TN School Meals

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TENNESSEE JUSTICE CENTER
TJC and the Nutrition Team

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Agenda:

- Introductions
- School Meals Funding
- Spotlight: Robertson County Schools
- Student Impact
- No Cost School Meals
- Q&A
End hunger in Tennessee by protecting and strengthening the federal nutrition programs: SNAP, WIC, Child Nutrition Programs

- Improve access and remove barriers to programs
- Advocate for solutions to systemic issues
- Educate and inform
- Provide policy expertise
- Direct client work
# Federal Nutrition Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSLP</td>
<td>National School Lunch Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBP</td>
<td>School Breakfast Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFSP</td>
<td>Summer Food Service Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACFP</td>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## SNAP STRENGTHS

**SNAP reduces hunger** and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.

**SNAP improves dietary intake** and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.

**SNAP bolsters local economies** by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.

**SNAP lifts millions of people** out of poverty.

- Reduces Food Insecurity
- Improves Dietary Intake and Health
- Protects Against Obesity
- Boosts Learning and Development
- Supports Economic Security
- Lifts Families out of Poverty
- Acts as Stimulus for Local Economies
National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Program
How School Meals Work: Funding and Regulations

CONGRESS

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA)

TN Dept of Education  TN General Assembly
Where do school meals come from?
Who sets the funding levels?
Is this different than education funding?

School districts receive:
- State,
- Local and,
- Federal education funding

Ed funds pays for:
- teacher and principal salaries,
- books, desks, and
- anything outside school meals.

Because the district’s general fund and budget rely heavily on state and local taxes, education funding can drop if the tax base weakens, but school nutrition departments receive more federal funding for meals if families’ incomes drop.
Do students pay anything?

- 3 categories of meals:
  - Free
  - Reduced-price
  - Paid

- To determine each student’s eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, the department may collect applications and compare a family’s reported income to federal guidelines.

- Or, the department may use information about whether a student’s family participates in other programs that have strict income requirements, like SNAP or Medicaid.
What are the income guidelines for families?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Annual</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Twice per Month</th>
<th>Every two weeks</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18,954</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25,636</td>
<td>2,137</td>
<td>1,069</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>493</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32,318</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>1,347</td>
<td>1,243</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>1,625</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>750</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>45,682</td>
<td>3,807</td>
<td>1,904</td>
<td>1,757</td>
<td>879</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>52,364</td>
<td>4,364</td>
<td>2,182</td>
<td>2,014</td>
<td>1,007</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>59,046</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>2,461</td>
<td>2,271</td>
<td>1,136</td>
</tr>
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</table>
No Cost School Meals for Kids: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

CEP is a federal reimbursement option for schools participating in NSLP and School Breakfast Program. Authorized nationwide Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

CEP schools serve meals to all students at no cost.

CEP eliminates the need to gather household income information or claim meal reimbursements according to student eligibility status.

Schools receive per-meal funding based on formula that uses data from other public benefit programs.
How does CEP work?

**Eligibility** - A school is eligible for CEP if at least 25% of enrolled students participate in certain public benefit programs like SNAP or Medicaid. This percentage – known as the identified student percentage or ISP – is determined largely through a data matching process called direct certification, which schools are required to do for other purposes. Schools can operate under CEP for four years before redetermining their eligibility.

**Funding** – The ISP is multiplied by 1.6 to approximate the total percentage of students eligible for free school meals had applications been collected. Schools are reimbursed at the highest level, the “free” rate, for that percentage of meals served and receive the lower “paid” rate for the remaining meals. For example, a school with a 62.5% ISP would receive the free rate for 100% of meals served, while a 55% ISP would receive the free rate for 88% of meals served and the paid rate for the other 12% of meals served.

**Election** - A district could elect CEP for a single eligible school, multiple eligible schools, or the entire district. The district may also group schools together to optimize the ISP across schools. The grouping can include schools with an individual ISP below 25% as long as the group's ISP is at least 25%.
**MYPLATE GUIDE TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST**

**FRUITS**
A full cup of fruit is available every day, providing nutrients that are important for kids' health, such as potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folate (folic acid).

