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Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs

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Summary

Since the 1930s, the federal government has administered programs to provide food to the hungry and to other vulnerable populations in the United States. Such efforts date back to the Great Depression, when the government became involved in distributing agricultural surpluses to households and school lunch programs.

The relationship between food assistance and the farm economy has persisted over time, with many programs having the mutual goals of feeding people in need and supporting the agricultural sector. Most programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), including the largest—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP and several other FNS programs have historically been reauthorized in the *farm bill*, an omnibus reauthorization and extension of dozens of farm, food, and nutrition laws. FNS also administers programs included in a separate child nutrition reauthorization process, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) and the National School Lunch Program.

Other food assistance programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS') Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Those programs include ACL meal programs for seniors authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA), and FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), which includes a focus on individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Although each of the programs discussed in this report provides for food in some way, the methods through which they accomplish this goal vary. For example, some programs provide food assistance to low-income households broadly, whereas others are targeted to specific populations (e.g., infants, children, seniors). The type of assistance can also differ. SNAP and certain other programs provide benefits redeemable for groceries, whereas others distribute foods or support prepared meals (e.g., the school lunch program). Some programs also support local feeding organizations' operating costs.

All of the programs aim to reduce hunger in some way. Over the past 30 years, USDA has monitored trends in *food insecurity*—a related concept to hunger—in order to assess national progress toward reducing food-related hardship and collect data that is used in evaluating domestic feeding programs. For 2024, USDA estimated that 13.7% of U.S. households were food insecure at some point during the year, meaning that they could not afford or obtain adequate food due to a lack of resources. Such households included 49.7 million individuals. Approximately 5.4% of U.S. households experienced *very low food insecurity,* a more severe kind of food insecurity that reflects reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns. USDA announced the discontinuation of its food insecurity reports in 2025.

This report begins with a brief overview of hunger and food insecurity in the United States, and then describes the domestic food assistance programs in three sections: those administered by (1) USDA FNS, (2) HHS ACL, and (3) DHS FEMA. It includes information about each program, including its authorizing language, administering agency, eligibility criteria, services provided, and participation and funding levels. It also compares and contrasts features across programs.

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Background

This report gives an overview of the major federal programs that provide food assistance within the United States, including the territories. The report begins by discussing common concepts and themes across the network of domestic food assistance programs. It then breaks out discussions of programs by administering agency in the following report sections: (1) "USDA FNS Programs" (see **Table 1** for farm bill programs and **Table 2** for WIC and child nutrition programs), (2) "HHS ACL Programs" (**Table 3**), and (3) "DHS FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program" (**Table 4**). The tables within this report are intended to provide summary information, which can help illustrate the ways in which domestic food assistance programs are both similar and different.

There are aspects of other federal programs that support nutrition in the general population, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS') Dietary Guidelines for Americans, coverage of medical foods and social determinants of health initiatives within Medicaid, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) research on and promotion of nutrition interventions.[1] Researchers have also linked certain non-food benefits, such as tax credits and cash assistance, with reductions in food insecurity.[2] These other linkages between federal programs and nutrition are not discussed in this report.

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Congress has long been interested in issues of hunger and allocating federal resources to address hunger in this country. The federal programs discussed in this report pursue the goal of providing food to low-income and needy populations, seeking to prevent hunger. Some of these programs, such as food stamps and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), have deep roots dating to the Great Depression era. More recently, many policymakers are concerned not just with the economic challenges of purchasing enough food, but with the public health concerns of improving diet quality, reducing obesity, and preventing diet-related disease.[3]

Over time, government officials and researchers have developed ways to evaluate trends associated with hunger, with the goal of identifying vulnerable populations that need assistance and understanding if efforts to prevent hunger are working. *Hunger*, however, is a challenging concept to measure. Instead, *food security* and *food insecurity* are the prevailing terms used to describe the ability to access adequate food.

"Food security" and "food insecurity," as defined by USDA, focus on economic and other access-related reasons associated with an individual's ability to purchase or otherwise obtain enough to eat. USDA's use of these terms came out of a decades-long collaboration between federal agencies and private-sector researchers to improve the measurement of hunger in the U.S. population.[4] This consortium concluded that hunger, as an individual-level physiological

[1] Other examples include Head Start, which provides funds that go, in part, to providing meals, and emergency disaster relief programs administered by the Department of Homeland Security such as the Stafford Act Public Assistance Program, which provides sustenance as part of disaster recovery.

[2] For example, see Paul R. Shafer et al., "Association of the Implementation of Child Tax Credit Advance Payments With Food Insufficiency in US Households," *JAMA Network Open*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2022).

