

TN School Meals

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TENNESSEE
JUSTICE
CENTER



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Agenda:

- Introductions
- School Meals Funding
- Spotlight: Robertson County Schools
- Student Impact
- No Cost School Meals
- Q&A

TJC Anti-Hunger Advocacy

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

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infant and Children

NSLP National School Lunch Program

SBP School Breakfast Program

SFSP Summer Food Service Program

CACFP Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children:



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

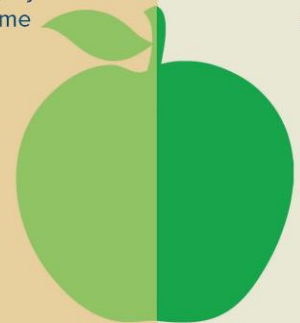
SNAP STRENGTHS

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.

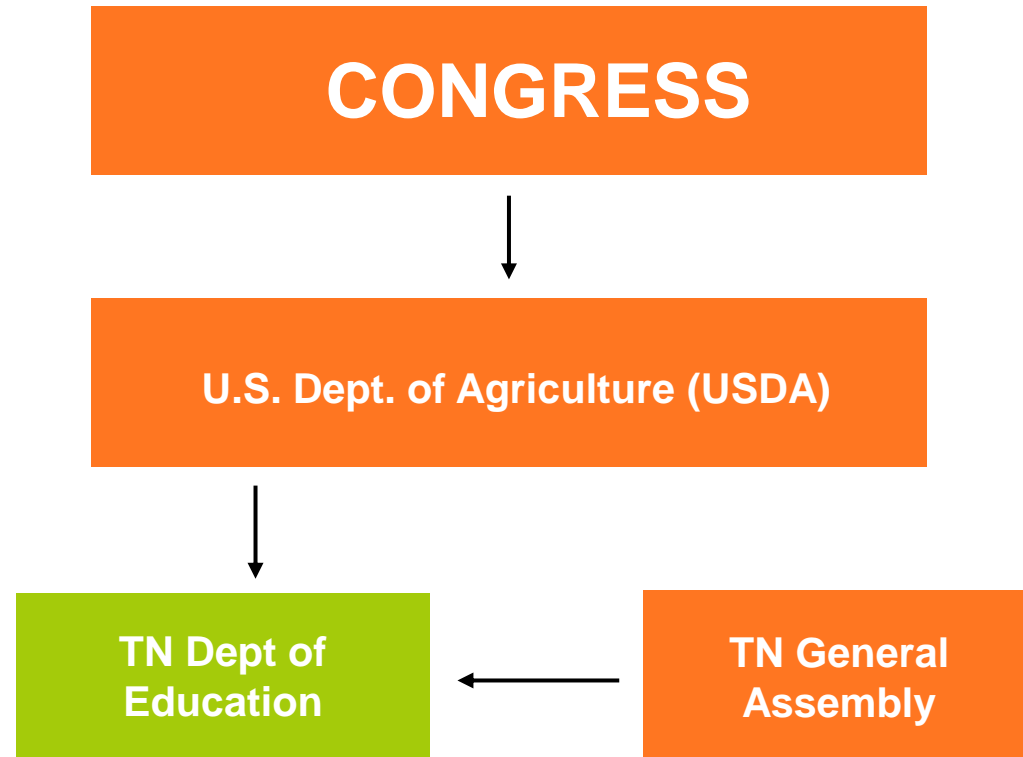




National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Program



How School Meals Work: Funding and Regulations



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?

INCOME GUIDELINES FOR FREE MEALS					
Household size	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every two weeks	Weekly
1	18,954	1,580	790	729	365
2	25,636	2,137	1,069	986	493
3	32,318	2,694	1,347	1,243	622
4	39,000	3,250	1,625	1,500	750
5	45,682	3,807	1,904	1,757	879
6	52,364	4,364	2,182	2,014	1,007
7	59,046	4,921	2,461	2,271	1,136

No Cost School Meals for Kids: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)



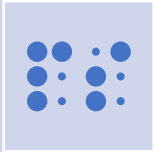
CEP is a federal reimbursement option for schools participating in NSLP and School Breakfast Program. Authorized nationwide Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

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

for Families



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.



