



Childhood Hunger  
in

**New York**



Dear New York State Official,

The last several years have been difficult for New York State and millions of New York children are still growing up facing hunger, especially those within historically marginalized communities. Hunger takes a profound toll on children's health, happiness, and their ability to build successful futures and break the cycle of poverty.

**In New York State, 1 in 7 kids face hunger.**

**Childhood hunger is, however, a solvable problem. As an elected leader in New York State, you have the power to help and, together, we can ensure that all children get the nutrition they need to grow up healthy, educated and strong.**

With your leadership, we can:

- develop, share and implement a replicable "blueprint" for ending childhood hunger;
- enact bold strategies that provide better access to meal programs;
- promote innovative solutions to remove barriers so that children in low-income families can access nutrition programs, and;
- advocate for critical policy changes to ensure thousands more children in need across the state are receiving healthy meals every day.

As a leader in New York State, you are on the front lines of this crisis. You can transform an issue into a movement. With collaborative guidance, you can use your role to raise awareness about childhood hunger, advance proven solutions and institute policies that bring about lasting changes to increase access to child nutrition programs and end childhood hunger.

We look forward to being your partner throughout this journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Sabella". The script is fluid and cursive.

Rachel Sabella  
Director, No Kid Hungry New York  
Share Our Strength

## The Problem: Childhood Hunger in New York

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Food insecurity looks different in every household. For some families, the pantry is completely empty. In others, parents skip dinner a few nights a week so their kids can have something to eat in the evening. No matter how food insecurity manifests, a lot is at stake for these children, families and the communities where they live. When kids don't get the consistent nutrition they need each day throughout the year, it's harder for them to grow up healthy, educated and strong. Consistent access to nutrition is linked to cognitive and physical development, better long-term health, higher test scores and better education outcomes.

Unfortunately, because policies and practices entrenched in our laws and society leave millions of children behind, especially in rural areas, tribal lands and among communities of color, the promise of opportunity remains unfairly out of reach for far too many children. The pandemic, the economic fallout and inflation have exacerbated these existing deep-rooted disparities, increasing the severity of a myriad health and economic crises, pushing millions more families into poverty and hunger throughout the country. **Keep in mind, 1 in 7 kids in New York State faces hunger.**<sup>1</sup>

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### Impact on Child Food Insecurity



15%

of children face hunger in  
New York State<sup>1</sup>

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# The Solution: Strengthening Nutrition Programs



Our nation's federal nutrition programs work together to connect children to the food they need. Many of these programs, however, are underutilized or can be difficult to access. Eliminating barriers and maximizing participation in these programs will help combat rising child food insecurity in New York State. While strengthening these programs often requires federal action, state level policy changes and innovations can play a major role. This section describes the various nutrition programs followed by an action list on how New York State can help these programs operate more effectively and reach more children facing economic insecurity.

## School Meals

School meals play a critical role in ensuring kids get three meals a day and the nutrition they need to thrive in and out of the classroom. For day-to-day school breakfast and lunch operations, this school year is largely a return to pre-pandemic operations since nationwide waivers have now expired. Students are back in classrooms and most meal service has returned to the cafeteria. One of the most notable changes is that school meals are no longer free for all students; that means families must again apply for free or reduced-price school meals eligibility. Meals do continue to be free for all students at schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2 or in states that have passed universal free school meals legislation.

While the Keep Kids Fed Act authorized a temporary additional per meal reimbursement, many school nutrition programs are facing strained budgets. It continues to be critical to promote the availability of school meals to families. School nutrition programs are reimbursed for each meal that they serve, so when more students participate, it helps strengthen the program for all students.

**2,077,711**

The number of New York State students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals in 2019<sup>2</sup>

## Summer Meals

Summer is the hungriest time of year for many kids from families facing economic hardship because school breakfast and lunch are unavailable. Summer meal programs—which are operated by schools and community organizations and provide free meals at congregate sites to children 18 and under—can help kids get the nutrition they need during these difficult months. But, transportation challenges, bureaucratic hurdle, area eligibility and congregate feeding requirements, and even extreme weather can become barriers to participation.

Due to area eligibility requirements, approximately

**128,786**

kids risk losing access to summer meals in 2023 as compared to summer 2021<sup>3</sup>

## Afterschool Meals

Too many kids don't get enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the next morning. Afterschool meals help kids get the nutrition they need once the school day ends. Having these meals reimbursed by the USDA also helps schools and community organizations save money and redirect funds into additional programming or staffing.

In FY 2019, the number of afterschool meals and snacks served in New York State was just

**21.4%**

of free or reduced-price school lunches<sup>4</sup>

# The Solution: Addressing Hunger



## SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a powerful tool for ending childhood hunger in the United States. SNAP provides eligible households with a grocery store benefit, that allows families to purchase healthy food and ingredients. It helps decrease food insecurity, lifts kids out of poverty and is linked to better physical health and stronger academic success in children.

