

# Food & Nutrition in Texas

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



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# Hunger in Texas

“We worried that our food would run out before we got money to buy more.”

“We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.”

“We skipped meals because there wasn’t enough money for food.”<sup>1</sup>

1.9 million Texas children live in households where access to food is limited.<sup>11</sup>

Hunger is an experience that shouldn’t exist in a prosperous place like Texas. And yet, 18 percent of Texas households experience food insecurity,<sup>2</sup> meaning they do not have consistent access to enough nutritious food to support a healthy life. *We worried that our food would run out before we got money to buy more. We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals. We skipped meals because there wasn’t enough money for food.* These are some of the statements food-insecure households say describe their lives in the annual Household Food Security Survey.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Household Food Security Survey, 1.7 million Texas households (4.7 million total people) struggled to put food on the table in 2013, one of the highest rates of household food insecurity in the country. Shockingly, nearly 600,000 Texas households experienced such low food security that they actually cut back on the food they needed or at times did not eat.<sup>4</sup>

What is behind food insecurity in Texas? When families struggle to make ends meet – juggling finances to cover rent, utilities, and transportation – too often little is left for food. Low-income families are forced to make difficult choices as scarce resources are stretched, increasing the chance that they go hungry.

The problem goes beyond grumbling stomachs. Food insecurity has long-term consequences for children and families. It means young children lack nutrients while they are still developing, and can lead to delays in physical, intellectual and emotional growth.<sup>5</sup> Hungry children have a harder time focusing in school and are more likely to have social and behavioral problems.<sup>6</sup> Food-insecure adults are often sicker, which may stem from coping strategies such as skipping meals or eating cheap and unhealthy foods.<sup>7</sup> They’re also at greater risk for chronic illnesses, such as diabetes<sup>8</sup> and heart disease.<sup>9</sup> Health problems associated with food insecurity have economic consequences as well, including lower educational outcomes, reduced productivity and the costs of treating chronic illness.<sup>10</sup>

18% of Texas households do not have consistent access to enough nutritious food to support a healthy life.<sup>12</sup>

## FACES OF HUNGER

Food insecurity affects families in all corners of the state - urban, suburban and rural areas. It affects children, adults and seniors, and families of all races and ethnicities. However, certain populations are at higher risk for hunger. Nationally, one in three low-income households is food insecure, as are single-mother households. A quarter of all Black and Hispanic households are food-insecure. Households with children are almost twice as likely to be food-insecure as households without children.<sup>13</sup>

## FEDERAL ROLE IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) funds and administers federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. USDA provides funding and sets broad eligibility standards to accomplish its mission of providing children and families across the U.S. access to food and a healthy diet. In 2013, major state nutrition programs brought \$8.79 billion in federal funds to Texas.<sup>14</sup>

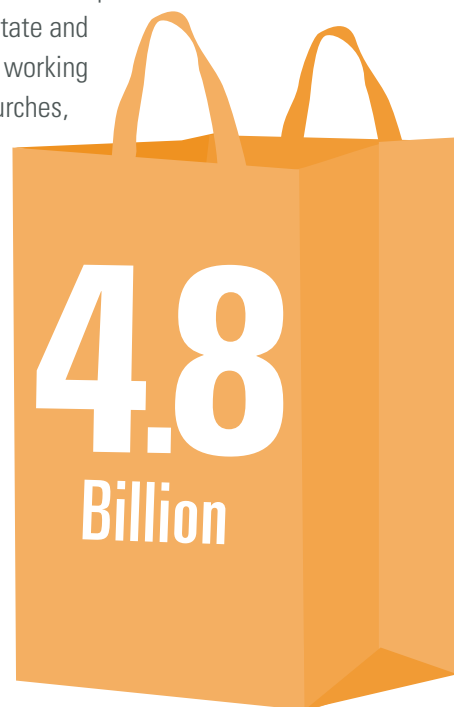
## TEXAS' ROLE IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

The state of Texas is responsible for distributing federal funds from the USDA through the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Department of State Health Services, and the Health and Human Services Commission. Through these agencies, millions of Texans get access to food—at schools, churches, child care centers and grocery stores throughout Texas. Within certain bounds, states have flexibility to modify eligibility requirements, food package benefits or program rules. States can also supplement federal funding to magnify the impact of nutrition programs, although Texas chooses not to.

***In 2011, Texas food banks distributed 285 million pounds of food.<sup>18</sup>***



***In 2011, SNAP benefits in Texas totaled nearly 4.8 billion pounds of food.<sup>19</sup>***



The state works with families and individuals receiving benefits, and a wide variety of organizations, such as schools and child care centers. Efficient outreach, enrollment, eligibility verification and reimbursement are all central state-based tasks to running programs that strengthen the food security of Texans.