**MILK**
Kids and teens need the calcium, protein, and vitamin D found in milk for strong bones, teeth, and muscles.

**VEGETABLES**
Every breakfast does not include vegetables, but schools may offer them in place of fruits.

**GRAINS**
Starting every day the whole grains way gives kids and teens B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to feel fuller longer so they stay alert to concentrate at school.

**PROTEIN FOODS**
Some breakfast menus may offer items such as eggs, nuts, or meats to pair with whole-grain options.

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**MYPLATE GUIDE TO SCHOOL LUNCH**

**VEGETABLES**
A variety of vegetables helps kids get the nutrients and fiber they need for good health.

**GRAINS**
Whole grains give kids B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help them feel fuller longer so they stay alert to concentrate at school.

**PROTEIN FOODS**
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds provide many nutrients including protein and iron. Portions sizes are based upon the nutrition needs of children in various grade groups. School meals also allow cheese, tofu, and yogurt to count as the meat/meat alternate in the school lunch.

**FRUITS**
Fruits
Every school lunch includes fruits as well as vegetables. Only ½ of the fruits offered may be 100% juice, since whole and cut-up fruits have more fiber.

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Visit teamnutrition.usda.gov for additional tips and activities.
Is there a limit on federal funding?

No, there is no cap on how much money states and school nutrition departments can receive, as long as the meals meet USDA requirements and are served to eligible students.

The school nutrition department gets more funding for serving more students.

Expanding the breakfast and lunch programs brings more federal funding into the school nutrition department to benefit schools and students.
Conversation with School Nutrition

Patsi Gregory
Robertson County Schools
Robertson County Schools

• The School Nutrition Program budget for 2023-2024 is $5,762,215. NO local funds are included in that amount.
• There have been no findings in the School Nutrition Program financial audit for the past 12 years.
• The school nutrition program employs 97 full and part-time employees.
• 33 employees of the Robertson County School Nutrition Program hold an advanced professional certification through the national School Nutrition Association.
• For the past 3 years, the Robertson County School Nutrition Program has partnered with the Robertson County Sheriff’s Department to provide meals and snacks at the SMART Great Games summer camp.

• In July 2023, through our community feeding program, we provided 5,925 breakfasts and 5,955 lunches to kids in need.

• During this school year, the Robertson County School Nutrition Program worked in partnership with the Bransford Pride Afterschool Program teaching math and reading.
Benefits of Meals at No Cost for Robertson County

Over 11,000 students rely on school meals for their daily nutrition.

$1,000,000 saved by families in Robertson County Schools.

No daily phone calls to parents about unpaid meal charges and no unpaid meal charges to be collected at the end of the year.
No Cost School Meals for Kids

Student Impact & Policy Opportunities at the State Level
Student Impact: Food Security

• 197,490 Tennessee kids are food insecure.

• Providing school meals for all improves food security among low-income students and their families.

• School meals ensure all students are hunger-free and ready to learn!
Student Impact: School Meal Participation and Diet Quality

- Providing healthy school meals for all increases the number of students participating in the school meals program.

- Studies show the increase in participation tends to be largest among students who previously did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

- Expanding free school meals is associated with better student diet quality.

Student Impact: Academic Performance and Attendance

Student Impact: Increased Financial Security for School Districts and Low-income Families

- Increased participation in school meals means that school districts will receive increased reimbursements for meals served to kids.

- Parents surveyed in 2 states that have implemented school meals for all reported cost savings for households, time savings for parents, and reduction in parental stress.

- Eliminating cost for meals would also eliminate school meal debt accumulated by children who cannot pay for their meals.

Student Impact: Reduce Stigma for Students and Families

- Healthy school meals for all kids also reduces the perceived stigma for students in low-income households.

- Parents also experience reduction in stigma especially around the experience of completing school meal applications or their children having school meal debt.