[3] For a brief history of anti-hunger policies in the past 50 years, see Tufts University, *Report of the 50th Anniversary of the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health: Honoring the Past, Taking Actions for our Future*, Boston, MA, March 2020, pp. 8-12.

[4] For further background, see National Research Council, *Food Insecurity and Hunger in the United States: An Assessment of the Measure*, Washington, DC, 2006, pp. 23-51, https://www.nap.edu/catalog/11578/food-insecurity-and-hunger-in-the-united-states-an-assessment.

condition, was difficult to measure through a household survey. They recommended food security and food insecurity as alternative concepts that captured the economic reasons for inadequate food and/or nutritional intake, rather than individual behaviors that may result in the physical condition of being hungry (for example, dieting or missing a meal due to illness). The resulting food security measure was deployed in a multi-question "Food Security Supplement" to the Census's Current Population Survey (CPS) starting in 1995.[5] In 2006, a National Academies panel convened at the request of USDA evaluated the measure, recommending its continued use with some refinements to the food security and insecurity definitions.[6]

Since 2006, USDA has recognized a spectrum of four levels of food security, listed below from highest to lowest:

Food Security:

High food security—Households had no problems, or anxiety about, consistently accessing adequate food.

Marginal food security—Households had problems at times, or anxiety about, accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, and quantity of their food intake were not substantially reduced.

Food Insecurity:

Low food security—Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets due to a lack of money or resources, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.

Very low food security—At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.[7]

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) has historically funded the Food Security Supplement and published annual reports analyzing findings from the survey.[8] In fall 2025, USDA announced that it would be discontinuing the survey and reports after the release of its 2024 findings.[9] Findings from ERS's 2024 report are presented in the next section.

Food Insecurity Rates in Recent Years

In 2024, ERS found that 13.7% of U.S. households (where "household" includes one or more members) were food insecure.[10] This was similar to the food insecurity rate in 2022 and 2023, but

[5] The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 U.S. households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, primarily used to report monthly labor force statistics such as the labor force participation and unemployment rates. For some months, the basic questions of the CPS are supplemented with special topical questions, such as the Food Security Supplement or the Annual Social and Economic Supplement, which produces annual poverty statistics.

[6] USDA, ERS, "Food Security in the U.S. - CNSTAT Assessment," January 8, 2025, https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/cnstat-assessment (accessed February 2, 2026).

[7] USDA, ERS, "Food Security in the U.S. – Measurement," January 8, 2025, http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx (accessed February 2, 2026).

[8] USDA, Economic Research Service, "Food Security in the U.S. - History & Background," January 8, 2025, https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/history-background (accessed February 2, 2026).

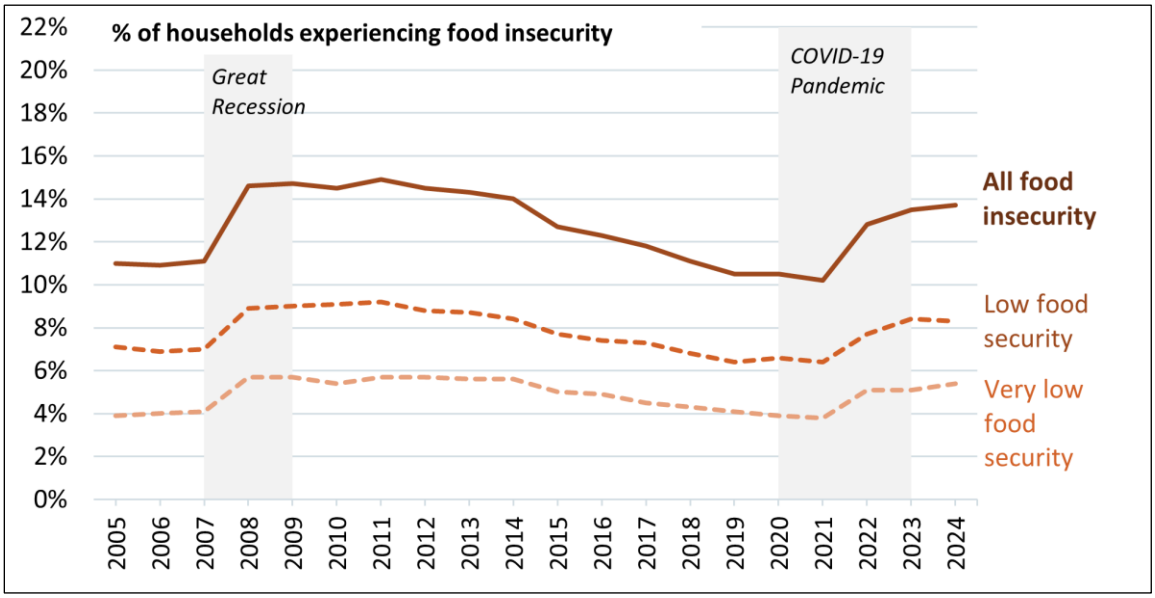
[9] USDA, "USDA Terminates Redundant Food Insecurity Survey," September 20, 2025, https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/09/20/usda-terminates-redundant-food-insecurity-survey.