## ROLE OF FOOD BANKS AND PRIVATE CHARITIES

Communities also have a role in addressing food insecurity. Many food-insecure families report relying on community food banks to keep from going hungry. The Feeding Texas network of 21 regional food banks includes more than 3,000 local partners, representing most of the food distributed through charities in Texas.<sup>15</sup> In 2011, food banks distributed more than 285 million pounds of food to food-insecure Texans.<sup>16</sup>

Although a vital source of food to many Texans, private charity and food banks are not enough to fill the need. In 2011, SNAP benefits used in Texas were equivalent to nearly 4.8 billion pounds of food... 16 times the amount distributed by food banks during the same period.<sup>17</sup>

Texas is a big state, with big issues to solve. Ending food-insecurity in Texas will require the combined resources and efforts of local, state and federal agencies working with schools, churches, food banks and non-profits. It's a big job, but it can be done.

# Federal Nutrition Programs Benefiting Texans

## SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM<sup>21</sup>

**4**  
**Million**  
TEXANS SERVED



## TEXAS FAMILIES & INDIVIDUAL TEXANS

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most widely used federal nutrition program in Texas. Sixty-two percent of SNAP beneficiaries are children.

## CHILD & ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM<sup>22</sup>

**212,000**  
TEXANS SERVED



## WOMEN, INFANTS & CHILDREN<sup>23</sup>

**955,000**  
TEXANS SERVED



## SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Women, Infants & Children (WIC) and Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) serve special populations. WIC serves pregnant women, infants and young children. CACFP serves young children, elderly adults and adults with disabilities who require care. These programs operate through child care sites, adult day care centers, and clinics that serve pregnant women, infants and young children.

# Federal Nutrition Programs Benefiting Texans

## NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM<sup>24</sup>

**3.2**  
**Million**  
TEXANS SERVED



### SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

These federal nutrition programs are targeted for children and operate through schools, afterschool programs, churches and other places that serve school-aged children. The Summer Nutrition Programs are the only programs available during the summer, while the other programs operate during the school year.

AFTERSCHOOL  
MEALS PROGRAM<sup>25</sup>

**51,000**  
TEXANS SERVED



## SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS<sup>26</sup>

**280,000**  
TEXANS SERVED



## SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM<sup>27</sup>

**1.8 Million**  
TEXANS SERVED



*Estimated number of Texans served each day*



# NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN TEXAS



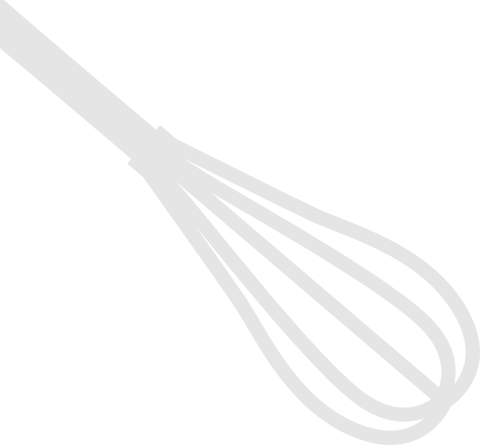




4 MILLION  
TEXANS SERVED

# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

**SNAP** is the largest program for preventing hunger in Texas, assisting more than 4 million Texans in 2013.<sup>28</sup>



One out of every seven  
Texans receives SNAP.<sup>35</sup>

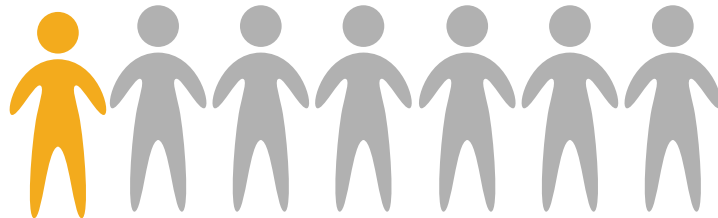
## WHAT IS SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, is the largest program for preventing hunger in Texas. The program helps Texas families who struggle to purchase food and pay for basic needs due to financial hardship. SNAP acts as a buffer against hunger for low-income working families, seniors and people with disabilities by supplementing food budgets and making it possible for low-income Texans to buy the food they need.<sup>29</sup>

## WHO DOES SNAP SERVE?

SNAP serves a broad cross-section of low-income Texans. Generally, households with incomes below 165 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$32,600 per year for a family of three) are eligible to receive SNAP benefits.<sup>30</sup> In an average month in 2013, 4 million Texans received SNAP benefits. That's one out of every seven Texans.<sup>31</sup>

SNAP is an especially important program for families with children. The majority of Texans receiving SNAP benefits are children, with more than 2.4 million Texas children participating.<sup>32</sup> Of the working-age adults who receive SNAP, the vast majority live in households with children.<sup>33</sup> Adults without children make up only 4 percent of SNAP beneficiaries,<sup>34</sup> and they can receive SNAP for only three months within a three-year period unless they are disabled, elderly, pregnant or working. Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for SNAP, and in Texas individuals previously convicted of a drug-related felony are banned for life from receiving SNAP benefits.





