



Food and Nutrition Service

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For three decades, FNS has led America's fight against hunger and provided good nutrition through high-integrity programs delivered by State and local partnerships. The mission of the Food and Nutrition Service is to reduce hunger and food insecurity by ensuring better access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education for children and needy families.

Each day, one out of every five Americans receives nutrition assistance through one or more of the 15 FNS programs, including food stamps, school meals, and the WIC program. The Food and Nutrition Service works in public and private partnerships with State and local governments and non-profit organizations. States, counties, cities, and school systems administer distribution of food benefits and determine eligibility for millions of children and families. Thousands of local food pantries, soup kitchens, churches, and social service agencies provide direct nutrition assistance to hungry people with FNS support.

Congress appropriated \$36.5 billion in Fiscal Year 1999 for the Food and Nutrition Service to serve more than 40 million Americans through nutrition assistance programs.

Food Stamp Program: First Line of Defense Against Hunger

The Food Stamp Program is the first line of defense against hunger for millions of families. The program provides benefits monthly for eligible participants to purchase approved food items at approved food stores. Eligibility and allotments are based on household size, income, assets, and other factors. Over half of all participants are children; one out of six is a low-income older adult.

Food stamps help families buy more food and better food, increasing available nutrients like protein, vitamins, and essential minerals by 300 percent to 900 percent. Nutrition provided by food stamps is essential to the success of welfare reform, providing a national safety net as families make the transition from welfare to self sufficiency. It also enables States to experiment more boldly with welfare policies, knowing that the Food Stamp Program is there to provide a steady base that serves the basic needs of low-income households.

The welfare reform law of 1996 eliminated food stamp benefits for many legal immigrants, and restricted benefits for many able-bodied adults without dependents. Congress subsequently restored benefits for many children and elderly immigrants, and for some specific groups. Local food stamp offices can provide information about eligibility, and

USDA operates a toll-free number (800-221-5689) for people to receive information about the Food Stamp Program.

As the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance programs, the Food Stamp Program receives special attention because of its size and importance. Program integrity is a high priority. USDA carefully screens food retailers who apply to accept food stamps, reviews records regularly, and quickly removes retailers who violate regulations. State food stamp agencies oversee the authorization of individual stamp recipients and revoke the eligibility of those who break the program's rules.

By Congressional mandate, States must convert food stamp coupon programs to an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card system by 2002. Thirty-six States plus the District of Columbia already use EBT for at least some food stamp benefits. More than half of all food stamp benefits are now distributed by EBT.

EBT customers use a plastic card similar to a bank debit card to buy groceries by transferring funds from a food stamp benefit account to a retailer's account. EBT electronically records every transaction, providing a useful tool to help identify fraud, and saving costs for retailers, banks, and government.

The Food Stamp Program currently serves almost 19 million people a month. Monthly food benefits average about \$72 per person. The Federal government pays for the benefits and shares administrative expenses with the States. Congress appropriated \$21.2 billion for the Food Stamp Program in FY 1999.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Healthier Mothers and Babies

WIC's goal is to improve the health of low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding new mothers, and infants and children up to 5 years old. WIC provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, and access to health services. Participants redeem vouchers for specific foods that contain nutrients frequently lacking in the diet of low-income mothers and children. Participation averages more than 7.3 million people a month. The average food benefit per person is more than \$32 a month. The FY 1999 appropriation for WIC is \$3.924 billion.

The WIC program is effective in improving the health of mothers and their infants. A study of WIC and Medicaid costs in five States showed that women who participate in WIC during pregnancy have lower Medicaid costs for themselves and their babies in the first weeks after birth than do women who do not participate. In the States studied, Medicaid savings ranged from \$1.77 to \$3.13 for each dollar spent in prenatal WIC benefits.

The **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** gives WIC families increased access to fresh produce by providing coupons for fresh fruits and vegetables that can be used at authorized farmers' markets. Congress made \$10 million available for the FMNP under the FY 1999 WIC appropriation, plus another \$5 million dependent on WIC participation.

Child Nutrition Programs: Eating to Learn, Learning to Eat

School meals and child nutrition assistance programs improve the diets of more than 26 million children every school day. But major nutritional challenges remain. One out of every four children is considered obese, and 90 percent consume fat above recommended levels.

Healthy alternatives like school lunch, school breakfast, and the newly expanded afterschool nutrition programs are vital to the fight for better nutrition and health. Congress in 1998 expanded reimbursement to provide snacks for educational and enrichment afterschool care programs for at-risk children through age 18. Funding for snacks in afterschool programs is provided through the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The National School Lunch Program provides funding and commodity foods to non-profit food services in elementary and secondary schools, and in residential child care facilities. Every school day, more than 26 million children in more than 96,000 schools across the country eat lunch through the National School Lunch Program. More than half of these children qualify to receive their meals free or at a reduced price. School meals must meet the Federal nutritional standards of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Congress appropriated \$5.38 billion for the school lunch program for FY 1999.

The School Breakfast Program serves some 7.1 million children in more than 71,000 schools every school day. As in the school lunch program, low-income children qualify to receive school breakfast free or at a reduced price. Schools are reimbursed for meals served, which must meet nutritional standards similar to the school lunch program. Studies have shown that students who eat breakfast perform better academically, have fewer behavior problems, and are tardy and absent less frequently than those who do not. Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion in FY 1999 for the School Breakfast Program.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program supplies commodity foods and reimburses for meals in child and adult day care centers, and family and group day care homes for children. This program provides meals to 2.6 million children and 58,000 adults each month. Congress appropriated \$1.61 billion for the CACFP in FY 1999. Congress also allocated \$3.7 million for the **Homeless Children Nutrition Program**, which provides meals for preschool-age children in emergency shelters.

The Summer Food Service Program bridges the nutrition gap when school is not in session, providing meals to more than 2 million low-income children during school vacation periods. The USDA reimburses sponsors such as local schools, governmental agencies, non-profit groups and residential camps for meals, which are served free of charge to participants. The FY 1999 Congressional appropriation is \$294 million.

The Special Milk Program furnishes milk to all children in approved schools, camps, and child care institutions that have no Federally supported meal program. It distributed 133 million half-pints of milk in 1998. Congress appropriated \$18.1 million for FY 1999.