[10] Matthew P. Rabbitt et al., *Household Food Security in the United States in 2024*, USDA, ERS, Report No. ERR-358, (continued...)

a statistically significant increase compared to rates in 2016 through 2021.[11] As shown in **Figure 1**, the national household food insecurity rate reached recent highs of nearly 15% following the Great Recession, declined to a low of 10.5% in 2019 and 2020, then increased again following the COVID-19 pandemic.[12]

Figure 1. Trends in U.S. Food Insecurity, 2005-2024

(figure is interactive in HTML version of this report)



Source: CRS, adapted from USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS), "Food Security in the U.S. - Key Statistics & Graphics," January 8, 2025, https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics (accessed December 2025), using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, 2005-2023 Food Security Supplements and USDA, ERS, Household Food Security in the United States in 2024 (December 2025).

Notes: "Low food security" and "very low food security" are subsets of all food insecurity. Low food security means that households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets due to a lack of financial resources, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted. Very low food security means that at times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money or other resources for food.

In summary, findings for 2024 include the following:

- 13.7% of U.S. households (18.3 million) were *food insecure* at some point during the year. Such households included 49.7 million individuals.
  - Of these households, 11.1 million experienced *low food security*, and 7.2 million experienced *very low food security*.

December 2025 (hereinafter, "USDA, ERS 2024"). These may be underestimates, as the CPS uses address-based sampling and therefore does not capture individuals who are homeless and does not fully capture those in temporary housing arrangements, as discussed in Matthew P. Rabbitt et al., *Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2024*, USDA, ERS, Report No. AP-126, December 2025.

[11] Statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. The percentages shown in this report are estimates based on a sample. A different randomly drawn sample from the same population would likely produce a slightly different estimate. ERS performed statistical tests to avoid mistaking sampling variability for real differences. A difference between estimates is "statistically significant" at the 90% confidence level if it is large enough that fewer than 10% of all possible survey samples would show a difference of that size, even if there were no real change in the population.

[12] USDA, ERS 2024, p. 17.

- On average, food insecure households experienced food insecurity in seven months out of the year.[13]
- Food insecure households include those who receive food assistance through federally funded programs and those who do not.[14] In 2024, nearly 60% of food insecure households reported participating in SNAP, WIC, or the NSLP in the last month.[15] While research has demonstrated that certain food assistance programs can reduce food insecurity, they do not always eliminate the condition entirely.[16]

USDA-ERS also analyzes food insecurity rates for different subpopulations and household types, finding subgroups above and below the national rates of food insecurity.[17] Some examples of these findings for 2024 include the following:

- 9.9% of households that included an older adult (aged 65 or older) (4.4 million households) were food insecure. This rate was higher (11.3%) among older adults living alone.
- 18.4% of households with children (6.7 million households) were food insecure. However, not all members of the household are affected by food insecurity in the same way. Adults tend to shield children from food insecurity, and children often receive food benefits (such as free school meals) that are not accessible to adults. In 2024, ERS estimated that roughly half of food insecure households with children actually included a child experiencing food insecurity (representing 7.3 million children in 3.3 million households).
    - This included 751,000 children living in 318,000 households in which children experienced very low food security, meaning that they were hungry, skipped a meal, or did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food.
- 24.4% of households headed by Black, non-Hispanic individuals; 10.1% of households headed by White, non-Hispanic individuals; and 20.2% of households headed by Hispanic individuals were food insecure.

Program Variation

There are a number of domestic food assistance programs.[18] Although each of the programs discussed in this report provides for food in some way, the ways in which they accomplish this

[13] Further discussion of the duration of food insecurity can be found on page 16 of USDA, ERS 2024.

[14] Households' receipt of food assistance is measured separately on the survey. Their receipt of such assistance is not taken into account in the food insecurity questions. However, in some cases, households may interpret benefits such as SNAP to be a monetary resource, which could affect their responses to the food insecurity questions and whether they get classified as "food insecure."

[15] This is likely an underestimate because survey respondents tend to underreport participation in assistance programs.

[16] For example, see Travis A. Smith and Christian A. Gregory, "Food Insecurity in the United States: Measurement, Economic Modeling, and Food Assistance Effectiveness," *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2023), pp. 279-303.

[17] Refer to the 2024 report for additional measures of food security (e.g., regions, states, populations of interest).