4 MILLION  
TEXANS SERVED

# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program



More than **2.4 million** Texas children receive SNAP benefits.<sup>36</sup>

## HOW DOES SNAP WORK?

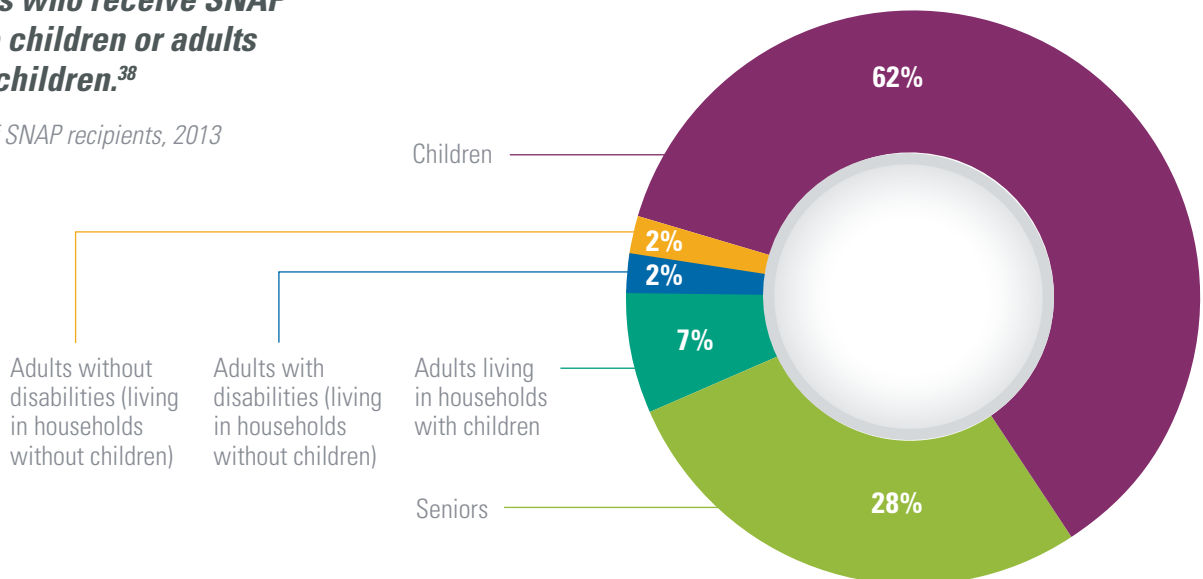
SNAP benefits are provided monthly on the Lone Star Card, an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. Low-income Texans use Lone Star Cards just like debit cards to purchase food at supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers' markets. The dollar amount of your SNAP benefit varies according to family size and income. However it is not adjusted for local differences in cost of living.

SNAP benefits can be used only on food items, such as fruits and vegetables, flour, meat, fish and dairy products. SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase hot, prepared foods that can be eaten in stores, and other non-food items such as alcohol, cigarettes, diapers, pet food, household supplies, vitamins and medicine.

Within these limitations, SNAP does not further restrict recipients' choices. The program allows Texans to choose how to best use their food budgets, supplemented by SNAP benefits. However, SNAP does include a nutrition education program, SNAP-Ed, which provides information about making healthy food and lifestyle choices. In Texas, agricultural extension services and local food banks run most SNAP-Ed programs.<sup>37</sup>

## Most Texans who receive SNAP benefits are children or adults living with children.<sup>38</sup>

Average share of SNAP recipients, 2013



## WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF SNAP?

SNAP financially benefits low-income Texans by supporting food purchases and freeing up scarce cash resources for other basic needs, such as rent. SNAP benefits help many working families make ends meet on low incomes. In a typical month, 42 percent of households that used SNAP to supplement their food budgets had earnings.<sup>39</sup> In 2013, the average monthly SNAP benefit per person in Texas was \$122, compared to \$133 nationally.<sup>40</sup>

SNAP benefits are 100 percent federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 2013, Texans received \$5.9 billion in SNAP benefits, which they spent directly in local economies through food purchases at supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers' markets.<sup>41</sup> Although high SNAP caseloads are an indicator of tough times for families, the program itself has economic benefits. Every \$5 in SNAP benefits generates nearly \$9 of economic activity.<sup>42</sup>

While the federal government fully funds SNAP benefits, the federal and state governments share the administrative costs. The state spent \$322.3 million on SNAP administration in 2013 to serve 4 million Texans.<sup>43</sup>

In 2013, Texans spent **\$5.9 billion** in SNAP benefits in almost 19,000 grocery stores and other retailers throughout Texas.<sup>46</sup>

## WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?

Texas' Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) administers SNAP. To fulfill SNAP's goal of preventing hunger in Texas, HHSC is charged with making accurate eligibility determinations, issuing payments, overseeing participating retailers and preventing fraud.