Other FNS Programs: Strengthening the Nutritional Safety Net

- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** provides commodity foods to States for distribution to supplement food stocks of households, soup kitchens, and food banks. Congress appropriated \$45 million FY 1999 for food and support of distributing agencies.
- **The Commodity Supplemental Food Program** distributes food directly to women, infants, children and elderly, with food packages tailored to the nutritional needs of participants. More than 376,000 people participate monthly. For FY 1999, Congress appropriated \$86 million.
- **The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations** supplies commodity foods to low-income families who live on Indian reservations and to Native Americans living near reservations. More than 124,000 people participate each month. The FY 1999 Congressional appropriation is \$75 million.
- **Food assistance for disaster relief** is furnished by FNS to State relief agencies and organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army in times of emergency such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and winter storms. Depending on the nature and severity of the crisis, FNS may provide commodity foods for distribution to shelters and mass feeding sites; or commodity food packages for distribution directly to families in need; or approve issuance of emergency food stamps. Tens of thousands of survivors of natural disasters are fed by FNS and its partners every year.
- **Team Nutrition** is the FNS nutrition education program, which furnishes information and materials to schools, technical assistance to food service staffs, and educational materials to programs like WIC and food stamps. Congress appropriated \$10 million for FY 1999.
- **The Nutrition Program for the Elderly** distributes cash and commodity foods to States for meals served in senior citizen centers or delivered by meals-on-wheels programs. USDA provides reimbursement for more than 20 million meals a month. Congress appropriated \$140 million for the program for FY 1999.
- **Nutrition Assistance Programs in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands** provide block grant cash and coupons to participants rather than food stamps or commodities. For FY 1999, Congress appropriated \$1.24 billion to Puerto Rico and \$10.4 million to the Pacific Islands.

For more information on the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and its programs, contact the FNS Public Information Staff. Call 703-305-2286, or write to 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Fact sheets and program information are available on the FNS home page at www.usda.gov/fcs. FNS was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service.



Food Stamp Program

1. What is the Food Stamp Program?

The Food Stamp Program helps put food on the table for some 8.3 million households and 20 million individuals each day. It provides low-income households with coupons or electronic benefits they can use like cash at most grocery stores to ensure that they have access to a healthy diet. The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of the Federal food assistance programs. It provided more than \$19.5 billion in benefits in 1997.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the Food Stamp Program at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies administer the program at State and local levels, including determination of eligibility and allotments.

2. Who is eligible to receive food stamps?

Households must meet eligibility requirements and provide proof of their statements about household circumstances. U.S. citizens and some aliens who are admitted for permanent residency may qualify. The welfare reform act of 1996 ended eligibility for many immigrants, and placed time limits on benefits for unemployed, able-bodied, childless adults.

To participate in the Food Stamp Program:

- Households may have no more than \$2,000 in countable resources, such as a bank account (\$3,000 if at least one person in the household is age 60 or older). Certain resources are not counted, such as a home and lot. Special rules are used to determine the resource value of vehicles owned by household members.
- The gross monthly income of most households must be 130 percent or less of the Federal poverty guidelines (currently \$1,479 per month for a family of three in most places). Gross income includes all cash payments to the household, with a few exceptions specified in the law or the program regulations.
- Net monthly income must be 100 percent or less of Federal poverty guidelines (currently \$1,138 per month for a household of three in most places). Net income is figured by adding all of a household's gross income, and then taking a number of approved deductions for child care, some shelter costs and other expenses.

Households with an elderly or disabled member are subject only to the net income test.

- Most able-bodied adult applicants must meet certain work requirements.
- All-household members must provide a Social Security number or apply for one.

Federal poverty guidelines are established by the Office of Management and Budget, and are updated annually by the Department of Health and Human Services.

3. How is each household's food stamp allotment determined?

Households are issued a monthly allotment of food stamps based on the Thrifty Food Plan, a low-cost model diet plan. The TFP is based on National Academy of Sciences' Recommended Dietary Allowances, and on food choices of low-income households.

An individual household's food stamp allotment is equal to the maximum allotment for that household's size, less 30 percent of the household's net income. Households with no countable income receive the maximum allotment (\$329 per month in Fiscal Year 1999 for a household of three people). Allotment levels are higher for Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, reflecting higher food prices in those areas.

4. What is the average benefit from the Food Stamp Program?

The average monthly benefit was more than \$71 per person and more than \$172 per household for FY 1998. See the chart on Page 5 for a listing of maximum benefits available to households of various sizes.

5. What foods are eligible for purchase with food stamps?

Households can use food stamps to buy any food or food product for human consumption, and seeds and plants for use in home gardens to produce food.

Households CANNOT use food stamps to buy:

- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco
- Lunch counter items or foods to be eaten in the store
- Vitamins or medicines
- Pet foods
- Any non-food items (except seeds and plants)

Restaurants can be authorized to accept food stamps from qualified homeless, elderly, or disabled people in exchange for low-cost meals. Food stamps cannot be exchanged for cash.

6. What measures are taken to prevent food stamp fraud?

In a program as large as the Food Stamp Program, it may be inevitable that some people will try to cheat the system. USDA is committed to absolute integrity in all of its nutrition assistance programs, and has put special emphasis on the Food Stamp Program because of its size and importance. Penalties for misusing program benefits can include removal from the program, fines and jail.

The Department has already taken a number of steps to make it easier to catch and punish people who misuse food stamp benefits. The welfare reform act of 1996 included several provisions, originally proposed by USDA, to more closely scrutinize food retailers who apply for food stamp authorization, and to more closely monitor retailers once they are participating in the program. Retailers who violate program rules can face heavy fines, removal from the program, or jail. Individual food stamp recipients who sell their benefits can also be removed from the program.

One of the most promising developments in the fight against food stamp fraud has been the increasing use of electronic benefit transfer -- EBT -- to issue food stamp benefits. EBT uses a plastic card similar to a bank card to transfer funds from a food stamp benefits account to a retailer's account. With an EBT card, food stamp customers pay for groceries without any paper coupons changing hands. EBT eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction that makes fraud easier to detect.

Most States are now moving in the direction of using EBT as an alternative for food stamp issuance, and in some cases for other programs such as USDA's Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, the Federal block-grant program operated by the Department of Health and Human Services to provide cash assistance to needy families. As of September 1998, there are 35 States (including the District of Columbia) using EBT in some form for food stamps, and 22 States are issuing all of their food stamp benefits via EBT. All other States are in various stages of planning for EBT. Several States have formed consortiums for joint EBT projects. The welfare reform act of 1996 requires all States to convert to EBT issuance for their food stamp programs by 2002.

7. What keeps unqualified people from getting food stamps?

As part of the commitment to program integrity, USDA works closely with the States to ensure that they issue their benefits correctly. State workers carefully evaluate each application to determine eligibility and the appropriate level of benefits. USDA monitors the accuracy of eligibility and benefit determinations. States that fail to meet standards for issuing their food stamp benefits correctly can be sanctioned by USDA, and those that exceed the standard for payment accuracy can be eligible for additional funding support. People who receive food stamp benefits in error must repay any benefits for which they did not qualify.