“It’s a parent’s worst nightmare to feel like I have to sign this piece of paper that says I can’t feed my kids.” - Parent

School Meals for All: National Movement

Source: FRAC, Healthy School Meals for All, Healthy School Meals for All (frac.org)
Ohio – Bill passed in 2023 to eliminate the reduced-price category starting in SY23-24. The Ohio Department of Education will cover the cost of all reduced-price category meals served to kids.

Arkansas – Governor Huckabee Sanders included eliminating the reduced-price category in her budget in 2023. Implementation began at the beginning of SY23-24.

Kentucky – Updated state regulations in 2022 to include up to 15 minutes of school breakfast in instructional time. Allows students to eat breakfast in the classroom.

North Carolina – School Meals for All NC is a coalition also advocating for healthy school meals. We can learn from their messaging to better our campaign!
No Cost School Meals State Legislation

- HB 255/SB 208 filed by Representative Raper and Senator Lowe.

- Requires the state to reimburse each local education agency (LEA) the cost of providing a free breakfast and lunch to each student enrolled in the LEA after all available federal funds have been applied.

- Similar legislation has passed in 9 other states and been introduced in 24 others.
### Fiscal Note: Comparison from Other States

#### Table 1. Enacted Universal School Meal Program Legislation and Funding Outlays (2021-2023)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Funding Outlays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>H 4040</td>
<td>Allocates funding to reimburse school districts and participating schools for the cost of providing universal free school meals. The state funds the program through a new voter-approved 4% tax on incomes over $1 million.</td>
<td>FY 23-24: $69 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>S 173</td>
<td>Establishes the school meals reserve fund as a separate account in the state school aid fund to cover the cost of providing free school meals to students.</td>
<td>FY 22-23: $25 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td>H 5</td>
<td>Establishes the free school meals program in the Minnesota Department of Education for schools participating in the national school lunch and breakfast programs. The department is required to distribute funding to each school participating in the state’s program.</td>
<td>FY 22-23: $400k (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>S 4</td>
<td>Requires public school districts and charter schools operating under the national school lunch and breakfast programs to establish a program to offer high-quality meals at no charge to all students. The New Mexico Public Education Department must award funding to each school food authority that establishes a program based on meal quality improvement requirements. School food authorities are also eligible to receive grants to purchase New Mexico-grown, -raised or -processed products.</td>
<td>FY 23-24: $29 - $42 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>H 5506</td>
<td>Allocates $30 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for free school meals. CT H 6671 (2023) extends funding to cover free school meals in the 2023-2024 school year.</td>
<td>FY 22-23: $30 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>S 100</td>
<td>Allocates funding to provide free school meals for FY 2023. VT H 165 (2023) extends funding and establishes a continuous universal school meals supplement provided under the Vermont Agency of Education.</td>
<td>FY 22-23: $29 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>CO</td>
<td>H 1414</td>
<td>Establishes the Healthy School Meals for All Program to</td>
<td>FY 22-23: $193,354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Childhood hunger is a serious problem for Tennessee. Access to school meals is a solution.

If we work together, we can ensure more Tennessee kids have access to nutritious, free meals.
Key Messaging: No Cost School Meals in Tennessee

- Fights hunger/food insecurity
- Improves academic outcomes
- Improves health
- Supports families’ budgets – tax rebate
- Investment in our future workforce
- Reduces stigma
Who should policymakers hear from?

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- School Administrators
- Healthcare Providers
- Public health advocates
- Education advocates
- Business community
- Nonprofit sector
- Everyone!
How to Engage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Join</td>
<td>Join our Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids TN working group to get updates and engage with other advocates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include</td>
<td>Include no cost school meals talking points in your conversations with legislators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Join Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids TN advocates on our advocacy day!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Contact Kate Goodin, <a href="mailto:kgoodin@tnjustice.org">kgoodin@tnjustice.org</a></td>
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QUESTIONS?

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