

# ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER

A MAYOR'S CHECKLIST



*center for* BEST  
PRACTICES

Mayors are in a strong position to help end childhood hunger in their communities. Mayors can help raise awareness about the issue and about available programs; convene stakeholders across sectors to tackle the problem; and ensure that schools, city agencies and community organizations are implementing effective programs that expand access to nutritious food for kids. Use this checklist to learn about the actions that you can take as a mayor to end childhood hunger.

## GENERAL ACTION TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER

In every community across the nation, there are children at risk of hunger. Hunger affects a child's ability to grow, learn and play. Hunger can lead to short- and long-term health issues, and cause behavioral and emotional problems in children. There are a number of steps mayors can take to make addressing childhood hunger a priority:

- ❑ **Learn about child food insecurity** in your city to assess current levels of need and build the case for community support; available through Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap [map.feedingamerica.org](http://map.feedingamerica.org)
- ❑ **Launch a public campaign** to end childhood hunger and convene a multi-sector taskforce to set goals, develop a plan and monitor participation in the federal nutrition programs.
- ❑ **Convene city and state social services** agency leaders to streamline services and improve connections across programs that serve low-income families.
- ❑ **Join national and state efforts** calling for enactment of legislation and appropriation of funding that supports actions to end childhood hunger.
- ❑ **Establish a toll-free hotline** and equip municipal service employees, such as police officers and healthcare workers, with information on local food resources to help connect families with local food resources.
- ❑ **Raise awareness** about childhood hunger by speaking about the issue, by participating in national events, such as Dine Out for No Kid Hungry in September, or by celebrating the work of local champions through a proclamation.

In 2010, Mayor Mitch Landrieu partnered with Share Our Strength to launch the **New Orleans** No Kid Hungry campaign.

In 2012, Mayor Rawlings-Blake convened the **Baltimore** Partnership to End Childhood Hunger to increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs and decrease childhood hunger in Baltimore City.

## SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM



The School Breakfast Program offers kids the nutrition they need to start their day off right. School breakfast programs have been shown to have positive academic, health and behavior benefits for students. The most effective way to increase access to School Breakfast is to make it a part of the school day through “breakfast after the bell” models such as serving breakfast in the classroom. Mayors can help to ensure students in their communities have access to a healthy breakfast at the start of their school day:

- ❑ **Launch an initiative** to make breakfast a part of the school day in your community by convening school board members, superintendents, principals, and food services directors to develop a plan for implementation and use of local funds to support district-wide implementation of breakfast after the bell and universal free meals.

- ❑ **Meet with school and district leaders** to encourage implementation of breakfast after the bell and adoption of the Community Eligibility Provision for eligible schools.
- ❑ **Sponsor a school breakfast challenge** to incentivize schools to improve participation in school breakfast by offering cash prizes to those who achieve the biggest gains.
- ❑ **Raise awareness** about the School Breakfast Program by visiting a school serving breakfast after the bell to help build public support for alternative school breakfast service models, by presenting a proclamation in support of National School Breakfast Week in March, or by making robo calls to families promoting the availability of breakfast at school.

In 2015, **New York** Mayor Bill de Blasio committed \$17.9 million over the course of three years to ensure that breakfast is served in the classroom in every public elementary school in the New York City School District.

In **Los Angeles**, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa launched a three year initiative that rolled out a mandate for universal free breakfast in the classroom in high-need schools across the city.

## AFTERSCHOOL MEALS



In a national survey of low-income parents, a quarter worry that their children do not have enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the following day. The Child and Adult Care Food Program At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program ensures students in need

get a healthy meal after the school day ends, but many schools and community-based organizations may not be aware of the program. Mayors can take a number of steps to help children in their communities get a meal at the end of the day:

- ❑ **Convene state and city agencies, schools and community-based organizations** to create a collaborative plan for expanding access to the At-Risk Afterschool Meals program.
- ❑ **Work with decision-makers** at schools and city agencies in eligible areas to offer enrichment programs after the school day ends that include a healthy meal.
- ❑ **Apply for the mayor's office to sponsor sites** to serve healthy meals to children during afterschool enrichment activities.
- ❑ **Convene city, county and state health licensing and inspection agencies** and the state administrative agency for the afterschool meals program to better understand the requirements for afterschool programs serving meals and explore flexibilities to increase sponsor and site participation in the program.
- ❑ **Work with education leaders to adapt bus schedules** to allow schools to serve afterschool meals in the classroom after the school day ends.
- ❑ **Maximize available government funds** to incentivize and encourage afterschool enrichment programs to serve healthy meals.
- ❑ **Raise awareness** by visiting a school-based afterschool meals program and challenging city council members to do the same.

The Mayor's Office of Children's Affairs in **Denver** is a sponsor of the Afterschool Meals Program for 20 recreation centers, offering monitoring and administrative support so that children in the City don't experience hunger. The Office also is a sponsor for sites that serve meals during the summer.

## SUMMER MEALS



Summer is a critical time for children's academic and physical well-being; during the summer children are at a higher risk of both obesity and hunger. Children who rely on free and reduced-price meals during the school year lose access to those meals during the summer and their families' budgets are often stretched to the breaking point. Programs exist to feed kids during the summer but they reach a fraction of the kids in need. Mayors can help kids receive the healthy meals they need during the summer:

- ❑ **Participate in collaborative planning** with state agencies, schools, and community-based organizations to **set a goal for the number of meals served** and prioritize expanding access to the summer meals programs.
- ❑ **Work with schools, libraries, parks and recreation centers**, and other city agencies to sponsor and operate summer meals sites or have the mayor's office sponsor summer meals sites in high-need areas in your community, and **authorize volunteer time for city employees** to support these summer meals sites.
- ❑ **Meet with school principals or the district superintendent** encouraging schools to remain open in the summer to serve meals to children and to promote summer meals sites to families.

- ❑ **Work with the local public transportation authority** to provide free rides for kids to summer meals sites and leverage federal transportation funding to support efforts to connect kids with summer meals sites.
- ❑ **Raise awareness** about free summer meals by visiting a summer meals site and challenging city council members to do the same; incorporating summer meals into literacy or grade-level reading campaigns; and by promoting the free national texting service through PSAs, robo calls to families, social media, city government websites, inserts with utility bills, and the city services hotline.

In 2012 Former Mayor Nutter of **Philadelphia** established Fun Safe Philly Summer, a year-round collaborative effort to connect Philadelphia's youth with free and low-cost summer programming and free summer meals. In addition to facilitating quarterly meetings with stakeholders to share best practices and common challenges, the initiative sets goals and tracks progress toward meeting them.

In **Providence** the Mayor's Healthy Communities Office convenes summer meals partners, matching summer program providers with meal providers and maintaining a city-wide calendar of events featuring free meals for kids.

Mayor Deirdre Waterman of **Pontiac** co-hosted a Meet Up and Eat Up Block Party in partnership with local community-based organizations to bring families together, elevate the issue of hunger in the city and promote the availability of summer meals.

### SHARE OUR STRENGTH'S NO KID HUNGRY CAMPAIGN

No child should grow up hungry in America, but one in five children struggles with hunger. Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign is ending childhood hunger in America by ensuring all children get the healthy food they need, every day. The No Kid Hungry campaign connects kids in need to effective nutrition programs like school breakfast and summer meals and teaches low-income families to cook healthy, affordable meals through Cooking Matters. This work is accomplished through the No Kid Hungry network, made up of private citizens, public officials, nonprofits, business leaders and others providing innovative hunger solutions in their communities. Join us at [NoKidHungry.org](http://NoKidHungry.org)