Texas has been recognized for its very high rates of payment accuracy (98 percent).<sup>44</sup> However, Texas currently has one of the lowest rates of participation for eligible individuals in the country. Only 71 percent of all eligible Texans are enrolled in SNAP, compared to 79 percent nationally.<sup>45</sup>

A state's participation rate is tied to the flexibility it has to modify eligibility rules when administering SNAP. For example, states can set the limit on the assets a family can have and qualify for SNAP. In Texas, the limit is \$5,000 in cash and \$15,000 for the first car or truck. That means a low-income family that owns a car or has a small emergency savings account may be ineligible for SNAP. Most states have eliminated asset limits in order to reduce administrative costs, increase program efficiency and encourage low-income families to save.









955,000  
TEXANS SERVED

# Women, Infants and Children

## ***WIC participation has been linked with:***

-  Fewer premature babies
-  Higher birthweight babies
-  Healthier diets
-  Improved rates of regular medical care<sup>48</sup>

In a typical month, Texans redeemed more than **\$46 million** in WIC benefits at grocery stores and supermarkets all across the state.<sup>51</sup>



## **WHAT IS WIC?**

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, also known as WIC, is designed to improve the health of nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children under age five by providing healthy foods, nutrition education and access to basic health services.

## **WHO DOES WIC SERVE?**













WIC focuses on families with modest incomes that earn below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.<sup>49</sup> For a couple expecting their first child, that means the family earns less than about \$36,600 per year. To be eligible for WIC services, babies and mothers must have a medical or nutritional risk, and a medical professional must recommend participation. Risks may include complications during pregnancy, poor diets or greater likelihood of low birthweight. In Texas, approximately 250,000 mothers, 227,000 infants, and 478,000 children ages 1-4 receive WIC services.<sup>50</sup>

## **HOW DOES WIC WORK?**

The WIC program provides free services tailored to the needs of the different populations served by the program. New mothers can receive breastfeeding support, nutrition education and health care screenings and referrals at WIC clinics. Infants and young children receive basic health and immunization screenings and referrals. WIC does not provide health care beyond basic screenings and referrals.

WIC also includes monthly vouchers to support food purchases at grocery stores and farmers' markets for specific food items, such as formula, baby food, and fruits and vegetables. WIC benefits do not cover non-food infant/toddler items, such as diapers, and foods not on the WIC-approved list. WIC benefits are distributed through an Electronic Benefits Transfer Card (EBT), which works and looks like a debit card. Food benefits are loaded three months at a time during clinic visits. In 2013, participating women spent an average of \$26 in WIC benefits per month on WIC-approved foods, such as baby cereal, milk or eggs, representing the lowest benefit amount in the country.<sup>52</sup>

### **Texas WIC-Approved Foods Include:**

-  Baby Cereal, fruits, vegetables and meats
-  Whole-wheat bread
-  Oatmeal
-  Milk
-  Cheese
-  Fruits and vegetables
-  Beans
-  Juice
-  Brown Rice
-  Eggs
-  Canned tuna & salmon
-  Peanut Butter<sup>56</sup>

### **WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF WIC?**

WIC benefits pregnant women and new mothers with modest incomes by supporting the purchase of nutritious foods and encouraging healthy behaviors that can reduce health costs in the long run. Research has shown that prenatal participation in WIC was associated with costs savings in Medicaid for low-income mothers and newborns because babies were born healthier and with fewer complications.<sup>53</sup>

WIC is 100 percent federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 2013, Texas received \$495 million for the WIC program, which covered both the cost of food benefits and administration of the program.<sup>54</sup> In a typical month, Texans redeemed more than \$47 million in WIC benefits at Texas grocery stores and supermarkets all across the state.<sup>55</sup>

### **WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?**

In Texas the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and a network of over 500 regional WIC clinics administer the WIC program. The state's role is to fulfill the program's goals of protecting the health of women, infants and young children who are at risk of nutritional deficiencies. The state can choose which foods to include as WIC-authorized purchases, and Texas also manages contracts with infant formula providers to control costs.

Texas has made several policy changes to improve program effectiveness and efficiency, including moving from paper vouchers to electronic benefits transfer and expanding WIC clinic hours so that more eligible women, infants and children can receive health care screenings and referrals, and reload their food benefits.

A major state administrative role is enrolling eligible women, infants and children into the program. It is estimated that only two out of three eligible women, infants and children are participating in WIC.<sup>57</sup> Participation rates are highest for infants under one year of age, and lowest for children ages one to five.<sup>58</sup>

Another administrative role is recertifying women, infants and children as eligible to continue participating in the program. Currently, pregnant women participating in WIC must recertify their eligibility no later than six weeks after birth. New mothers, infants and children must recertify every six or twelve months, depending on the age of the child and whether the mother is breastfeeding.





212,000  
TEXANS SERVED

# Child & Adult Care Food Program

**CACFP** helps serve meals in **14,084 child care sites** and **434 adult care sites** throughout Texas.<sup>59</sup>

***In 2013, CACFP served lunch each day to:***

-  187,147 children in child care centers and day care homes
-  25,179 adults in adult day care<sup>64</sup>

## WHAT IS THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) supports the health and wellness of low-income children, people with disabilities and elderly Texans, by helping feed these at-risk populations while their parents or caretakers are working. Child care centers and homes, after-school programs, adult day care centers and emergency shelters participate in CACFP to provide nutritious meals and snacks to individuals in their care at low or no cost to families.