PROTEIN FOODS

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

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.



Visit teamnutrition.usda.gov for additional tips and activities.



MYPLATE GUIDE TO SCHOOL LUNCH

for Families



GRAINS

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

VEGETABLES



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

MILK



Low-fat (1%) or Fat-free milk. Children and teens need the calcium, protein, and vitamin D found in milk for strong bones, teeth and muscles.



PROTEIN FOODS

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds provide many nutrients including protein and iron. Portion 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



Every school lunch includes fruits as well as vegetables. Only 1/2 of the fruits offered may be 100% juice, since whole and cut-up fruits have more fiber.



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.

Community Involvement

- 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



Source: Cohen JFW, Hecht AA, McLoughlin GM, Turner L, Schwartz MB. Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review. *Nutrients*. 2021; 13(3):911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911>

- 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

SCHOOL BREAKFAST CHANGES LIVES

School breakfast can have a potentially dramatic effect on students. On average, students who eat school breakfast have been shown to:



ACHIEVE

17.5% HIGHER SCORES
ON STANDARDIZED MATH TESTS



ATTEND

1.5 MORE DAYS
OF SCHOOL PER YEAR

These impacts have potential long-term economic benefits as well:



STUDENTS WHO ATTEND
CLASS MORE REGULARLY ARE
20% MORE LIKELY
TO GRADUATE
FROM HIGH SCHOOL



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
TYPICALLY EARN
\$10,090 MORE
PER YEAR AND ENJOY A
4% HIGHER EMPLOYMENT RATE

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.



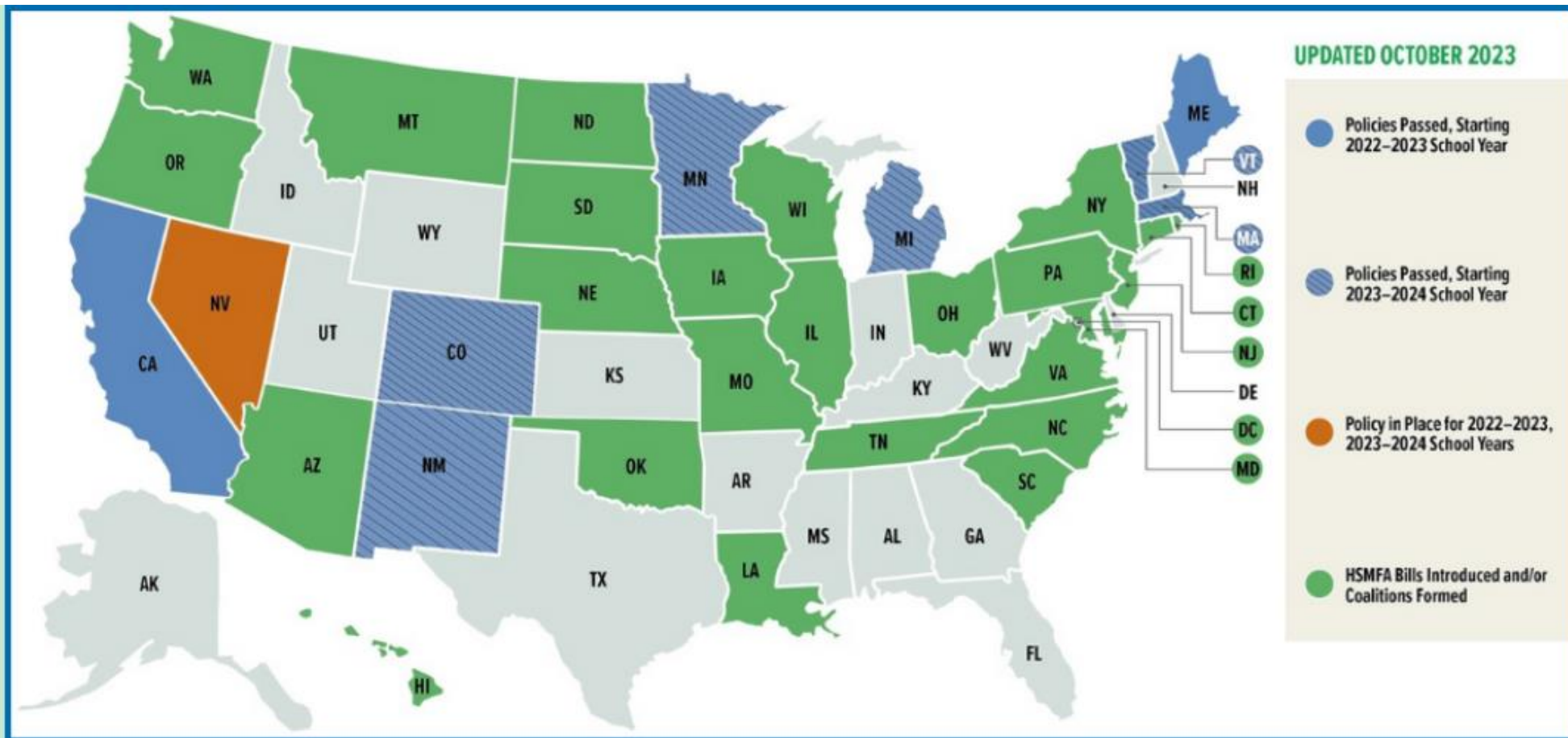
Student Impact: Reduce Stigma for Students and Families

