



CHILD FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS: HOUSEHOLD AND ACADEMIC SETTINGS

Food insecurity affects approximately 461,720 of Georgia's children under the ages of 18.¹ When given access to adequate nutrition, the impact is clear: children are healthier and perform better in school.² On the other hand, children who do not eat enough healthy food often perform poorly in school, are more likely to experience mental health problems, and are at greater risks for health issues later in life.³

The federal government funds seven food and nutrition programs which support children and adults within academic settings, afterschool programs, care facilities, and at home. Such programs have proven to support child health and development, all while addressing long-standing inequities (e.g., food insecurity, disparate chronic health outcomes).^{4, 5}

What should children and youth be eating?

The **Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025** is published by the United States Department of Agriculture. The guidelines* provide recommendations on what to eat and drink to meet nutrient needs, promote health, and prevent chronic disease.⁶ They are broken down by age:⁷

Ages	Vegetables (Cup/Day)	Fruit (Cup/Day)	Grains (Cup/Day)	Protein (Cup/Day)	Dairy (Cup/Day)
2 to 8 years	1 to 2.5	1 to 2	3 to 6	2 to 5.5	2 to 3
9 to 13 years	1 to 3.5	1.5 to 2	5 to 9	4 to 6.5	3
14 to 18 years	2.5 to 4	1.5 to 2.5	6 to 10	5 to 7	3

*Servings vary on each child and their individual caloric intake.

How do nutritious foods affect your body?

Nutritious foods support:



- Immune system responses⁸
- Eyesight⁹
- Cognitive development¹⁰
- Bone health¹¹

Nutritious foods protect against:¹²



- Dental cavities
- Heart disease
- Chronic illness (e.g., type 2 diabetes, obesity)
- Iron deficiency

What are the benefits of nutrition education?^{13, 14}



Nurturing eating habits and behaviors



Supporting individuals in informed decision-making about food and beverage consumption



Empowering individuals by increasing nutrition and health knowledge

Nutritious Food for Households

Two federally-funded feeding programs provide food purchasing benefits as well as nutrition education to participating households.

Programs Designed to Support Child Nutrition

Eligibility Requirements	Benefits and Resources	Enrollment in Georgia
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Georgia ¹⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident of the state of Georgia Non-citizen Individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived in the United States for at least 5 years, or Receives disability-related assistance or benefits, or Children under age 18 Income ¹⁶ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives at or below 130% of the federal poverty (FPL) income guidelines, depending on household status and deduction calculations 	Food Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly monetary benefit loaded on the SNAP/EBT card to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and frozen, canned, and shelf-stable items¹⁷ Health and Nutrition Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition education (i.e., information on healthy eating, safe food, staying active, stretching food dollars, etc.)¹⁸ 	417,226 households with children ¹⁹
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women²⁰ Infants and children up to age 5 Income ²¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives at or below 185% of FPL Participating in another assistance program may make an applicant automatically income-eligible for WIC (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid) Nutrition Risk ²² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants must be determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional or a trained health official 	Food Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritionally balanced food packages²³ WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits²⁴ Health and Nutrition Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breastfeeding supports²⁵ Healthcare referrals²⁶ Nutrition education²⁷ Immunization screenings²⁸ 	231,480* total participants ²⁹ <i>*Preliminary FY2024 data from the USDA</i>

Policy Recommendations

State Only:

- Strategically engage community organizations and benefit enrollment staff to understand and eliminate barriers to SNAP and WIC
- Ensure state agencies are fully leveraging data to ease enrollment for all eligible households (e.g., use Medicaid or SNAP data to facilitate WIC enrollment)
- Explore and enact opportunities to leverage virtual tools to support physicians in WIC program operations (e.g., electronic prescriptions, referral systems, electronic health data contracts)
- Explore an extension of the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) farmers’ market season

State and Federal:

- Increase culturally and linguistically inclusive resources within SNAP and WIC
- Ensure SNAP and WIC programming and enrollment supports are incorporated in DPH’s Home Visiting Pilot

Federal Only:

- Leverage technology to increase access to and utilization of the WIC FMNP for farmers and WIC participants (e.g., remote trainings, electronic WIC FMNP benefits)
- Increase culturally inclusive foods within WIC food packages
- Expand the WIC child eligibility from age 5 to age 6
- Extend the WIC-certification timeline from 1 to 2 years
- Explore and incorporate online purchasing WIC-eligible foods

Nutritious Food for Early Education, School, and Afterschool

Five federally-funded feeding programs provide nutritionally balanced meals and snacks to children within early care and education programs, schools, and afterschool programs. Eligibility for participation is based on income, from 130% of FPL (free) to 185% of the FPL (reduced-cost).

Programs Designed to Support Health and Adequate Child Nutrition

Eligibility Requirements	Enrollment in Georgia
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Reimburses for nutritious meals. Child care programs, afterschool care programs, child care homes, emergency shelters, and adult care centers can be CACFP eligible. 31	130,208* average daily attendance 36
National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Provide nutritionally balanced, free or reduced-cost (based on a sliding scale) lunches to children in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. 32	1,128,798* total participation 37
School Breakfast Program (SBP) Provides cash subsidies to public or nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions to provide meals that meet federal nutrition requirements. Meals are provided to eligible children for free or at a reduced cost. 33	649,866* total participation 38
Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Provides the same meal service that is available during the regular school year to hungry kids in the community during the summer. This program is provided through either the NSLP or SBP. 34	124,471 average daily participation 39
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Reimburses for healthy meals and snacks served to children from areas with low-income during summer months when school is not in session. 35	52,521* average daily attendance 40 <i>*Preliminary FY2024 data from the USDA</i>

Policy Recommendations

State Only:

- Ensure state agencies are fully leveraging data to ease enrollment for eligible students (e.g., Direct Certification, which is using Medicaid data to facilitate NSLP enrollment)
- Leverage available data to strategically recruit CACFP-eligible programs (e.g., low-income, low food access areas)

State and Federal:

- Provide funding for transportation grants to fund innovative approaches and mobile meal trucks to increase access to summer meals
- Promote local food procurement by connecting food systems to child care programs and simplifying procurement processes for CACFP operators

Federal Only:

- Increase food access by changing the area eligibility requirement from 50% to 40% of the children eligible for free or reduced-price meals
- Streamline CACFP program requirements, reduce paperwork, and maximize technology to improve program access (e.g., streamline CACFP and SFSP applications, virtual monitoring)
- Allow all CACFP participant programs to be reimbursed for an additional meal (e.g., snack or dinner), as was previously allowed
- Increase nutritious food access for family child care homes and afterschool programs by allowing them to receive a higher reimbursement rate (regardless of location)



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