8. When did the program begin?

The Food Stamp Program traces its earliest origins back to the Food Stamp Plan, which helped needy families in the Depression era. The modern program began as a pilot project in 1961 and was authorized as a permanent program in 1964. Expansion of the program occurred most dramatically after 1974, when Congress required all States to offer food stamps to low-income households. The Food Stamp Act of 1977 made significant changes in program regulations, tightening eligibility requirements and administration, and removing the requirement that food stamps be purchased by participants.

Program growth has continued since then, reaching an all-time high of almost 28 million in March of 1994 before declining to the current participation level of about 20 million. Participation generally peaks in periods of high unemployment, inflation and recession.

9. What are some characteristics of food stamp households?

Based on a study of data gathered in Fiscal Year 1996:

- Just over half of all participants are children (18 or younger).
- 60 percent of food stamp households include children.
- 7 percent of all participants are elderly (age 60 or over).
- 90 percent of all benefits go to households with children or elderly persons.
- 69 percent of households with children were headed by a single parent, most of whom were women.
- The average household size is 2.5 persons.
- The average gross monthly income per food stamp household is \$528.
- Among adult participants, women outnumber men by more than 2 to 1.
- 41 percent of participants are white; 34 percent are African-American; 19 percent are Hispanic.

10. Don't some territories, such as Puerto Rico, use a different version of the Food Stamp Program?

In Puerto Rico, the Food Stamp Program was replaced in 1982 by a block grant program. The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands and American Samoa in the Pacific also operate under block grants. The territories now provide cash and coupons to participants rather than food stamps or food distribution. The grant can also be used for administrative expenses or special projects related to food production and distribution.

Congress appropriated \$1.20 billion for the 1998 Puerto Rico NAP block grant, up from \$1.17 billion in FY 1997. For the Pacific Islands, the block grant appropriations totaled \$1.17 billion for FY 1998.

11. How many people get food stamps, and at what cost?

During the first nine months of Fiscal Year 1998 (October 1997 through June 1998), the Food Stamp Program served an average of 20.09 million people each month. Participation was 19.3 million in June, 1998. The Food Stamp Program appropriation

was \$25.1 billion for FY 1998, compared to \$26.3 billion in FY 1997.

By comparison:

- In 1995, the program served 26.6 million people a month, and cost \$24.6 billion.
- In 1990, it served 20.1 million people and cost \$15.5 billion.
- In 1985, it served 19.9 million people and cost \$11.7 billion.
- In 1980, it served 21.1 million people and cost \$9.2 billion.
- In 1975, it served 17.1 million people and cost \$4.6 billion.
- In 1970, it served 4.3 million people and cost \$577 million.
- The program's all-time high participation was 27.97 million people in March of 1994.

The following chart lists the current gross and net income eligibility standards for the continental United States, Guam and the Virgin Islands, effective October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999. Eligibility levels are slightly higher for Alaska and Hawaii.

Household size	Gross monthly income (130 percent of poverty)	Net monthly income (100 percent of poverty)
1	873	671
2	1,176	905
3	1,479	1,138
4	1,783	1,371
5	2,086	1,605
6	2,389	1,838
7	2,693	2,071
8	2,996	2,305
Each additional member	+304	+234

The current maximum allotment levels for the continental United States, in effect from October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999 are:

Household size	Maximum allotment level
1	\$125
2	230
3	329
4	419
5	497
6	597
7	659
8	754
Each additional member	+94



National School Lunch Program

1. What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 96,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches and after-school snacks to more than 27 million children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Food and Nutrition Service, administers the program at the Federal level. At the State level, the NSLP is usually administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with local school districts.

2. How does the National School Lunch Program work?

School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and donated commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced-price lunches to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in after-school educational or enrichment programs.

3. What are the nutritional requirements for school lunch?

School meals must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories.

Schools have the option to choose one of four systems for their menu planning: Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, the traditional meal pattern, and the enhanced meal pattern. Both Nutrient Standard and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning systems base their planning on a computerized nutritional analysis of the week's menu. The traditional and enhanced meal pattern options base

their menu planning on minimum component quantities of meat or meat alternate; vegetables and fruits; grains and breads; and milk.

School lunches must meet Federal nutrition requirements, but decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by local school food authorities. USDA has made a commitment to improve the nutritional quality of all school meals. The Department works with state and local school food authorities through the Team Nutrition initiative to teach and motivate children to make healthy food choices, and to provide school food service staff with training and technical support.

4. How do children qualify for free and reduced-price meals?

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the National School Lunch Program. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents. (For the period July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$21,710 for a family of four; 185 percent is \$30,895.)

Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay a full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price meals, but most operate their meal services as non-profit programs.

Congress in 1998 expanded reimbursement for snacks served to children in afterschool educational and enrichment programs to include children up to 18 years of age. Afterschool snacks are reimbursed on the same income eligibility basis as school meals. Programs that operate in areas where more than 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals serve all their snacks for free, and are reimbursed at the free rate.

5. How many schools take part in the school lunch program?

More than 96,000 schools and residential child care institutions participate in the National School Lunch Program. Public schools or non-profit private schools of high school grade or under, and residential child care institutions are eligible. The program is available in almost 99 percent of all public schools, and in many private schools as well. About 92 percent of all students nationwide have access to meals through the NSLP. On a typical day, about 58 percent of the school children to whom the lunch program is available participate.

6. How much reimbursement do schools get?

Most of the support USDA provides to schools in the National School Lunch Program comes in the form of a cash reimbursement for each meal served. The current (July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000) basic cash reimbursement rates are:

Free meals:	\$1.98
Reduced-price meals:	\$1.58
Paid meals:	19 cents
Free snacks:	54 cents
Reduced-price snacks:	27 cents
Paid snacks:	5 cents

Higher reimbursement rates are in effect for Alaska and Hawaii, and for some schools with high percentages of low-income children.

7. What other support do schools get from USDA?

In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled by law to receive commodity foods, called "entitlement" foods, at a value of 14.75 cents for each meal served. Schools can also get "bonus" commodities as they are available from surplus agricultural stocks. About 17 percent of the dollar value of the food that goes on the table in school lunch programs is provided directly by USDA as commodities. Schools purchase the remaining 83 percent from their own vendors.

Team Nutrition also provides schools with technical training and assistance to help school food service staffs prepare healthy meals, and with nutrition education to help children understand the link between diet and health.

