA for key nutrients.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): started as a pilot program in 1972 and authorized as a national program in 1974, provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to low-income pregnant women, new mothers and infants and children at nutritional risk. Participants receive a monthly food package that is a prescribed combination of targeted foods for the purpose of improving the nutritional quality of their diets.

Child and Adult Care Food Program: founded in 1968, provides federal funds for meals and snacks to licensed public and nonprofit child care centers and family and group child care homes for preschool children. Funds for after-school program snacks and meals are also available.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): provides a fresh fruit or vegetable snack to all students in participating schools with goals to increase the variety of fruits and vegetables children consume, create healthier school food environments, and positively impact the nutrition of not only the students but their families. Elementary

schools with at least 50 percent of their students eligible for free and reduced-price meals can apply to participate in FFVP. Top priority is given to the schools with the highest proportion of free and reduced-price eligible students.



Child Nutrition Reauthorization Update⁹

An amendment to a recent defense bill shows that Congress may be getting serious about child nutrition. The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), was a show of support for expanding children's food programs, although it made no legal commitments. Reps. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA) co-sponsored the amendment. Rep. McGovern is on the Budget and Rules Committees and is a champion for child and hunger issues.

The amendment highlights hunger and obesity and its impact on military recruitment while urging Congress fund the child nutrition authorization at \$1 billion a year over 10 years, the level requested by President Obama. It passed by a 341-85 margin, with support from 87 Republican members of the House.

Text of the Bill. <http://www.voices.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/MCGOVERN-EMERSON-BISHOP.pdf>



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²Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture website: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats_graphs.htm accessed 5/5/10.

³Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture website: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/measurement.htm> accessed 5/10/10.

⁴Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture website: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats_graphs.htm accessed 5/5/10.

⁵Food and Research Action Center (FRAC), Data Center <http://frac.org/data/> accessed 4/1/2010

⁶Hunger in America 2010. Feeding America website: <http://feedingamerica.org/faces-of-hunger/hunger-in-america-2010/hunger-report-2010.aspx> accessed 5/10/10.

⁷Food and Research Action Center website: www.frac.org accessed 5/10/10.

⁸New York Times website <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/11/28/us/20091128-foodstamps.html> accessed 5/10/10.

⁹Voices for America's Children. Speaking Out! email communication. Website <http://www.voices.org/> accessed 6/2/2010.

Facts on KIDS in South Dakota is published by South Dakota KIDS COUNT, Beacom School of Business, The University of South Dakota.

The South Dakota KIDS COUNT Project

(www.sdkidscount.org) is a national and state-by-state effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for children and families. Additional funding for the state project comes from the South Dakota Departments of: Education & Human Services.

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