[18] The list of programs discussed in this report is largely consistent with a list of 18 programs (at the time) identified by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a 2010 review as focusing primarily on providing food assistance or coordinating food assistance activities (this report adds the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program [GusNIP], given permanent authorization in 2018, and the Summer EBT program, given permanent authorization in 2022). When looking more broadly at programs that included a food or nutrition component, the GAO report identified 70 such (continued...)

goal vary. For example, programs vary with respect to the target population (e.g., pregnant women, children, older individuals), eligibility requirements, types of assistance provided (e.g., grocery benefits, commodity foods, prepared meals), and settings (e.g., foods for consumption at home, meals served in institutional settings).

One way to examine this variation is to compare the populations eligible for these domestic food assistance programs. For instance, the WIC program is available to children under the age of five, while the school meals programs (the NSLP and School Breakfast Program [SBP]) become available to school-age children. Another way to examine this variation is to compare the benefits that these programs provide. Within this constellation of programs, federal resources provide benefits redeemable for uncooked foods, cash assistance to support program operations, USDA-purchased commodity foods (discussed further in the next section), and prepared meals. While some programs provide specific foods (e.g., through the federal and state requirements for "food package" in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and WIC), SNAP gives benefits that may be redeemed for a wide variety of foods at authorized retailers. OAA programs provide prepared meals that not only assist those who lack adequate resources to purchase food, but can also assist those who lack the functional capacity to prepare a meal on their own.

The following sections of the report and the accompanying tables provide more details about the services, eligibility, participation, and funding for each program. They help illustrate the similarities and differences between the programs, including the extent to which they provide similar or distinct forms of assistance to similar or distinct populations.

USDA FNS Programs

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers domestic food assistance programs authorized in the farm bill (**Table 1**)[19] as well as WIC and Child Nutrition Programs (**Table 2**). **Table 1** and **Table 2** provide details on the FNS programs, including services provided, eligibility, participation, and funding. (The tables in this report describe normal program operations, which may differ during disasters and emergencies.[20])

The FNS national office works in concert with FNS's regional offices[21] and state agencies. With respect to SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program), state agencies and legislatures have a number of options and waivers that can affect SNAP program operations from state to state.[22] With respect to school meals programs (NSLP and SBP), state departments of education and school districts play a role in administering these programs. WIC and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are often coadministered by state and local health departments.

Several FNS programs distribute USDA-purchased foods as a primary or secondary means of assistance. Those programs include The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), NSLP, Summer Food Service Program, and

federal programs at the time; see U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Domestic Food Assistance: Complex System Benefits Millions, but Additional Efforts Could Address Potential Inefficiency and Overlap among Smaller Programs*, GAO-10-346, April 2010, pp. 51-53.

[19] The Community Food Projects and Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) are administered by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

[20] For more information on FNS program operations during disasters and emergencies, see USDA, FNS, "Disaster Assistance," https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster.

[21] See also the USDA, FNS, "FNS Regional Offices," http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices.

[22] USDA, FNS, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: State Options Report 17th Edition*, August 2025, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/waivers/state-options-report.

Child and Adult Care Food Program. USDA commodity foods are also provided to the HHS-ACL's Nutrition Services Incentive Program (**Table 3**). These programs distribute "entitlement commodities" (an amount of USDA foods to which grantees are entitled by law) as well as "bonus commodities" (USDA food purchases based on the needs of the agricultural producers).[23]

These domestic food assistance programs have a historical, and in most respects, ongoing relationship with farming and agriculture. For example, the first Food Stamp Program, a pilot program in the late 1930s and early 1940s, sold orange and blue "food stamps" to program participants.[24] While $1 would provide a program participant with $1 in value of "orange stamps" that could be spent on any food, the program participant would also receive an additional 50 cents worth of "blue stamps," which could only be used to purchase agricultural products that were in surplus. Commodity donation programs that supported the post-Depression farm economy were precursors to the National School Lunch Program.[25] TEFAP and several of the child nutrition programs still benefit from USDA commodity foods as well as USDA's donation of bonus commodities, which USDA purchases based on agricultural producers' identification of surplus goods or need for price support. In more contemporary examples, the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79), 2010 child nutrition reauthorization (P.L. 111-296), and USDA initiatives include efforts to promote "farm-to-school" endeavors, seeking, for example, to facilitate school cafeterias' purchasing from local and regional farms.[26]

USDA Food Assistance Resources

- **FNS Website:** https://www.fns.usda.gov—Program descriptions, press releases, current policy guidance and regulations, and participation and spending data. Information is available on SNAP, WIC, food distribution, and child nutrition programs.
- **FNS Office of Policy Support, Research and Analysis**: https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis—USDA-sponsored data, research, and analysis on participation in and effectiveness of USDA, FNS programs.
- **USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) Food and Nutrition Assistance Products:** https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/—ERS provides research on USDA-administered nutrition assistance programs and related topics.