8. What types of foods do schools get from USDA?

States select entitlement foods for their schools from a list of more than 60 different kinds of food purchased by USDA and offered through the school lunch program. The list includes fresh, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables; meats; fruit juices; vegetable shortening; peanut products; vegetable oil; and flour and other grain products.

Bonus foods are offered only as they become available through agricultural surplus. The variety of both entitlement and bonus commodities schools can get from USDA depends on quantities available and market prices.

USDA has placed special emphasis on improving the quality of commodities donated to the school lunch program, including a great increase in the amount and variety of fresh produce available to schools. A very successful pilot project between USDA and the Department of Defense has helped provide schools with fresh produce purchased through DoD. USDA has also worked with schools to help promote connections with local small farmers who may be able to provide fresh produce.

9. How many children have been served over the years?

The National School Lunch Act in 1946 created the modern school lunch program, though USDA had provided funds and food to schools for many years prior to that. In signing the 1946 act, President Harry S Truman said, "Nothing is more important in our

national life than the welfare of our children, and proper nourishment comes first in attaining this welfare."

About 7.1 million children were participating in the National School Lunch Program by the end of its first year, 1946-47. By 1970, 22 million children were participating, and by 1980 the figure was nearly 27 million. In 1990, an average of 24 million children ate school lunch every day. In Fiscal Year 1997, more than 26 million children each day got their lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Since the modern program began, more than 160 billion lunches have been served.

10. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$5.26 billion for the school lunch program for Fiscal Year 1999. The 1998 appropriation was \$5.13 billion.

By comparison, the lunch program's total cost in 1947 was \$70 million; in 1950, \$119.7 million; 1960, \$225.8 million; 1970, \$565.5 million; 1975, \$1.7 billion; 1980, \$3.2 billion; 1985, \$3.4 billion; and 1990, \$3.7 billion.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information on FNS programs is available on the World Wide Web at www.fns.usda.gov

August 1999



The School Breakfast Program

1. What is the School Breakfast Program?

Some 7.4 million children in more than 71,000 schools and institutions start their day with the School Breakfast Program, a Federal entitlement program that provides States with cash assistance for non-profit breakfast programs in schools and residential child care institutions.

Teachers have reported that their students are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast. Studies support that notion. A 1998 Tufts University statement on the link between nutrition and cognitive development in children cited findings from a Massachusetts research project: "Children who participated in the School Breakfast Program were shown to have significantly higher standardized achievement test scores than eligible non-participants. Children getting school breakfast also had significantly reduced absence and tardiness rates."

Two other recent studies, one by the State of Minnesota and one by Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital, found that students who ate school breakfast had improved math grades, reduced hyperactivity, decreased absences and tardiness rates, and improved psycho-social behaviors. A 1989 study published in the American Journal of Diseases of Children found that "participation in the School Breakfast Program is associated with significant improvements in academic functioning among low-income elementary school children."

The School Breakfast Program began as a pilot project in 1966, and was made permanent in 1975. The program is administered at the Federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State education agencies and local school food authorities administer the program at the local level.

Recognizing the importance of a nutritious breakfast, USDA has actively promoted the School Breakfast Program, and at the same time has made a commitment to improve the nutritional quality of all school meals. Regulations require that all school meals meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In addition, breakfasts must provide one-fourth of the daily recommended levels for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C and calories.

USDA continues to work with State and local school food authorities through its Team Nutrition initiative to teach and motivate children to make healthy food choices, and to provide school food service professional staffs with technical training and support.

2. What schools and institutions can participate?

Public schools or non-profit private schools of high school grade or under, and residential child care institutions are eligible to participate in the School Breakfast Program.

3. Who gets free or reduced-price breakfasts?

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the School Breakfast Program. However, children whose families meet income criteria may receive free or reduced-price breakfasts. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. (For the period July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$21,710 for a family of four; 185 percent is \$30,895.) Children from families over 185 percent of poverty pay a full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent.

4. How do schools get reimbursed for meals?

Participating schools and institutions must serve breakfasts that meet Federal nutrition standards, and must provide free and reduced-price breakfasts to eligible children. The Federal government reimburses the schools for each meal that meets program nutritional requirements. School food authorities submit a claim to their State agency for meals served. USDA reimburses the State, which in turn reimburses the local school food authority. For school year 1999-2000, the Federal government will reimburse school food authorities at the following rates:

\$1.09 per meal for free breakfasts.

79 cents for reduced-price breakfasts.

21 cents for paid breakfasts.

Schools may qualify for higher "severe-need" reimbursements if a specified percentage of their meals are served free or at a reduced price. Severe-need payments are up to 21 cents higher than the normal reimbursements for free and reduced-price breakfasts. About 65 percent of the breakfasts served in the School Breakfast Program receive the severe-need subsidy. Reimbursement payments for all meals are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.

Schools may charge no more than 30 cents for a reduced-price breakfast. Schools set their own prices for breakfasts served to students who pay the full meal price, though they must operate their meal services as non-profit programs.

5. How many children participate? At what cost?

For Fiscal Year 1999, Congress appropriated \$1.34 billion for the School Breakfast Program, up from \$1.29 billion in FY 1998. In FY 1998, an average of 7.2 million

children participated every day. That number grew to 7.4 million in the early months of FY 1999. Of those, 6.1 million received their meals free or at a reduced price.

By comparison, participation and cost in previous years:

- 1995: 6.3 million children at a cost of \$1.05 billion
- 1990: 4.1 million children at a cost of \$596.2 million
- 1985: 3.4 million children at a cost of \$379.3 million
- 1980: 3.6 million children at a cost of \$287.8 million
- 1975: 1.8 million children at a cost of \$86.1 million
- 1970: 500,000 children at a cost of \$10.8 million

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Communications Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Information on FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>

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Special Milk Program

1. What is the Special Milk Program?

The Special Milk Program (SMP) provides milk to children in schools and child care institutions that do not participate in other Federal child nutrition meal service programs. The program reimburses schools for the milk they serve.

Schools in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs may also participate in the SMP to provide milk to children in half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs where children do not have access to the school meal programs.

Begun in 1955, the Special Milk Program is administered at the Federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Food and Nutrition Service, formerly the Food and Consumer Service.

2. Who may participate?

Any child at a participating school or kindergarten program can get milk through the SMP. Children may buy milk or receive it free, depending on the school's choice of program options.

3. Who is eligible for free milk?

When local school officials offer free milk under the program, any child from a family that meets income guidelines for free meals and milk is eligible. Each child's family must apply annually for free milk eligibility.

4. How does the SMP operate?

Participating schools and institutions receive reimbursement from USDA for each half-pint of milk served. They must operate their milk programs on a non-profit basis. They agree to use the Federal reimbursement to reduce the selling price of milk to all children.