Now, as many families struggle with inflation, the program is more important than ever. In FY 2021, SNAP reached 2,780,700 New York State residents.<sup>5</sup> Over the last couple of years, program flexibilities have been allowed to ensure those most in need have better access to needed food and nutrition through SNAP. These include flexibilities related to benefit application, processing and recertification, and the availability of the maximum benefit level for current program participants. SNAP is also one of the most effective ways to boost the local economy, money spent at grocery stores and markets leads to more jobs, wages and local economic activity in the community. In fact, every SNAP dollar that households spend expands the local economy by about \$1.50 to \$1.80.

In New York State,  
more than  
**54%**  
of SNAP participants  
are in families with  
children<sup>5</sup>

## WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) assists low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children up to age five with food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and health care referrals. Evidence suggests that women who participate in WIC have improved pregnancy outcomes, resulting in healthier babies and reduced medical costs.

Over the last couple of years, USDA maximized the use of existing program flexibilities and benefits including: WIC online ordering improvements and waiver authorities provided by Congress to ensure children and families who need it can participate in WIC. However, despite these benefits, many women, infants, and children are not participating in the program due to the administrative burden and barriers to access & eligibility. In addition, WIC retention has become a challenge as many women leave the program after their child turns one.

In 2019,  
**95.3%**  
of eligible infants  
and  
**48%**  
of eligible children  
(ages 1-4) were  
participating in WIC  
in New York State<sup>6</sup>

## Pandemic EBT

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) was initially authorized by Congress in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in March 2020. P-EBT provides grocery assistance directly to households with K-12 students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals when schools are closed, have a hybrid attendance schedule, or students experience COVID absences. The amount of assistance a family receives is equal to the value of school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks that are missed. In January 2021, children under the age of 6 who are in households that receive SNAP and live in or attend child care in an area where one or more schools or child care facilities are closed or operate with reduced attendance became eligible to receive P-EBT. P-EBT is extended for the 2022-2023 school year and during summer 2023 for eligible K-12 students and children under the age of 6 while there is a federal public health emergency declaration. Benefits are distributed to eligible students by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). To learn more, visit OTDA's P-EBT page at <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/>

Approximately  
**2,180,000**  
children were  
eligible for P-EBT in  
summer 2022<sup>7</sup>

# End Childhood Hunger: An Action List for New York State Leaders



Your leadership is crucial to a successfully ending hunger in New York State. With your support, federal nutrition programs can run more effectively and efficiently, reaching more kids across New York with the food they need to grow up healthy and strong. Additional information can be found on the No Kid Hungry New York Policy Resources Website at <https://state.nokidhungry.org/new-york/new-york-state-policy-resources/>

## Across all programs

- Support efforts to pass equitable and inclusive state policies that will improve access to school breakfast, after-school meals, summer meals programs, and SNAP
- Ensure state agencies have the resources to efficiently administer each program and hold them accountable for reaching quantitative goals to increase program participation.
- Use your platform to celebrate the champions who are feeding kids through the child nutrition programs.

## Poverty Alleviation

- Support efforts to expand the New York State Empire State Child Tax Credit and ensure families are accessing all available tax credits.

## P-EBT

- Encourage your state agency to submit a plan to administer P-EBT for the 22-23 school year and summer 2023
- Ensure that all families who qualify for P-EBT for the 22-23 school year and summer 2023 can access the program quickly and efficiently
- Promote P-EBT and provide clear information to eligible families about how to participate
- Establish a statewide or centralized database system and processes for direct certification and rapid FRP eligibility determination to more quickly distribute PEBT benefits

## School meals

- Support the Healthy School Meals for All campaign in New York which provide access to no cost school meals for all students. Part of the proposal would incentivize use of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which is key to expanding access.
- Provide financial support for school meal programs in the state budget, that will cover additional costs associated with inflation (meal delivery and transportation).
- Modify the Farm to School Incentive program to allow schools to include purchases made for the School Breakfast Program to be in the 30 percent threshold

## Out of school meals

- Increase participation in the summer and afterschool meal programs by promoting PSAs and hotlines to help families find sites.
- Establish a New York State program modeled on the federal Summer EBT pilot to provide additional grocery assistance to low-income families with children where summer meals programs are difficult to access.

## SNAP and WIC

- Maximize all the available federal SNAP waivers and flexibilities available to states to expand program access, reduce administrative and application burden to state agencies and eligible families.
- Support efforts to ensure that mothers and young children have access to WIC and child care.
- Establish a "Hunger-Free Campus Program" which addresses hunger among students at higher education institutions by expanding SNAP enrollment and benefit redemption options.



Share Our Strength created the No Kid Hungry campaign to make sure every child in the United States gets three meals a day. As part of this mission, No Kid Hungry New York is focused on making sure more New York children have access to essential nutrition programs like school meals, summer meals, SNAP, and WIC.

Through a combination of emergency grants, strategic assistance, advocacy, and awareness, No Kid Hungry New York is helping kids, families, and communities get the resources they need.