- 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

Source: Cohen JFW, Gosliner W, Polacsek M, Hecht CE, Hecht K, Read M, Olarte DO, Chapman L, Patel AI, Schwartz MB, Turner L, Zuercher MD, Ritchie LD. “Implementation of Universal School Meals during COVID-19 and beyond: School Food Authority and Parent Perspectives.” Share Our Strength Report. September 2023. Project Officer: Anthony Panzera.

School Meals for All: National Movement



Source: FRAC, Healthy School Meals for All, [Healthy School Meals for All \(frac.org\)](https://www.frac.org)

State Legislation: Examples of School Meal Expansion Success + Opportunities



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)

Year	State	Bill	Summary	Funding Outlays
2023	MA	<u>H 4040</u>	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.	FY 23-24: \$69 million
2023	MI	<u>S 173</u>	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.	FY 22-23: \$25 million FY 23-24: \$60 million
2023	MN	<u>H 5</u>	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. Note: Funding outlay abbreviations refer to administrative (A), breakfast (B), and lunch costs (L).	FY 22-23: \$400k (A) FY 23-24: \$190.86 mil (L), \$25.73 mil (B) FY 24-25: \$202k (A), \$197.9 mil (L), \$26.54 mil (B)
2023	NM	<u>S 4</u>	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.	FY 23-24: \$29 - \$42 million FY 24-25: \$29 - \$42 million
2022	CT	<u>H 5506</u>	Allocates \$30 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for free school meals. CT <u>H 6671</u> (2023) extends funding to cover free school meals in the 2023-2024 school year.	FY 22-23: \$30 million FY 23-24: \$90 million
2022	VT	<u>S 100</u>	Allocates funding to provide free school meals for FY 2023. VT <u>H 165</u> (2023) extends funding and establishes a continuous universal school meals supplement provided under the Vermont Agency of Education.	FY 22-23: \$29 million FY 23-24: \$29 million
2022	CO	<u>H 1414</u>	Establishes the Healthy School Meals for All Program to	FY 22-23: \$193,354

HEALTHY MEALS, HEALTHY KIDS TENNESSEE

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.



American Heart Association.



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:

Join	Join our Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids TN working group to get updates and engage with other advocates.
Include	Include no cost school meals talking points in your conversations with legislators.
Advocate	Join Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids TN advocates on our advocacy day!
Contact	Contact Kate Goodin, kgoodin@tnjustice.org

QUESTIONS?

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