5. What is the Federal reimbursement?

The Federal reimbursement for each half-pint of milk sold to children in school year 1999-2000 is 12.75 cents. For children who receive their milk free, the USDA reimburses schools the net purchase price of the milk.

6. What types of milk can be offered?

Schools or institutions may choose unflavored or flavored whole milk, low-fat milk, skim milk, and cultured buttermilk that meet State and local standards. All milk should contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the Food and Drug Administration.

7. How much milk is served annually in the Special Milk Program?

In 1998, more than 133 million half-pints of milk were served through the Special Milk Program. Expansion of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, which include milk, has led to a substantial reduction in the SMP since its peak in the late 1960's. The program served nearly 3 billion pints of milk in 1969; 1.8 billion in 1980; and 181 million in 1990.

8. How many institutions participate in the Special Milk Program?

In 1998, more than 8,000 schools and residential child care institutions participated, along with 1,400 summer camps and 500 non-residential child care institutions.

9. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$17.2 million for the Special Milk Program in Fiscal Year 1999, down from \$18.2 million in FY 1998. By comparison, the program cost \$101.2 million in 1970; \$145.2 million in 1980; and \$19.2 million in 1990.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286; or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information about FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.fns.usda.gov.

August 1999



Child and Adult Care Food Program

1. What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a Federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks in child and adult day care facilities.

CACFP reimburses participating day care operators for their meal costs and provides them with USDA commodity food and nutrition education materials. The program generally operates in child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, family and group day care homes, and some adult day care centers. Day care providers in the CACFP must serve meals that meet federal guidelines, and must offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible people.

First authorized as a pilot project in 1968, the program was formerly known as the Child Care Food Program. It was made a permanent program in 1978, and the name was changed in 1989 to reflect the addition of an adult component. CACFP is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. State agencies or FNS regional offices oversee the program at the local level.

2. What types of institutions provide benefits?

- **Child Care Centers.** Includes licensed or approved non-residential, public or private non-profit child care centers; and Head Start centers, settlement houses, and neighborhood centers. For-profit child care centers may also participate if they meet certain criteria for serving low-income children.
- **Family Day Care Homes.** Generally, family day care homes provide care in a licensed or approved private home for a small group of children. Family or group day care homes must be administered by a sponsoring organization that maintains Federal and State regulations, and prepares a monthly food reimbursement claim. The sponsor also receives Federal reimbursement for administrative expenses, based on the number of homes it sponsors.
- **Adult Day Care Centers.** Licensed day care centers that are operated by public agencies for functionally impaired adults may receive cash reimbursements and commodity foods under the adult component of the CACFP. Private organizations,

both non-profit and for-profit, are also eligible if they meet certain criteria for serving low-income people.

3. Who gets free or reduced-price meals?

Most child and adult care centers include meals as a part of their fees. Centers that participate in CACFP are reimbursed for meals based on whether the children or adults in their care are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or pay the full price. Those from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level may qualify for free meals; those from families with income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level may qualify for reduced-price meals; and those from families with income above 185 percent of the poverty level pay full price. Currently, for a family of four, the poverty level is \$16,450; 130 percent of the poverty level is \$21,385 a year; 185 percent is \$30,433 a year.

For family day care homes, Congress instituted a two-tier system of reimbursements under the welfare reform act of 1996. Under the new system, which went into effect July 1, 1997, day care providers located in low-income areas, or whose own households are low income, are reimbursed at a single rate (tier 1 reimbursement). Other providers will be reimbursed at a lower rate (tier 2 reimbursement) unless they choose to have their sponsoring organizations identify income-eligible children through use of income applications similar to those used in day care centers. Meals served to such income-eligible children will be reimbursed at the higher tier 1 level.

4. How much reimbursement does the Federal government provide?

Child and adult day care centers receive reimbursement based on whether the children or adults in their care qualify for free or reduced-price meals, or pay the full meal price. Centers are reimbursed at the following rates:

	Free meals	Reduced price	Paid meals
Breakfast	\$1.0725	77.25 cents	20 cents
Lunch/Supper	\$1.9425	\$1.5425	18 cents
Supplement (snack)	53.25 cents	26.75 cents	4 cents

Family day care homes are reimbursed at the following rates:

	Tier 2 rate	Tier 1 rate
Breakfast	34 cents	90 cents
Lunch/Supper	\$1.00	\$1.65
Supplement (snack)	13 cents	49 cents

Higher rates apply in Alaska and Hawaii. These rates do not include the average 14.75 cents value of commodities (or cash in lieu of commodities) that institutions receive as additional assistance for each lunch or supper served to program participants.

Family day care home sponsors also receive reimbursement for their administrative costs. The current administrative rates per home per month are:

- 1 - 50 homes: \$76**
- 51 - 200 homes: \$58**
- 201 - 1,000 homes: \$45**
- Each home over 1,000: \$39**

5. How much does the Child and Adult Care Food Program cost, and how many people does it serve?

Congress appropriated \$1.5 billion for the CACFP in Fiscal Year 1998, compared to \$1.6 billion in FY 1997. In March 1998, CACFP provided meals to 2.6 million children and 58,000 adults. In June, 1997, it served nearly 2.2 million children and more than 58,000 adults.

By comparison, participation and costs from earlier years:

- 1996:** 2.4 million children and 47,000 adults participated at a cost of \$1.5 billion.
- 1995:** 2.3 million children and 44,000 adults participated at a cost of \$1.5 billion.
- 1990:** 1.5 million children and 18,000 adults participated at a cost of \$812.9 million
- 1985:** 1 million children participated at a cost of \$452.1 million.
- 1980:** 663,000 children participated at a cost of \$236.4 million.
- 1975:** 375,000 children participated at a cost of \$51 million.

6. What is the Homeless Children Nutrition Program?

The Homeless Children Nutrition Program is designed to provide free food service throughout the year to homeless children under the age of 6 in emergency shelters. Sponsoring organizations are reimbursed for the meals that they serve. First established as a demonstration project by the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 1989, the Homeless Children Nutrition Program was made permanent by the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994. A total of 86 sponsoring organizations operate the program in 117 shelters, providing meals to more than 2,500 preschool-age children every month.

Public and private nonprofit organizations that operate emergency shelters may participate in the Homeless Children Nutrition Program, but they may operate no more than five food service sites and may feed no more than 300 children per day at each site. Sponsors are reimbursed at a rate of \$1.9425 for each lunch or supper served; \$1.0725 for each breakfast served; and 53.25 cents for each supplement (snack).

