



An Introduction to Child Nutrition Reauthorization

The “child nutrition programs” (National School Lunch Program and certain other institutional food service programs) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs are up for reauthorization during the 114th Congress. Some of the authorities created or extended in the last reauthorization law (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296)) expire on September 30, 2015.

Child nutrition reauthorization refers to Congress’s process of making changes, additions, and deletions to the permanent statutes that authorize the child nutrition programs, WIC, and related policies: (1) Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (2) Child Nutrition Act, and sometimes (3) Section 32 of the Act of August 24, 1935.

Major Programs Typically Amended in a Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Table 1 summarizes the major programs that have been part of a child nutrition reauthorization. There are smaller grant programs or school meals’ support functions that are not listed. The five main child nutrition programs are the

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP);
- School Breakfast Program (SBP);
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP);
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); and
- Special Milk Program.

Participating children (and adults for CACFP) receive subsidized meals, snacks and/or milk, which, if eligible, may be free or at reduced price. States and food-serving institutions receive federal reimbursements for the food served. Some programs also receive USDA commodity food assistance. Details vary by program.

WIC provides eligible low-income women, infants, and children (under five years old) with specific supplemental foods as well as certain services. The **WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)** provides vouchers redeemable at farmers markets to WIC participants.

Related Programs and Policies in the Farm Bill

The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (“Snack”) Program (FFVP)** is authorized in the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. Since 2008 it has been amended, if at all, during omnibus farm bill legislation. No amendments to FFVP were made during the 2010 child nutrition reauthorization. The most recent farm bill (P.L. 113-79) reauthorized the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** as well as USDA’s purchase of foods for the child nutrition programs.

Categorization of Programs’ Funding

Most of the WIC and child nutrition programs’ funding is provided by appropriation bills; this includes mandatory and discretionary funds:

- The majority of the child nutrition programs’ funding is mandatory, particularly the programs’ per-meal reimbursements.
- There are some smaller child nutrition grants and activities that are funded with discretionary appropriations (e.g., Team Nutrition).
- WIC and WIC FMNP funds are discretionary.

The child nutrition programs also receive support from some sources outside the appropriations process. Most significantly, USDA’s Section 32 program, a permanent appropriation of 30% of the previous year’s customs receipts, transfers certain funds to the child nutrition programs annually.

Last Reauthorization

The 2010 reauthorization, Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), included a number of new and revised policies, particularly for the school meals programs (NSLP and SBP). In some cases, the new policies’ details are largely described within the statute (e.g., community eligibility provision, an option for eligible schools to provide all meals for free). In other cases, the details of the policy were laid out in USDA-promulgated regulations (e.g., updated school meals nutrition standards and new nutrition standards for other foods sold in schools).

Significance of September 30, 2015

Many of the programs’ authorizing provisions are permanent (i.e., they do not have an expiration date associated with them). This is the case for the main functions of NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and Special Milk.

Other programs, including SFSP, WIC, WIC FMNP, and the State Administrative Expenses (funding for states’ operation of certain programs), face an expiration date of September 30, 2015, for the authorization of their appropriations. However, even without an authorization extension beyond that date, Congress can still choose to provide funding via the appropriations process, allowing these programs to continue to operate.

Several policies set to expire after September 30, 2015—not authorizations of appropriations—could be affected if their authorizing dates are not changed. These are not major program functions, but have interested stakeholders. This list includes a California program to provide SFSP food year-round, certain food safety audits, and preappropriated funds for a National Hunger Clearinghouse.

Table I. Child Nutrition and WIC Programs at a Glance

Program	Authorizing Statute (Year First Authorized)	Distinguishing Characteristics	FY2014 Expenditures (in millions) exceptions noted	FY2014 Average Daily Participation exceptions noted
National School Lunch Program	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunches at school Typically served in schools, to pre-K-12 students, during the school day and year Possible to provide meals during summer and snacks. 	\$12,656	30.4 million
School Breakfast Program	Child Nutrition Act (1966)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakfasts at school (also for pre-K-12) Typically served in schools, to K-12 students, during the school day and year 	\$3,686	13.6 million
Child and Adult Care Food Program (child care center, day care homes, adult day care centers)	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1968)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals and snacks in early childhood and adult day care settings Rules and funding differ based on type of institution 	\$3,133 (includes at-risk after-school spending, described below)	3.8 million children; 122,000 adults
Child and Adult Care Food Program (at-risk after-school snacks and meals)^a	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supper and snacks for school-age children after-school Eligibility based on area eligibility 	(Not available; included in CACFP total above)	977,000 children (included in CACFP children above)
Summer Food Service Program	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1968)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals and snacks provided during summer months Sites vary and include schools, community centers, camps, parks, and others Eligibility rules vary for “open” and “closed” sites 	\$466	2.7 million (July 2014)
Special Milk Program	Child Nutrition Act (1954)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidizes milk, not meals or snacks Institutions eligible must not participate in NSLP or SBP 	\$11	222,000 half-pints served ^b
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Child Nutrition Act (1974)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides benefits redeemable for supplemental foods; and nutrition counseling, and breastfeeding support, to pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women; infants; and children (under five years old). 	\$6,277	8.3 million average monthly
WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP)	Child Nutrition Act (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides vouchers for WIC participants to redeem at farmers' markets. 	\$17	1.6 million recipients in FY2013
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides free fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to elementary school students 	\$168 (school year 2013-2014)	Not available

Source: Except where noted, participation and funding data from USDA-FNS Key Data Report, generated July 10, 2015, based on data through April 2015. WIC costs figure subtracts WIC FMNP.

- a. At-risk after-school snacks and meals are part of CACFP law and CACFP funding, but differ in their rules and the age of children served.
b. FY2016 congressional budget justification p. 32-63.

CRS Reports for Further Detail:

CRS Report R42353, *Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs*

CRS Report R43783, *School Meals Programs and Other USDA Child Nutrition Programs: A Primer*

CRS Report R44115, *A Primer on WIC: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children*

CRS Report R41354, *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization: P.L. 111-296*

CRS Report RL34081, *Farm and Food Support Under USDA's Section 32 Program*

Randy Alison Aussenberg, raussenberg@crs.loc.gov, 78641

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