



Childhood Hunger
in

New York



Dear New York State Official,

The last several years have been difficult in New York State, with 1 in 5 kids facing hunger statewide, but they have also proven that smart policy matters. When our state invests in nutrition programs like SNAP, school and summer meals, and programs that help get grocery and tax benefits into the hands of families, hunger and hardship give way to security and opportunity, especially for those in historically marginalized communities.

That's never been truer than this year, when New York State opted into Summer EBT, a game changing program that is expected to help the families of nearly 2 million kids across the state stretch their grocery budget and provide nutrition meals at home while kids are out of school.

Yet, we know that it takes more than food to fight hunger. In the years ahead, No Kid Hungry New York has committed to transforming systems and creating a more equitable world where all children, families and communities have what they need to thrive.

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 families with low-income can access nutrition programs, and;
- advocate for critical policy changes to ensure that children in need are receiving healthy meals every day.

As a leader in New York State, you and your team are on the front lines of driving change and have the power to transform an issue into a movement. You are uniquely positioned to raise awareness about childhood hunger, advance proven solutions to reduce food insecurity and institute policies that bring about lasting change.

We look forward to being your partner throughout this journey,



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, caregivers 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 5 kids in New York State faces hunger.**¹

Impact on Child Food Insecurity



19%

of children face hunger in
New York State¹

The Solution: Addressing Summer Hunger



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 by the federal government 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 permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program starting in 2024, which will provide all kids eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with a grocery benefit over the summer break.

Non-congregate Meals

At congregate meal sites, children and young people must eat their meal at the site location. If more than one meal service is offered, that means they would need to be present at the site for both breakfast and lunch. This model works great for summer camps and programs offering enrichment and childcare. However, it can be a great burden for children of working families, those without access to reliable transportation, and families who live a significant distance from the nearest meal site.

The non-congregate meal option now available in rural areas allows for meals to be taken to-go. Depending on what is allowable in their state, operators can provide individual or multiple days worth of meals for families. Meals can be either delivered directly to families' doors or picked up at a central location. By offering delivered and to-go style meals, we can overcome transportation, safety, and accessibility barriers and meet the nutritional needs of children and young people during the summer – setting them up for school year success!

Summer EBT

Summer EBT, is a new, permanent, nationwide program that provides children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with grocery benefits over the summer break. The benefits are \$40 per child per summer month, \$120 per child for the full summer and will remain available and accessible for 122 days after the date they were issued. After 122 days, all unused benefits are removed from the card. The permanent program is based on the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children initiative, which demonstrated positive impacts for children, including increasing consumption of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy and reducing very low food security by a third. USDA pays for 100% of the benefits, while the administrative costs are shared between USDA and the state. Summer EBT is estimated to bring in over \$200 million dollars to the state.²

2,000,000
The approximate
number of New
York State
students eligible
for Summer EBT²

The Solution: Strengthening School and Community Meal Programs



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, schools can implement the model that works best for their community. Many schools in New York offer Breakfast After the Bell to remove stigma and ensure all children have access to a nutritious breakfast. Thanks to leadership from the Governor and State Legislature, 88% of students in New York State have access to a no-cost school meal since the passage of the CEP subsidy in 2023.

While the federal Keep Kids Fed Act authorized a temporary additional per meal reimbursement, many school nutrition programs are facing challenges including staffing shortages, turnover among critical leaders, supply chain challenges, school morale and strained budgets. It is critical to promote and educate communities about the availability of school meals and the essential role of school nutrition personnel. School nutrition programs are reimbursed for each meal that they serve, so when more students participate, it helps strengthen the program for the entire school community.

2,095,741

**The number of
New York State
students eligible
for free and
reduced-price
school meals in
SY23-24³**

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 USDA also helps schools and community organizations save money and redirect funds into additional programming or staffing.

The Solution: Strengthening School and Community Meal Programs



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 FY19, 945,051 kids in New York State were eligible for SNAP.⁴ 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, but many of these flexibilities have or are going away, which means families may have more difficulties accessing or maintaining their SNAP benefits. 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 FY19,
95%
of SNAP eligible
children were
participating in the
program⁴

WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) assists low-income pregnant and postpartum 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 has taken the steps necessary to modernize the WIC program. Taking lessons learned from the pandemic, the use of waivers enhanced remote services meaning WIC online ordered improved. 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 2021,
76.5%
of eligible infants
and
46.3%
of eligible children
(ages 1-4) were
participating in
WIC in New York
State⁵

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 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.
- Support proposals to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for New Yorkers.

Poverty Alleviation

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

Summer EBT

- Appropriate the necessary administrative match funds to continue Summer EBT in 2025.
- Collaborate with OTDA leadership to ensure smooth, successful program operation.
- Ensure that all families who qualify can access the program quickly and efficiently.
- Actively promote and provide clear participation guidance to eligible families.
- Establish a statewide or centralized database system and processes for rapid eligibility determination to distribute benefits more efficiently.

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.



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 and Puerto Rico. 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 technical assistance, funding and strategic resources to expand school meal programs, and enroll eligible families in federal programs such as SNAP and Summer EBT.



CREATE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

No Kid Hungry works with corporate and philanthropic supporters like **Citi, Arby's Foundation, Warner Bros. Discovery, and Williams Sonoma** 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.**

Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County¹



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Albany	16%
Allegany	18%
Bronx	33%
Broome	20%
Cattaraugus	19%
Cayuga	16%
Chautauqua	20%
Chemung	19%
Chenango	18%
Clinton	16%
Columbia	15%
Cortland	15%
Delaware	19%
Dutchess	12%
Erie	18%
Essex	16%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Franklin	20%
Fulton	18%
Genesee	13%
Greene	15%
Hamilton	15%
Herkimer	16%
Jefferson	19%
Kings	25%
Lewis	17%
Livingston	14%
Madison	14%
Monroe	19%
Montgomery	19%
Nassau	7%
New York	18%
Niagara	18%

Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County¹



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Oneida	18%
Onondaga	18%
Ontario	13%
Orange	15%
Orleans	18%
Oswego	20%
Otsego	15%
Putnam	7%
Queens	19%
Rensselaer	16%
Richmond	14%
Rockland	16%
St. Lawrence	19%
Saratoga	9%
Schenectady	16%
Schoharie	14%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Schuyler	17%
Seneca	17%
Steuben	16%
Suffolk	8%
Sullivan	20%
Tioga	14%
Tompkins	13%
Ulster	15%
Warren	13%
Washington	16%
Wayne	14%
Westchester	11%
Wyoming	14%
Yates	16%
State Total	19%

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 747,520 kids face hunger in New York State.¹ 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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¹. Dewey, A., Harris, V., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2024). [Map the Meal Gap 2024](https://map.feedingamerica.org/): An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2022. Feeding America. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>

². Estimated Number of Summer EBT Eligible Children and Total Benefit Amounts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sebt/estimated-children-eligible>

³. Number of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals: State Data for SY23-24. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Data Report is provided directly to Share Our Strength.

⁴. SNAP Participation Rates. Analysis conducted by Mathematica Policy Research on behalf of Share Our Strength. Published data report will be released in early 2025.

⁵. Kessler, C., Bryant, A., Munkacsy, K., & Farson Gray, K. (2023). National- and State- level estimates of WIC eligibility and WIC program reach in 2021. U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/wic-eligibility-report-vol2-appendices-2021.pdf>