For FY 1998, Congress appropriated \$3.4 million for the Homeless Children Nutrition Program. For 1997, the appropriation was \$3.1 million.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. FNS was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information on FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/fcs, and will be available soon on a new web site: www.usda.gov/fns

July 1998



The Summer Food Service Program

1. What is the Summer Food Service Program?

The Summer Food Service Program provides free, nutritious meals to low-income children during school vacations. The SFSP served nearly 2.3 million children a day at more than 29,000 sites across the country during the summer of 1998.

2. How does the program operate?

The program is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (formerly the Food and Consumer Service), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. State education agencies administer most programs at the State level, but other State agencies may also be designated. Food and Nutrition Service regional offices administer a few state programs. Locally, it is operated by approved sponsors, which receive reimbursement from USDA through their State agencies for the meals they serve and for their documented operating costs. Sponsors can include units of local government, camps, nonprofit private organizations, and schools.

Sponsors provide meals at a central site, such as a school or community center. All meals are served free to eligible participants.

3. Where does the program operate?

States designate SFSP feeding sites as either "open" or "enrolled" sites. Open sites operate in low-income areas where half or more of the children are from households with income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty guideline (currently \$30,433 a year for a family of four). Meals are provided free to any child at the open site. Enrolled sites provide meals only to children who are enrolled in an activity program, such as a day camp, at the site. In order for the enrolled site to participate in the SFSP, at least half of the children enrolled must be from households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty level.

Homeless feeding sites that primarily serve homeless children may participate regardless of location, but only until July 1, 1999. At that time, these sites will be administered under USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program. Residential camps also may get reimbursement for eligible children through the SFSP.

4. Who is eligible to get meals?

Children 18 and under, and people over 18 who are determined by a State educational agency to be mentally or physically handicapped, and who participate in a school program for the mentally or physically handicapped, may receive meals through the Summer Food Service Program.

5. How many meals do participants receive each day?

At most sites, participants receive either one or two meals a day. Residential camps and sites that primarily serve children from migrant households may be approved to serve up to three meals per day.

6. How much reimbursement does the government provide?

For summer 1999, the maximum reimbursement rate per meal will be:

Breakfast	\$1.22
Lunch/supper	\$2.13
Snack/supplement	49 cents

Sponsors also receive Federal funds for administrative costs. Depending on the type of site, sponsors can receive up to 12 cents for each breakfast, 22.25 cents for each lunch or supper, and 6 cents for each snack. Reimbursement rates are higher in Alaska and Hawaii to reflect the higher cost of providing meals in those states.

7. How long has the SFSP been in existence?

SFSP was first created as part of a larger pilot program in 1968, and became a separate program in 1975. By 1980, 1.9 million children were participating. Participation dropped to 1.5 million in 1985, and grew to 1.7 million again by 1990. Nearly 2.3 million children participated at more than 29,000 sites in the summer of 1998.

8. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$294.4 million for SFSP in Fiscal Year 1999, up from \$272.3 million for the program in FY 1998. By comparison, the program cost \$110.1 million in 1980; \$111.5 million in 1985; \$163.6 million in 1990; and \$237 million in 1995.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information on FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/fcs

January 1999



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

1. What is WIC?

Food, nutrition counseling, and access to health services are provided to low-income women, infants, and children under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, popularly known as WIC.

WIC provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Established as a pilot program in 1972 and made permanent in 1974, WIC is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Formerly known as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, WIC's name was changed under the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994, in order to emphasize its role as a nutrition program.

Most State WIC programs provide vouchers that participants use at authorized food stores. A wide variety of State and local organizations cooperate in providing the food and health care benefits, and 46,000 merchants nationwide accept WIC vouchers.

WIC is effective in improving the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their infants. A 1990 study showed that women who participated in the program during their pregnancies had lower Medicaid costs for themselves and their babies than did women who did not participate. WIC participation was also linked with longer gestation periods, higher birthweights and lower infant mortality.

2. Who is eligible?

Pregnant or postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 are eligible. They must meet income guidelines, a State residency requirement, and be individually determined to be at "nutritional risk" by a health professional.

To be eligible on the basis of income, applicants' income must fall below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines (currently \$29,693 for a family of four). While most States use the maximum guidelines, States may set lower income limit standards. A

person who participates in certain other benefits programs such as the Food Stamp Program or Medicaid automatically meets the income eligibility requirement.

3. What is "nutritional risk"?

Two major types of nutritional risk are recognized for WIC eligibility:

- Medically-based risks (designated as "high priority") such as anemia, underweight, maternal age, history of pregnancy complications, or poor pregnancy outcomes.
- Diet-based risks such as inadequate dietary pattern.

Nutritional risk is determined by a health professional such as a physician, nutritionist, or nurse, and is based on Federal guidelines. This health screening is free to program applicants.

4. How many people does WIC serve?

More than 7 million people get WIC benefits each month. Participation has risen steadily since the program began. In 1974, the first year WIC was permanently authorized, 88,000 people participated. By 1980, participation was at 1.9 million; by 1985 it was 3.1 million; and by 1990 it was 4.5 million. Average monthly participation for Fiscal Year 1997 was 7.4 million.

Children have always been the largest category of WIC participants. Of the average 7.4 million people who received WIC benefits each month in FY 1997, 3.8 million were children, 1.9 million were infants, and 1.7 million were women.

5. What percent of eligible people does WIC reach?

About 45 percent of all babies born in the United States, and 98 percent of eligible infants, are estimated to be served by WIC. Of all eligible women, infants, and children, the program is estimated to serve about 60 percent.

6. Where is WIC available?

The WIC program is available in each State, the District of Columbia, 32 Indian Tribal Organizations, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam.

7. What food benefits do WIC participants receive?

WIC participants receive vouchers that allow them to purchase a monthly food package designed to supplement their diets. The foods provided are high in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. These are the nutrients frequently lacking in the diets of the program's target population. Different food packages are provided for different categories of participants.

WIC foods include iron-fortified infant formula and infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, and peanut butter or

dried beans or peas. Special therapeutic infant formulas are provided when prescribed by a physician for a specified medical condition.

8. Who gets first priority for participation?

WIC cannot serve all eligible people, so a system of priorities has been established for filling program openings. Once a local WIC agency has reached its maximum caseload, vacancies are filled in the order of the following priority levels:

- Pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and infants determined to be at nutritional risk because of a nutrition-related medical condition.
- Infants up to 6 months of age whose mothers were at nutritional risk during pregnancy.
- Children at nutritional risk because of a nutrition-related medical condition.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women and infants at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern.
- Children at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern.
- Non-breastfeeding, postpartum women at nutritional risk.