## WHO DOES CACFP SERVE?

CACFP focuses on serving the nutrition needs of at-risk populations, including children in low-income neighborhoods, people with disabilities and elderly Texans. In 2013, CACFP helped provide more than 165,000 breakfasts and 212,000 lunches to Texans each day.<sup>60</sup>

CACFP accomplishes its mission of contributing to the health and wellness of vulnerable populations by working through care-giving organizations, including child and adult day care providers, schools, churches, and neighborhood and community centers. Sites must be located in low-income areas where the majority of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In 2013, approximately 1,600 organizations served meals at more than 14,000 sites throughout Texas.<sup>61</sup>

Child care centers and homes have traditionally been the largest participants in CACFP. More than 6,600 child care centers and 7,400 child care homes used CACFP to help feed the children in their care.<sup>62</sup> (Child care homes, also called day care homes, are in-home child care providers.) A smaller number of adult day care centers also participate.<sup>63</sup> CACFP recently added an afterschool component. For more on the Afterschool Meals Program, see page 18.

## HOW DOES CACFP WORK?

Low-income families of children, people with disabilities, and elderly Texans often depend on child and adult care centers to care for their loved ones while they are working or attending school. These organizations, which can include schools, churches and neighborhood and community centers, commonly feed those in their care. Organizations that participate in CACFP record the number of meals and snacks they serve, and the Texas Department of Agriculture reimburses organizations using federal funds at different rates, based on a number of factors. Factors include the type of meal served (breakfast, lunch,

supper or snack), the type of care center or program, and the share of low-income children served by the care center. In 2014, per-meal reimbursements ranged from 28 cents to \$1.62 for breakfast meals, 28 cents to \$2.98 for lunches, and 7 to 82 cents for snacks.<sup>65</sup> To be reimbursed, food must meet CACFP's nutritional guidelines that balance fruits and vegetables, grains and dairy.

### WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF CACFP?

In 2013, TDA reimbursed child and adult care sites in Texas for nearly \$306 million in meal and administrative costs, using federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>66</sup> The vast majority of CACFP funds go directly to food costs for child care centers and homes, after-school programs, churches, and other care sites. A small portion goes towards administrative funding for organizational sponsors, which can receive small amounts of funding to support tasks such as reviewing the accuracy of meal counts and training.

CACFP has multiple financial effects for Texas families, beyond the impacts of improving the quality of care, nutrition, and health of the most vulnerable Texans. Many small, home-based child care providers rely on CACFP to make it financially viable to feed kids in their care. By helping care centers stretch their dollars, CACFP helps make the cost of care more affordable for working families.

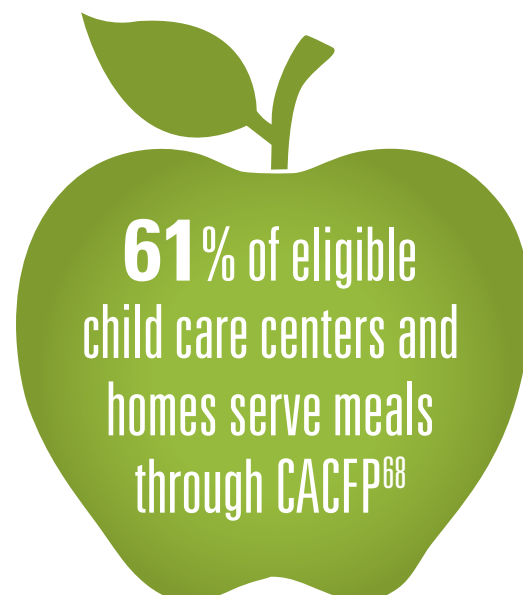
By **helping care centers** stretch their dollars, CACFP helps make the cost of care **more affordable** for working families.

### WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?

The Texas Department of Agriculture administers the CACFP program in Texas. TDA is tasked with confirming the eligibility of providers and sites, approving payments, and ensuring that all meals served meet the program's nutritional guidelines.

Currently, 61 percent of eligible centers and homes provide CACFP services.<sup>67</sup> Many eligible schools and child care providers do not participate in CACFP because they are not aware of the program or the costs do not make financial sense for them. The state could improve coordination between the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, which licenses child care providers, and TDA to communicate CACFP requirements to potentially eligible child care centers and homes.

The state can also streamline paperwork and facilitate collective purchasing by CACFP sites to cut administrative and food costs. States have flexibility to supplement reimbursement rates, increase the number of reimbursable meals or snacks, or provide funding to compensate sponsors and sites for administrative time.





3.2 MILLION  
TEXANS SERVED

# National School Lunch Program

NSLP requires schools to provide **healthy, balanced meals** for kids. Recently updated nutrition guidelines offer kids more **fruits, vegetables and whole grains**. Schools earn an extra six cents per meal for meeting **healthier nutritional standards**.<sup>69</sup>

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM?