Farm Bill

Table 1 lists the FNS programs that are typically reauthorized by the farm bill. The *farm bill* is an omnibus reauthorization and extension of dozens of farm, food, and nutrition laws. Most recently, Congress passed the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) (hereinafter, the "2018 farm bill"), which made changes to the programs and extended their funding through FY2023 (subsequent laws have continued to provide annual funding for the programs[27]). The 2018 farm

[23] For more on the procurement of USDA foods, see CRS Report R48141, *Trends in USDA Procurement of U.S. Food and Agricultural Products*. For more information on FNS's distribution of commodities, see USDA, FNS website, "Food Distribution & Emergency Assistance," https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods.

[24] USDA, FNS, "A Short History of SNAP," https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap.

[25] Gordon W. Gunderson, "The National School Lunch Program: Background and Development," USDA, FNS, https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/program-history.

[26] See, for example, USDA, FNS, "The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program," https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/farm-to-school.

[27] See P.L. 118-22, P.L. 118-58, and P.L. 119-37.

bill included 12 titles on topics ranging from conservation, rural development, and research to horticulture.[28] The nutrition title, Title IV, included all of the programs listed in **Table 1**.

Farm bill nutrition programs have their authorizing language primarily in the

- Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525 as amended; codified at 7 U.S.C. §§2011 et seq.),
- Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983 (P.L. 98-8 as amended; codified at 7 U.S.C. §§7501 et seq.), and
- Agriculture Consumer and Protection Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-86 as amended; codified at 7 U.S.C. §612c note).

The primary food assistance program in the farm bill is SNAP. In 2024, CRS estimated, primarily using the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO's) June 2024 baseline estimates, that approximately 81% of the 2018 farm bill spending was in the nutrition title (Title IV).[29] This is nearly all due to the mandatory spending associated with SNAP. Formerly referred to as the Food Stamp Program, the federal program name change to SNAP was included in the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246). Further detail on SNAP, beyond **Table 1**, is available in CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*.

Farm bill nutrition programs have generally been under the jurisdiction of the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.[30] CRS In Focus IF12255, *Farm Bill Primer: SNAP and Nutrition Title Programs* also summarizes these programs and policies.

WIC and Child Nutrition Programs

Table 2 lists the programs authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (P.L. 79-396 as amended; codified at 42 U.S.C. §§1751 et seq.) and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-642 as amended; codified at 42 U.S.C. §§1771 et seq.). Broadly, the programs contained in these laws are the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) as well as the child nutrition programs. These programs support food and nutrition starting during pregnancy and early infancy (in the case of WIC) and continuing through childhood.[31]

Two programs—WIC and the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program for Children (Summer EBT)—provide electronic benefits to eligible households that are redeemable for groceries at participating retailers. WIC is available to women during pregnancy and postpartum and to children from birth through age four, and includes nutrition and breastfeeding support services in addition to food benefits. Summer EBT is targeted toward households with school-age children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, and benefits are provided during the summer months when school is out.

[28] For more information on the farm bill, see CRS Report RS22131, *What Is the Farm Bill?*

[29] See CRS In Focus IF12233, *Farm Bill Primer: Budget Dynamics*; compiled using the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) June 2024 baseline for the five largest titles and amounts indicated in law for programs in other titles. Once CBO's baseline reflects the FY2025 budget reconciliation law (P.L. 119-21), Title IV's share is expected to decrease.

[30] The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, described in the table, was passed and financed by the 2008 farm bill. It amended the Russell National School Lunch Act—a statute typically reauthorized elsewhere and in the jurisdiction of the House Education and the Workforce committee.

[31] Exceptions include individuals with disabilities over the age of 18 attending K-12 schools participating in the lunch or breakfast programs, and older adults who attend CACFP adult day care centers.

Other programs provide food in schools, day care centers, and other institutional settings. NSLP and SBP subsidize lunches and breakfasts served in participating schools, offering the highest reimbursement rates for meals served for free or at a reduced price. CACFP offers similar reimbursements for meals served in child care settings, including at centers and day care homes, as well as a limited number of adult day care centers. NSLP and CACFP also support afterschool snacks for children from low-income households or low-income areas. During the summertime, eligible children can access free meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which typically serve meals on-site at summer recreational locations. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) sponsors fresh fruit and vegetable snacks in selected elementary schools nationwide. FFVP is sometimes referred to as a child nutrition program, but in this report it is included in the farm bill programs (**Table 1**) because FFVP has been more often amended by omnibus farm bills than child nutrition reauthorization legislation.