9. What is the WIC infant formula rebate system?

Mothers participating in WIC are encouraged to breastfeed their infants if possible, but State WIC agencies still provide formula for mothers who choose to use it. By negotiating rebates with formula manufacturers, States greatly increase the amount of formula they can provide, and help WIC funds go further to serve more people. States take bids or negotiate with manufacturers for the highest rebate for each can of formula purchased. For FY 1996, WIC state agencies spent \$620 million on infant formula, after rebate savings totaling \$1.18 billion.

10. What is the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program?

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), established in 1992, provides additional coupons to WIC participants that they can use to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. FMNP is funded through a Congressionally mandated set-aside in the WIC appropriation. The program has two goals: To provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared food, such as fruits and vegetables, from farmers' markets to WIC participants who are at nutritional risk; and to expand consumers' awareness and use of farmers' markets.

This program, operated in conjunction with the regular WIC Program, is offered in 32 States, the District of Columbia, and two Indian tribal organizations. State agencies may limit FMNP sales to specific foods that are locally grown to encourage participants to support the farmers in their own State. The amount set aside in the WIC appropriation for FMNP for Fiscal Year 1998 is \$12 million, up from \$6.75 million in FY 1997.

11. How much does WIC cost?

Congress appropriated \$3.9 billion for WIC in FY 1998, up from \$3.7 billion in 1997. The appropriation includes \$12 million for the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

By comparison, the WIC program cost \$10.4 million in 1974; \$727.7 million in 1980; \$1.5 billion in 1985; and \$2.1 billion in 1990.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information on FNS programs is available on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/fcs, and will soon be offered on a new web site at www.usda.gov/fns

February 1998



The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

1. What is The Emergency Food Assistance Program?

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with healthful foods at no cost. Under TEFAP, commodity foods are made available by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to States. States provide the food to local agencies for distribution to households for use in preparing meals for home consumption, or to organizations that prepare and provide meals for needy people. Recipients of food for home use must meet program eligibility criteria set by the States.

TEFAP is administered at the Federal level by the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. State agencies receive the food and supervise overall distribution. They select local organizations such as food banks which either directly distribute program commodities to households or use the commodities to prepare meals. These local organizations may also designate other groups such as food pantries and soup kitchens to perform these functions.

2. Who is eligible to get food?

- **Organizations** that receive food from their state agencies, and distribute commodities for household consumption or for use by organizations that provide prepared meals. These organizations can provide program foods for household use only to needy persons. Organizations that provide prepared meals are eligible to receive commodities if they can demonstrate that they serve predominantly needy persons.
- **Households** that meet state eligibility criteria. Each State sets criteria for determining what households are eligible to receive food for home consumption. Income standards may, at the State's discretion, include participation in other existing Federal, State or local food, health or welfare programs for which eligibility is based on income. States can adjust the income criteria in order to ensure that assistance is provided only to those households most in need. However, recipients of prepared meals are considered to be needy and are not subject to a means test.

3. How do TEFAP foods reach recipients?

USDA buys the food, processes and packages it, and ships it to the States. The amount received by each State depends on its low-income and unemployed population. State agencies work out details of administration and distribution. They select local organizations

which either directly distribute to households or serve meals, or distribute to other local organizations that perform these functions.

4. What types of food are available through TEFAP?

The types of commodity foods USDA purchases for TEFAP distribution vary depending on the preferences of States and agricultural market conditions. Foods available in Fiscal Year 1998 included more than 40 products, including canned and dried fruits, fruit juice, canned vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, rice, grits, cereal, peanut butter, nonfat dry milk, dried egg mix, and pasta products.

5. What other food assistance can TEFAP recipients get?

Many TEFAP households may be eligible to get food stamps. Low-income people can also get food assistance through a dozen other USDA programs, including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and several others. These programs provide nearly \$40 billion annually for food assistance to low-income households.

6. Are homeless people eligible for TEFAP food?

Yes. Homeless people can benefit from the program through organizations that provide prepared meals, or that distribute commodities for home use. Homeless people must meet State eligibility requirements in order to receive food for home use.

7. When and why did TEFAP start?

TEFAP was first authorized as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program in 1981 to distribute surplus commodities to households. The name was changed to The Emergency Food Assistance Program under the 1990 farm bill. The program was designed to help reduce federal food inventories and storage costs while assisting the needy. Most foods held in surplus stocks had been depleted by 1988. The Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 required the Secretary of Agriculture not only to distribute surplus foods, but also to purchase additional food for further distribution.

8. How much does the program cost?

Congress appropriated \$145 million for TEFAP for Fiscal Year 1998 -- \$100 million to purchase food, and another \$45 million for administrative support for State and local agencies. For Fiscal Year 1997, \$125 million was made available for TEFAP food purchases, and \$45 million was provided for program administration.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information about FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/fcs and will be offered soon on a new web site: www.usda.gov/fns



Commodity Supplemental Food Program

1. What is the CSFP?

The CSFP works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children up to age six, and elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodity foods. It provides food and administrative funds to States to supplement the diets of these groups.

The population served by CSFP is similar to that served by USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), but CSFP also serves elderly people, and provides food rather than the food vouchers that WIC participants receive. Eligible people cannot participate in both programs at the same time. CSFP food packages do not provide a complete diet, but rather are good sources of the nutrients typically lacking in the diets of the target population.

CSFP is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program is authorized under Section 4(a) of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973. Federal regulations covering CSFP can be found in 7 CFR, Parts 247 and 250. An average of more than 370,000 people each month participated in the program in fiscal year (FY) 1998, including more than 243,000 elderly people and more than 127,000 women, infants, and children.

2. What is the minimum age for elderly eligibility?

A person must be at least 60 years of age to qualify in the elderly category.

3. Is this program available in every State?

No. The CSFP is authorized to operate only in the following States: Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota (including the Red Lake Indian Reservation), Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and the Oglala Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

4. How does the program operate?

USDA purchases food and makes it available to State agencies and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs), along with funds for administrative costs. State agencies that administer CSFP are typically departments of health, social services, education, or agriculture. State agencies store the food and distribute it to public and non-profit private local agencies. Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and provide nutrition education. Local agencies also provide referrals to other welfare, nutrition, and health care programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Medicare.

5. What are the requirements to get food through CSFP?

Women, infants, children, and the elderly must reside in one of the States or on one of the Indian reservations that participate in CSFP. Women, infants, and children must meet income eligibility requirements established by the State, while elderly persons must have income at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (currently \$14,378 for a family of two).

States may also establish local residency requirements based on designated service areas (but may not require a minimum period of residency). States may also require that participants be at nutritional risk. Risk assessment can be based on a variety of measures, including height and weight measurements and blood tests. Examples of nutritional risk conditions include anemia and inappropriate weight for height.