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) has been serving Texas children since 1946 and is the largest school-based program for feeding students in the state. The goal of NSLP is to promote the health and well-being of children by guaranteeing they can eat a healthy meal while at school. Each school day, more than 3 million children in Texas receive a healthy lunch thanks to NSLP.<sup>70</sup>

## WHO DOES NSLP SERVE?

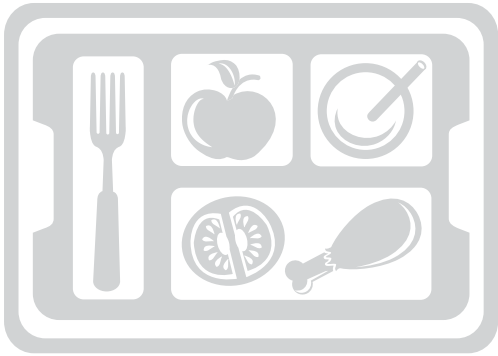
The NSLP serves all children attending public schools in Texas as well as many charter and private schools. Although NSLP serves all Texas students, its benefits are greater for students from low-income families. Schools provide lunches at no cost to students if their families earn less than 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (approximately \$31,000 annual income for a family of four). Students who are enrolled in other programs for low-income students like SNAP, children in foster care, or children who attend schools using the Community Eligibility Provision (see bottom of p. 15), are also eligible to receive free lunches. Children living in families earning between 130 and 185 percent of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for a reduced-price lunch costing no more than 40 cents (approximately \$31,000-44,000 annual income for a family of four).<sup>71</sup> More than 60 percent of Texas public school students qualified for free or reduced-price meals in school year 2013-14.<sup>72</sup>

## HOW DOES NSLP WORK?




Income-eligible students in Texas receive school lunches for free or at a reduced price, while higher-income students can also eat lunch through the school's food program, but they pay full price for meals. These are called "paid" lunches. Local school lunch programs determine meal prices and track the number and type of meals served.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reimbursed schools \$2.98 for "free" meals (from the student's perspective), \$2.58 for reduced-price meals, and 28 cents for "paid" meals. High-poverty schools where more than 60 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals receive an extra two-cent reimbursement for all meals.<sup>73</sup>





***More than 3 million Texas school children eat lunch through the National School Lunch Program each day. Every day, Texas schools serve approximately...***

-  2,100,000 Free Lunches
-  258,000 Reduced-Price Lunches
-  727,000 Paid Lunches<sup>75</sup>

Schools are responsible for classifying students as eligible for free or reduced-price meals and can fulfill this responsibility in multiple ways. Most schools ask families to provide income information at the beginning of the school year. Schools also receive information from state agencies that identifies students participating in other programs with similar income eligibility requirements, such as SNAP. The Direct Certification process enrolls “identified” students in NSLP, reducing paperwork for families and schools.

#### **WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF NSLP?**

By providing a healthy lunch each school day at low or no cost, NSLP lifts a major financial burden off millions of low-income families across the state, allowing their limited food budgets to go further. In the 2013-14 school year, schools received \$1.3 billion in federal reimbursements for school lunches.<sup>74</sup>

#### **WHAT IS THE STATE’S ROLE?**

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers the NSLP. The state’s role is to approve payments and ensure that all meals meet nutritional guidelines. Although NSLP reaches a significant number of children across the state of Texas, it is important to ensure that the program serves the hardest to reach children by continuing to use direct certification, simplifying applications and communications with families, and encouraging schools to use Community Eligibility. The state of Texas has been highly successful in implementing direct certification and currently directly certifies 97 percent of school-aged SNAP recipients for free school meals (compared to 89 percent nationally). This results in increased participation and accurate use of NSLP funds.<sup>76</sup>

## **Recent Policy Change: Community Eligibility**

Beginning in school year 2014-15, schools and districts have the option to use the Community Eligibility Provision to serve more Texas school children in the NSLP. Community Eligibility allows all students in high-poverty schools to eat school meals (both lunch and breakfast) at no cost. Instead of means-testing individual students to determine reimbursement rates, schools use an overall percentage of students already enrolled in other programs for low-income students (such as SNAP), foster care, or homeless education services.

**In high-needs schools where at least 40 percent of students are directly certified, all students can eat at no cost.**

**In Texas, almost 3,500 schools were eligible for Community Eligibility in 2014, and 1,483 schools have decided to take advantage of this option. If all schools eligible took advantage of this policy, almost 2 million students in Texas attending high-poverty schools would have the option to eat a free lunch and breakfast as part of their school day.<sup>77</sup>**



1.8 MILLION  
TEXANS SERVED

# School Breakfast Program

In 2013-14, nearly **1.8 million students** began their school day with the School Breakfast Program. Of these students, **1.5 million** ate breakfast at low or no-cost.<sup>79</sup>

## WHAT IS THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) ensures that nearly 1.8 million children in Texas start their school day with the nutrition they need to learn.<sup>78</sup> Serving breakfast at school helps students who may not eat breakfast at home and would otherwise start the school day on an empty stomach.