Historically, the WIC and child nutrition programs' authorizing statutes were reauthorized approximately every five years. However, the most recent reauthorization as of the cover date of this report, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), was signed into law in December 2010. It reauthorized these programs through FY2015. Certain provisions from that law expired after September 30, 2015, but the vast majority of child nutrition and WIC programs and activities have continued under subsequent appropriations laws.[32] Additional amendments were made to summer meals programs in the FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-328), which allowed meal delivery in rural areas and permanently authorized the Summer EBT program.[33]

WIC and the child nutrition programs have generally been under the jurisdiction of the House Committee on Education and Workforce and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. For further details (beyond **Table 2** information) on these programs and their reauthorizations, see

- CRS In Focus IF10266, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR): An Overview*
- CRS Report R46234, *School Meals and Other Child Nutrition Programs: Background and Funding*
- 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*

[32] These concepts are discussed in CRS In Focus IF10266, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR): An Overview*.

[33] For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11633, *Summer Food for Children: An Overview of Federal Aid*.

Table 1. Overview of Farm Bill Food Assistance Programs

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program)		
Food and Nutrition Act (7 U.S.C. §§2011 et seq.)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides benefits (through the use of electronic benefit transfer cards) that supplement low-income recipients' food purchasing power. Benefits vary by household size, income, and expenses (like shelter and medical costs) and averaged nearly $188 per person per month in FY2025. In lieu of SNAP benefits, (1) Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands receive nutrition assistance program (NAP) block grants to serve their low-income populations, and (2) the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR, discussed below) serves certain Native American households. SNAP funding also supports related grants, like SNAP Employment & Training (E&T). **Eligibility:** Under federal rules, eligible households must meet tests for gross income (monthly cash income below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines), net income (monthly cash income subtracting SNAP deductible expenses at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines), and liquid assets (for FY2026, under $3,000 in assets or under $4,500 if elderly or disabled household members). However, households with elderly or disabled members do not have to meet the gross income test. The state option of broad-based categorical eligibility also allows for the modification of some financial eligibility rules, including increasing the gross income limit to up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines and increasing or eliminating the asset limit. The vast majority of SNAP state agencies have opted into broad-based categorical eligibility. Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or state-funded General Assistance are categorically eligible for SNAP. SNAP also has nonfinancial eligibility rules for households such as work requirements and citizenship-related rules.[a] **Data:** In FY2025, SNAP served an average of 42.4 million individuals in 22.6 million households each month. In FY2023, the most recent year of available data, approximately 39% of participants were under age 18, 20% were age 60 or older, and 10% were disabled nonelderly adults.[b]	$106,766[c]
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)		
Food and Nutrition Act, Section 4(b) (7 U.S.C. §2013(b))/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides, in lieu of SNAP benefits, a food package of USDA commodities to low-income households on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in Oklahoma or in designated areas near Oklahoma. In 2024, three states and 107 Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) administered the program. **Eligibility:** In addition to geographic eligibility requirements, FDPIR has income requirements similar but not identical to SNAP's. By law, households that participate in FDPIR may not participate in SNAP and vice versa. **Data:** In FY2025, FDPIR had on average, 58,000 participants per month.	$239

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)		
The Food and Nutrition Act, Section 27 and The Emergency Food Assistance Act (7 U.S.C. §§2036 & 7501 et seq.)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides USDA-purchased food commodities (and cash support for distribution costs) through states to local emergency feeding organizations (e.g., food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens) serving the low-income population. **Eligibility:** States select local emergency feeding organization grantees and set income thresholds for households picking up food within a federal range (states must set the threshold between 185% and 300% of the federal poverty guidelines, unless they receive an exemption from USDA to set a higher threshold). There are no income restrictions on individuals who receive prepared meals (e.g., at a soup kitchen). **Data:** Information on the number of recipients or the average value of foods received in TEFAP is not available.	$552[d]
Community Food Projects		
Food and Nutrition Act, Section 25 (7 U.S.C. §2034)/administered by USDA, NIFA	Competitive grants to nonprofit organizations for programs that improve access to locally produced food for low-income households. Eligibility for grants will vary according to requests for applications. Grant program requires grantees' matching funds. In FY2024, USDA awarded grants to 19 projects in 16 states and the District of Columbia (DC).	$5
Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)		
Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Section 4405 (7 U.S.C. §7517)/administered by USDA, NIFA	Competitive grants for projects that increase low-income consumers' purchase of fruits and vegetables by providing incentives at SNAP points of purchase and (added by the 2018 farm bill) providing produce prescriptions to SNAP/Medicaid participants. In FY2024, USDA awarded grants to 26 projects in 18 states, DC, and two territories.	$56[e]
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)		
Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, Section 4(a) (7 U.S.C. §612c note)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides supplemental monthly food packages to primarily low-income elderly persons. **Eligibility:** Elderly persons (age 60+) who have access to a local CSFP project and household income below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. **Data:** In FY2025, approximately 700,000 individuals participated in CSFP each month across programs in 50 states, DC, and seven ITOs.	$460
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)		
Russell National School Lunch Act, Section 19 (42 U.S.C. §1769a) (expanded in Section 4304 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides grants to elementary schools to purchase fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to be provided during the school day. **Eligibility:** Program is nationwide in selected schools. States are required to select elementary schools in which 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Priority is placed on schools where the highest proportion of children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. **Data:** Information on the number of FFVP recipients is not available.	$243[f]

