



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 6 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 cursive script that reads "Rachel Sabella".

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

## The Problem: Childhood Hunger in New York

---

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 6 kids in New York State faces hunger.**<sup>1</sup>

---

### Impact on Child Food Insecurity



**15%**

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

---

# 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 healthy school meals for all 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 have traditionally provided 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 hurdles, area eligibility rules, the congregate requirement, and even extreme weather can become barriers to participation.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 is a recent step to address these challenges for rural areas, where these difficulties are often more acute. It authorizes a permanent non-congregate option for rural communities without congregate sites, including for eligible children in areas that do not meet usual area eligibility rules. It also authorized a new permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program to start in 2024.

Summer EBT (SEBT) is a program that provides families with children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with grocery benefits over the summer break. The permanent program builds from the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children pilot that showed positive impacts for children including reducing very low food security by a third and increased consumption of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy. SEBT will provide \$40 in federal grocery benefits per child per month and estimated to reach more than 2.1 million children across the state of New York. The program is available starting summer 2024, but New York State needs to indicate to the USDA by January 1, 2024, their intent to operate the program.

**Summer EBT is estimated to reach more than 2,150,000 school aged children in New York State.<sup>3</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>

## 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>

# 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, lunch, 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.

## 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 childcare.
- ❑ Establish a “Hunger-Free Campus Program” which addresses hunger among students at higher education institutions by expanding SNAP enrollment and benefit redemption options.

## Poverty Alleviation

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

## 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.

## Summer EBT

- ❑ Ensure New York State submits a robust plan to administer Summer EBT starting in 2024.
- ❑ Include the 50% administrative funding match required by the federal government to implement Summer EBT in the state budget.
- ❑ Establish a statewide or centralized database system and processes for direct certification and rapid FRP eligibility determination to more quickly distribute SEBT benefits.

## Out of school meals

- ❑ Increase participation in the summer and afterschool meal programs by promoting PSAs and hotlines to help families find sites.



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. In New York, we continue to support school districts and community organizations with support, funding and strategic resources to expand school meal programs, and enroll eligible families in federal programs such as SNAP.



## **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	11%
Allegany	14%
Bronx	31%
Broome	15%
Cattaraugus	15%
Cayuga	12%
Chautauqua	15%
Chemung	14%
Chenango	12%
Clinton	12%
Columbia	11%
Cortland	10%
Delaware	15%
Dutchess	8%
Erie	14%
Essex	11%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Franklin	15%
Fulton	14%
Genesee	9%
Greene	10%
Hamilton	9%
Herkimer	13%
Jefferson	14%
Kings	22%
Lewis	11%
Livingston	9%
Madison	8%
Monroe	14%
Montgomery	16%
Nassau	4%
New York	15%
Niagara	13%



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



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Oneida	13%
Onondaga	14%
Ontario	8%
Orange	10%
Orleans	14%
Oswego	15%
Otsego	10%
Putnam	4%
Queens	16%
Rensselaer	11%
Richmond	12%
Rockland	11%
St. Lawrence	14%
Saratoga	5%
Schenectady	11%
Schoharie	11%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Schuyler	13%
Seneca	11%
Steuben	12%
Suffolk	5%
Sullivan	15%
Tioga	8%
Tompkins	8%
Ulster	11%
Warren	9%
Washington	12%
Wayne	10%
Westchester	7%
Wyoming	9%
Yates	11%
<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 633,790 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

**Rachel Sabella**  
Director  
No Kid Hungry New York  
[rsabella@strength.org](mailto:rsabella@strength.org)  
[www.nokidhungry.org/newyork](http://www.nokidhungry.org/newyork)



- 
1. Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2023). [Map the Meal Gap 2023](https://map.feedingamerica.org/): An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2021. Feeding America, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>
  2. [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>
  3. Projected participation based on USDA Summer 2021 Pandemic EBT projections using SY19-20 enrollment data, and projected benefits based on projected participation multiplied by the \$40 per month benefit for three months. [https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-Report\\_FRAC\\_041023.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=2644cb6c-9edc-496a-8e1c-05711ba48ca0](https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-EBT-Report_FRAC_041023.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=2644cb6c-9edc-496a-8e1c-05711ba48ca0)
  4. [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)
  5. [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>
  6. [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>
  7. [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>