## **BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENTS**



Since 2010, the No Kid Hungry campaign **has invested millions of dollars in schools, nonprofits, and community organizations in all 50 states** - including over \$100 million in grants to 2,300+ local organizations during the worst of the pandemic. These organizations have used these investments on the essential kitchen equipment, transportation, staffing, food and materials that allowed them to serve billions of meals to children who needed them. **Most importantly since March 2020, No Kid Hungry has invested more than \$6,000,000 for solutions that work in New York and Puerto Rico.**



## **CREATE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

No Kid Hungry works with corporate and philanthropic supporters like **Citi, Arby's Foundation, and Warner Bros. Discovery** and strong local partners to build relationships with schools and community leaders to provide better access to the programs that feed kids.



## **DEVELOP NONPARTISAN PARTNERSHIPS**

No Kid Hungry builds **strong, bipartisan support** among elected leaders around streamlined data collection, pragmatic policy actions and collaboration to strengthen child nutrition programs. We were thrilled that this partnership led to the Restaurant Meals Program becoming law in New York State in 2021.



## **BRING RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

No Kid Hungry provides **expertise, best practices, collaborative planning** and **bold strategies** to maximize meal accessibility.



## **MAXIMIZE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIES**

No Kid Hungry ensures families facing economic hardship have information about the programs that can help them have better food access through our meal finder map, texting line and outreach campaigns. Lastly, No Kid Hungry enhances public awareness of childhood hunger, creating new momentum by celebrating champions across the state through our Hunger Heroes recognition. Visit

<https://state.nokidhungry.org/new-york/hungerheroes/nyc-hunger-heroes-2022/> to learn more.

# Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Albany	14%
Allegany	18%
Bronx	36%
Broome	19%
Cattaraugus	19%
Cayuga	15%
Chautauqua	20%
Chemung	18%
Chenango	15%
Clinton	15%
Columbia	14%
Cortland	15%
Delaware	19%
Dutchess	12%
Erie	19%
Essex	15%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Franklin	19%
Fulton	18%
Genesee	13%
Greene	14%
Hamilton	13%
Herkimer	16%
Jefferson	18%
Kings	26%
Lewis	15%
Livingston	13%
Madison	12%
Monroe	19%
Montgomery	21%
Nassau	8%
New York	18%
Niagara	18%



# Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Oneida	17%
Onondaga	18%
Ontario	12%
Orange	15%
Orleans	18%
Oswego	19%
Otsego	14%
Putnam	7%
Queens	21%
Rensselaer	14%
Richmond	15%
Rockland	16%
St. Lawrence	18%
Saratoga	8%
Schenectady	15%
Schoharie	14%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Schuyler	17%
Seneca	15%
Steuben	16%
Suffolk	10%
Sullivan	18%
Tioga	13%
Tompkins	11%
Ulster	15%
Warren	13%
Washington	14%
Wayne	14%
Westchester	11%
Wyoming	12%
Yates	14%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>15%</b>

## About No Kid Hungry New York

For nearly 40 years, Share Our Strength has been a nonprofit leader, creating innovative, sustainable ways to help people out of poverty. In 2010, we launched No Kid Hungry, a national campaign to end childhood hunger in America by changing the way that schools, communities and entire cities ensure hungry children have the food they need.

As many as 596,060 kids face hunger in New York State.<sup>1</sup> But this is a solvable problem. Investments in nutrition programs protect many families from hunger and helped stave off greater rates of child food insecurity. This is complicated work, but we know what strategies have been successful and today, we have the momentum and opportunity to make real progress. No Kid Hungry is working to ensure that policies and nutrition programs are adapting to meet the needs of families and that schools and communities have the funding, flexibility, guidance and strategies to support children's access to three healthy meals a day—now and in the future.



## CONTACTS

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- <sup>1</sup> Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2022). [Map the Meal Gap 2022](https://map.feedingamerica.org/): An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2020. Feeding America, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>
  - <sup>2</sup> [Child Nutrition Tables](https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables) (2019), Data & Research, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>
  - <sup>3</sup> [Summer Hunger in the United States: The challenges and solutions for Summer 2022 Microreport](https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer_Meals_Waivers_Micro_Report_.pdf) (2022), No Kid Hungry, [https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer\\_Meals\\_Waivers\\_Micro\\_Report\\_.pdf](https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer_Meals_Waivers_Micro_Report_.pdf)
  - <sup>4</sup> [Celebrating Ten Years Of Afterschool Meals: Looking Back And Looking Ahead](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating_10_Years_of_Afterschool_Meals_Full_Report.pdf) (FY 2019), No Kid Hungry, [http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating\\_10\\_Years\\_of\\_Afterschool\\_Meals\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating_10_Years_of_Afterschool_Meals_Full_Report.pdf)
  - <sup>5</sup> [A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Maryland) (FY 2021), Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Maryland>
  - <sup>6</sup> [WIC Coverage Rates by State 2019](https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/national-state-level-estimates-eligibility-program-reach-2019) (2019), United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/national-state-level-estimates-eligibility-program-reach-2019>
  - <sup>7</sup> [Pandemic EBT – Summer 2022](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt) (2022), United State Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>