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)		
Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), Section 4231 (7 U.S.C. §3007)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides grants to participating states to offer vouchers/coupons to low-income seniors that may be used at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other approved venues to purchase fresh produce. **Eligibility:** Income eligibility criteria are established by states, within a framework established by FNS (e.g., participants must be at least 60 years old, household income no greater than 185% of federal poverty). **Data:** In FY2024, SFMNP was operated by 56 agencies, including states, DC, U.S. territories, and ITOs. In FY2022 (the latest year of available data), about 758,000 individuals received annual SFMNP vouchers/coupons worth an average of $39.	$21[g]

Source: Funding for SNAP, FDPIR, TEFAP, Community Food Projects, and CSFP are FY2026 appropriations from P.L. 119-37 and the accompanying explanatory statement. SNAP's and FDPIR's funding are largely based on the demand for program's benefits and services, so appropriations figures usually overestimate those programs' annual cost. Funding for GusNIP, FFVP, and SFMNP are based on the mandatory funds authorized by the programs' authorizing laws (explained further in the notes below). Participation data are from USDA, FNS, "September 2025 Keydata Report," December 23, 2025, https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/overview/keydata-sept2025, unless otherwise noted. Data are preliminary for FY2025 and may be revised in future releases as reporting agencies finalize data.

a. See CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*, for additional detail.

b. USDA, FNS, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2023*, April 2025, https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/characteristics-fy23.

c. SNAP funding figure displayed includes FY2026 appropriated amounts for NAP block grants (approximately $3 billion for Puerto Rico, $12 million for American Samoa, and an unspecified amount for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

d. TEFAP appropriation for entitlement foods and administrative funds. Does not include the value of bonus foods distributed through TEFAP, which has ranged from $1 billion to $2 billion since FY2019. For more information, see CRS Report R45408, *The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): Background and Funding*.

e. GusNIP's mandatory funding is provided by a transfer from the Commodity Credit Corporation; the transfer is authorized by the program's authorizing language. Amount shown is the authorized transfer amount for FY2026.

f. FFVP is funded by a mandatory transfer of funds from Section 32 of the Act of August 24, 1935. Amount shown is the authorized transfer amount for FY2026, from USDA, FNS, "Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: Allocation of Funds for Fiscal Year FY2026," SP 16-2025, June 4, 2025, https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/allocation-funds-fy26.

g. SFMNP funding is provided by a transfer from the Commodity Credit Corporation; the transfer is authorized by the program's authorizing language. Amount shown is the authorized transfer amount for FY2026.

Table 2. Overview of WIC and Child Nutrition Programs

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)		
Child Nutrition Act, Section 17 (42 U.S.C. §1786)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides supplemental, nutrient-rich foods; nutrition education and counseling; and breastfeeding promotion and support to low-income women, infants, and children. WIC benefits are redeemable for a list of nutrient-rich foods specific to the participant's eligibility category and medical needs (for example, foods specifically recommended for an anemic pregnant woman). These foods are specified in USDA, FNS regulations, although state agencies may further specify. **Eligibility:** Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five with household income at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines may be WIC eligible. Applicants must be individually determined to be at "nutritional risk" by a health professional and must meet state residency requirements. Applicants may meet income requirements based on receipt of TANF cash assistance, SNAP, or Medicaid. **Data:** In FY2025, an average of approximately 6.9 million individuals (up from 6.7 million in FY2024) participated in WIC each month. This includes approximately 3.8 million children, 1.5 million infants, and 1.5 million women. In FY2026, WIC is administered by all 50 states, the District of Columbia (DC), five territories (American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and 32 ITOs.	$8,200
WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)		
Child Nutrition Act, Section 17(m) (42 U.S.C. §1786(m))/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides grants to participating states to offer vouchers/coupons/EBT to WIC participants that may be used in farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other approved venues to purchase fresh produce. **Eligibility:** Women, infants over four months old, and children who are certified to receive WIC Program benefits or who are on a waiting list for WIC certification are eligible to participate in the FMNP. **Data:** In FY2022, approximately 1.3 million WIC participants received annual FMNP benefits worth an average of $26 per year. In FY2024, 49 agencies participated in WIC FMNP, including states DC, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and ITOs.	$10