6. What foods are provided to participants?

Along with nutrition education information, program participants receive monthly food packages targeted to the nutritional needs of their specific group, such as pregnant or postpartum women, infants, children, or the elderly. Food packages include a variety of foods, such as infant formula and cereal, non-fat dry and evaporated milk, juice, farina, oats, ready-to-eat cereal, rice, pasta, egg mix, peanut butter, dry beans or peas, canned meat or poultry or tuna, and canned fruits and vegetables.

7. How much does CSFP cost?

For FY 1999, Congress appropriated \$86 million for for CSFP. For Fiscal Year 1998, the appropriation was \$96 million. Annual appropriations may be supplemented by unspent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Communications Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Information on FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.fns.usda.gov

April 1999



The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

1. What is the FDPIR?

This Federal program provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly, living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in the FDPIR as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program, usually because they do not have easy access to food stores.

The program is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with 98 Indian Tribal Organizations and six State agencies.

USDA purchases and ships commodities to the administering agencies based on their orders. These agencies store and distribute the food, determine applicant eligibility, and provide nutrition education to recipients. USDA also provides the Indian Tribal Organizations and State agencies with funds for program administrative costs.

FDPIR is authorized under Section 4(b) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, and Section 1336 of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. Federal regulations governing the program can be found at 7 CFR, Parts 250, 253, and 254.

2. Who is eligible to get food from FDPIR?

To participate in FDPIR, a household must have low income, have assets within specified limits, and be located on or near an Indian reservation. All income-eligible households on reservations can apply, but households in designated areas near the reservation must have a Native American member. The income limits are established by the Federal Government and do not vary from tribe to tribe.

In Oklahoma, which generally lacks reservations, only income-eligible households that include a Native American member and reside in a designated service area can participate.

3. What types of foods are available?

Each participant receives a monthly food package that weighs 50 to 75 pounds, consisting of meats, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, grains, and cereals.

Participants can select from approximately 60 products, including:

- canned meats and fish
- canned fruits and vegetables
- pasta, cereals, rice and other grains
- cheese, nonfat dry and evaporated milk
- dried beans and dried fruit
- flour and cornmeal
- peanut products
- juices and other foods

Participants on many reservations can choose fresh produce instead of canned fruits and vegetables.

Frozen ground beef is available to most programs that have facilities to store and handle it, and will soon be available to all that have the necessary equipment.

Several new products have been added to the list of available foods as a result of a 1997 review and update of the FDPIR food package. Beginning Fiscal Year 1998, egg noodles, spaghetti sauce, crackers, soups with reduced salt levels, low-fat refried beans, and frozen cut-up chicken were added to food packages. Choices will soon be expanded to include a cranberry-based juice and chunky beef stew.

4. Does the program accommodate the special health needs of Native Americans?

Yes. The food package was updated in 1997, through a cooperative effort of tribal program managers, elected tribal officials, USDA nutritionists, and other experts on Native American health and nutrition. The changes made the foods in the package easier to use and have better served the nutritional needs and preferences of Native Americans.

For example, the percentage of calories from fat was significantly reduced, and the number of servings was increased in the vegetable and bread/cereal/rice/pasta categories of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid.

These changes are important because many Native Americans have diet-related health conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

5. Does the program provide information about diet and nutrition?

Yes. USDA provides information about nutrition, and suggestions for making the most nutritious use of the commodity foods. A recipe book, "Quick & Easy Commodity

Recipes for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations," was released in 1990 and has since been reprinted.

Federal funding is also available to Indian Tribal Organizations and State agencies specifically for nutrition education. These funds are used, for example, to provide individual nutrition counseling, conduct cooking demonstrations with program commodities, and develop new recipes and other nutrition education materials.

6. How often do participants get food, and from where?

Every month, participating households receive a food package for each member from the administering agency, either over the counter at a distribution center, or in outlying areas, by tailgate distribution from a truck.

USDA buys most foods distributed in the program with FDPIR appropriations, though some commodities in the food package may occasionally be donated to the program from agricultural surpluses. Administering agencies order commodities from USDA based on their needs and the availability of commodities.

7. How many people participate in the program, and what does it cost?

The average monthly participation for FY 1999 is almost 128,000. For FY 1999, \$75 million of the Food Stamp Program appropriation is available for FDPIR, the same as in FY 1998.

For more information:

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Communications Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Information on FNS programs is also available on the World Wide Web at www.fns.usda.gov

April 1999



Nutrition Program for the Elderly

1. What is the Nutrition Program for the Elderly?

The Nutrition Program for the Elderly helps provide elderly persons with nutritionally sound meals through meals-on-wheels programs, or in senior citizen centers and similar congregate feeding settings.

The NPE is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but receives commodity foods and financial support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. Federal regulations governing the program can be found in 7 CFR, Part 250.

2. Who is eligible?

Age is the only factor used in determining eligibility. People 60 or over and their spouses, regardless of age, are eligible for NPE benefits. In addition, disabled people who live in elderly housing facilities; persons who accompany elderly participants to congregate feeding sites; and volunteers who assist in the meal service may also receive meals through NPE. Indian tribal organizations may select an age below 60 for defining an "older" person for their tribes.

There is no income requirement to receive meals under NPE. Each recipient may contribute as much as he or she wishes toward the cost of the meal, but meals are free to those who cannot make any contribution.

3. What does the program provide?

Under NPE, the Department of Agriculture provides cash reimbursements and/or commodity foods to State agencies, which pass them on to agencies or organizations that serve meals through Department of Health and Human Services programs. In order to qualify for cash or commodity assistance, meals served must meet a specified percentage of the nutrients prescribed by the Recommended Dietary Allowances.

4. Is NPE a commodity or cash subsidy program?

States can take all or part of their subsidies in cash, rather than commodity foods. Although it was originally established to distribute USDA commodities to senior citizen meal sites, the NPE has evolved primarily into a cash subsidy program. Approximately

96 percent of program resources were distributed to meal providers in cash in Fiscal Year 1997.

5. How much reimbursement do the States get?

For FY 1998, USDA is providing reimbursement at a rate of 56.07 cents per meal, which is equal to the current appropriation divided by the number of meals served in FY 1997.

6. How many meals are served and at what cost?

Congress appropriated \$140 million for NPE for FY 1998, the same as for FY 1997. USDA provided reimbursement for an average of more than 20 million meals a month in FY 1997.

For more information

For more information, contact the Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. The Food and Nutrition Service was formerly known as the Food and Consumer Service. Information about FNS programs can also be found on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/fcs and will soon be provided on a new web site: www.usda.gov/fns.

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