## WHO DOES THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM SERVE?

The SBP is available to nearly all children attending school in Texas. While any student may purchase breakfast, program benefits are targeted towards low-income students at high risk for hunger. Eligibility is identical to the National School Lunch Program. (For more on NSLP, see page 14.) Students whose families earn less than 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (approximately \$31,000 annual income for a family of four), receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, or attend high-poverty schools can eat a free breakfast at school. Students living in families earning between 130 and 185 percent of federal poverty guidelines are eligible to pay for breakfast at a reduced rate (approximately \$31,000-44,000 annual income for a family of four).<sup>80</sup>

## HOW DOES THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM WORK?

In Texas, any school with 10 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals must have a School Breakfast Program. Income-eligible students receive breakfast for free or at a reduced price of no more than 30 cents to start the day. Other students can also eat breakfast through the school's food program, but pay full price for meals. Using federal funds, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) reimburses schools for each breakfast served: \$1.62 cents for free meals received by students, \$1.32 for meals purchased by students at a reduced price, and 28 cents for meals that students paid full price in 2014. "Severe Need" schools, where 40 percent of lunches were served for free or a reduced price, are reimbursed an additional 31 cents per breakfast.<sup>81</sup>

***Benefits of eating a nutritious breakfast have been linked to:***

- 🍏 Increased attendance
- 🍏 Better student behavior and focus
- 🍏 Better class participation
- 🍏 Higher grades<sup>83</sup>

**Recent Policy Change:  
School Breakfast Bill (SB 376)  
and Community Eligibility**



**WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM?**

The School Breakfast Program supports low-income children in Texas by providing a nutritious meal to start the school day at low or no cost to families. Serving breakfast at school takes financial pressure off of food-insecure families at risk of going hungry. SBP meal reimbursements are 100 percent federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In school year 2013-14, Texas schools received over \$505 million in reimbursements for serving more than 312 million school breakfasts.<sup>82</sup>

**WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?**

The Texas Department of Agriculture administers the School Breakfast Program. While school districts are responsible for determining if children are income-eligible for SBP and for providing all meals, the state's role is to approve payments and ensure that meals meet nutritional guidelines so that students start the school day fed and ready to learn. Texas has the 8th highest rate of low-income student participation in school breakfast.<sup>84</sup> Although the SBP reaches a significant number of children across the state, participation has not been as high as the NSLP. However, recent policy changes and innovation from local school districts will continue to extend the reach of school breakfast services to more students. The state can continue to support schools implementing changes to run more effective breakfast programs.

**Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, schools where 80 percent or more of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals will offer free breakfast to all students thanks to the passage of Texas SB 376. This change will benefit the nutrition and education of students in high-poverty schools at no additional cost to the state. Many school districts, such as Dallas ISD, Laredo ISD, and Houston ISD, have already experienced success serving more eligible students by offering free breakfast to all. Schools have come up with innovative serving models that boost participation by serving "Breakfast After the Bell" when more students are at school. The most popular models for serving breakfast as part of the school day are "Breakfast in the Classroom" and "Grab and Go."**

**Another policy change called Community Eligibility will allow more students attending high-poverty schools to eat free meals and simplify reimbursement processes for schools. For more on Community Eligibility, see page 15.**



51,000  
TEXANS SERVED

# Afterschool Meals Program

## WHAT IS THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM?

The Afterschool Meals Program is the newest of the child nutrition programs and offers no-cost meals and snacks to children in afterschool enrichment programs. It is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which primarily funds food provided by child care centers in low-income areas (for more on CACFP, see pages 12 and 13). By feeding low-income children enrolled in afterschool programs, the Afterschool Meals Program helps to prevent hunger for children who may have eaten lunch hours before.

## WHO DOES THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM SERVE?

The Afterschool Meals Program feeds children in afterschool programs who may not receive adequate nutrition at home. Afterschool programs must be located in neighborhoods where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The program must also offer educational or enrichment activities, such as arts and crafts, literacy, or sports and fitness. The program is currently underutilized in Texas, and the potential unmet need is high. In 2014, Texas served an average of 51,000 meals per day in afterschool programs.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, an estimated 880,636 children participated in afterschool programs, and an additional 935,057 children were alone and unsupervised between the hours of 3 and 6 pm.<sup>86</sup>

***In 2010 the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) was expanded to include afterschool meals. In 2014:***

- 🍏 Children ate meals or snacks at 1,583 sites
- 🍏 21 school districts and 3 cities sponsored afterschool meal sites<sup>87</sup>

## HOW DOES THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMS WORK?

Using federal funds, the Texas Department of Agriculture reimburses organizations that run afterschool programs for the number of meals and snacks served. In 2014, reimbursements were \$2.98 per meal and 82 cents per snack.<sup>88</sup> Families do not have to pay extra for meals or snacks when enrolling kids in afterschool programs. In order to receive reimbursements, meals and snacks must meet nutrition standards that encourage a balance of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and proteins.

## WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE AFTERSCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM?

After School Programs are 100 percent federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For low-income Texas families who benefit from school lunch and breakfast, the Afterschool Meals Program provides additional support and relieves financial burden, especially for working parents whose children might be in an enrichment program until late in the evening. The Afterschool Meals Program also provides financial support for schools and community centers that run afterschool programs, so they can provide healthier meals and additional programming.

## WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?

The Texas Department of Agriculture administers the Afterschool Meals Program. Since this is a relatively new program, the state's role is to continue to increase awareness of the program to school districts and other potential sponsors, help potential afterschool sites connect with sponsors who can manage administrative tasks, and to provide training and technical assistance to help programs get started or increase capacity. The state can also simplify the application and administrative processes for organizations already experienced in operating other child nutrition programs.

# Summer Nutrition Programs



280,000  
TEXANS SERVED

## WHAT ARE THE SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS?

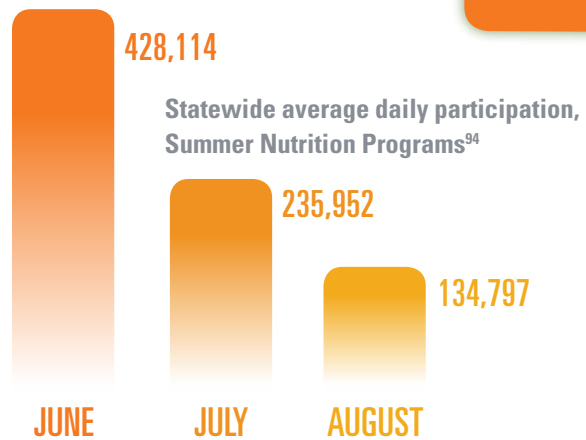
The summer nutrition programs offer free meals to children during summer vacations or summer school when many children lose access to meals eaten at school. The two summer nutrition programs are the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which is part of the National School Lunch Program. Beyond food, programs often include activities like sports and reading, though these are not funded through the Summer Nutrition Programs.

## WHO DO THE SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS SERVE?

SFSP sites must be located in low-income neighborhoods. In June, when participation is highest in Texas, approximately 428,000 kids ate lunch through the Summer Nutrition programs in 2013.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, more than 2.4 million children eat free or reduced-price lunch through the NSLP during the school year.<sup>90</sup> Texas is ranked 34th in summer nutrition participation.<sup>91</sup> Only an estimated 13 percent of the eligible population benefits from summer nutrition programs, due to factors such as low awareness of summer programs.<sup>92</sup>

## HOW DO THE SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS WORK?

Schools, churches, nonprofits, and other sponsors manage sites where children receive summer meals. Using federal funds, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) reimbursed SFSP sponsors \$1.99 per breakfast, \$3.49 per lunch, and 82 cents per snack in 2014.<sup>93</sup> Sites that prepare their own food or operate in rural areas receive a few additional cents per meal. Schools operating SSO programs receive the same reimbursements as in the NSLP and SBP (for more, see pages 14-17). Children attending summer school eat meals at school like they do during the school year, and children in summer programs or in need of food eat meals at sites such as community centers, libraries, schools and churches.



Participation in summer lunch programs is highest in June, when summer school is in session, and declines quickly afterwards.

## WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS?

For low-income families, summer programs help kids eat when school is not in session and childhood hunger rates spike. Summer Nutrition Programs are 100 percent federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Although TDA reimbursed organizations \$61.9 million using federal funds in 2013,<sup>95</sup> the state does not provide any additional funding for operations of a summer program, such as staff or transportation for kids. In 2013, children ate meals through Summer Nutrition Programs at 6,344 sites throughout Texas.<sup>96</sup>

## WHAT IS THE STATE'S ROLE?

TDA administers the summer nutrition programs. Texas law requires school districts where a majority of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-priced school lunches to provide a summer nutrition program. However, many school districts do not implement the programs or seek waivers due to barriers in operation cost. The state can continue to raise awareness and reduce barriers to participation in the program by simplifying paperwork requirements and streamlining application processes.

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[cPPP.org](http://cPPP.org)



Access data on food insecurity and nutrition programs, as well as other child well-being indicators.

[datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)

December 2014

**Feeding Texas** (formerly known as the Texas Food Bank Network)  
[feedingtexas.org](http://feedingtexas.org)

**Texas Hunger Initiative at Baylor University**  
[baylor.edu/texashunger](http://baylor.edu/texashunger)

**Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)**  
[frac.org](http://frac.org)

**Texas Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Division**  
[squaremeals.org/programs.aspx](http://squaremeals.org/programs.aspx)

**Texas Health and Human Services Commission, SNAP Enrollment Early Estimates**  
[hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF\\_FS.asp](http://hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF_FS.asp)

**United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services, Data and Statistics**  
[fns.usda.gov/data-and-statistics](http://fns.usda.gov/data-and-statistics)

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