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
School Breakfast Program (SBP)		
Child Nutrition Act, Section 4 (42 U.S.C. §1773)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides federal cash assistance for elementary and secondary schools that provide breakfast to school children. Federal subsidies currently range from about 40 cents to $3.00 per meal (depending on the type of meal and the recipient's household income, with subsidies higher in Alaska, Hawaii, and specified U.S. territories). Total amount of assistance can vary based on the number of free, reduced-price, and paid lunches served. **Eligibility:** Children are eligible to receive free school breakfasts if their family income is below 130% of federal poverty guidelines, or if they receive TANF or SNAP benefits, or if they are considered a migrant, runaway, or homeless child, or are in foster care. Children are eligible to receive reduced-price school breakfasts if their family income is between 130% and 185% of federal poverty guidelines. Children in states operating universal free meal policies, or in schools operating federal options such as the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), receive meals for free. **Data:** In FY2025, an average of 16.0 million students in approximately 91,000 schools participated in SBP each school day.	$6,590
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)		
Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. §§1751 et seq.)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides federal assistance, in the form of cash and commodities, to elementary and secondary schools that provide lunch to school children. Federal subsidies currently range from 44 cents to $4.86 per meal (depending on the type of meal and the recipient's household income, with subsidies higher in Alaska, Hawaii, and specified U.S. territories). Total amount of federal assistance can vary based on the number of free, reduced-price, and paid lunches served. There are also options for schools to provide summer meals through NSLP's Seamless Summer Option and afterschool snacks through the NSLP Afterschool Snack component. **Eligibility**: Children are eligible to receive free school lunches if their household income is below 130% of federal poverty guidelines, or if they receive TANF or SNAP benefits, or if they are considered a migrant, runaway, or homeless child, or are in foster care. Children are eligible to receive reduced-price school lunches if their household income is between 130% and 185% of federal poverty guidelines. Children in states operating universal free meal policies, or in schools operating federal options such as CEP, receive meals for free. **Data:** In FY2025, an average of 29.9 million students in approximately 94,000 schools participated in NSLP each school day.	$18,692

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)		
Russell National School Lunch Act, Section 13 (42 U.S.C. §1761)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides federal cash assistance and some commodity foods to local public and private nonprofit "service institutions" running summer youth programs, camps, or other recreation sites that serve low-income children during their summer break or during lengthy school-year breaks. Sites may be schools, camps, community centers, and other locations. As of summer 2023, institutions may also deliver meals to low-income children in rural areas. Sponsors receive per-meal/snack subsidies as well as assistance with operating costs. **Eligibility:** Children age 18 or younger and certain individuals with disabilities over the age of 18, who either live in low-income areas or meet program eligibility rules similar to the eligibility rules for the school lunch program. **Data:** In June 2025, summer meals were served at about 35,000 sites to 2.4 million children and youth each summer day.[a]	$905
Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program (Summer EBT)		
Russell National School Lunch Act, Section 13A (42 U.S.C. §1762)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Summer EBT provides electronic benefits that can be redeemed for groceries to households with eligible children over the summer months. Eligible households in participating jurisdictions receive a $40 per child, per month grocery benefit (adjusted annually for inflation) that they can redeem at SNAP-authorized retailers. Special program rules exist for certain Indian tribal organizations, certain territories, and children attending year-round schools. **Eligibility:** Children who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year are automatically enrolled in Summer EBT (though families may opt out). States participating in the program must also establish an application process—using the same eligibility criteria as free and reduced-price school meals—for other children. **Data:** In summer 2025, 37 states, DC, four territories, and five ITOs operated Summer EBT, with a peak of 8.5 million children receiving benefits in June 2025.	$4,357
Special Milk Program		
Child Nutrition Act, Section 3 (42 U.S.C. §1772)/administered by USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides public or nonprofit schools or child care institutions that do not participate in other federal meal programs with a per-half pint reimbursement for part of the cost of milk served to children/students. **Eligibility:** Any child at a participating school or half-day prekindergarten program can receive milk through the Special Milk Program. Children may either buy milk or receive it free, depending on the school's choice of program options. **Data:** In FY2025, roughly 65,000 half-pints of milk were served on average daily through the Special Milk Program.[b]	$5

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)		
Russell National School Lunch Act, Section 17 (42 U.S.C. §1766)) / Administered by the USDA, FNS	**Description:** Provides cash subsidies to participating child care centers, family day care homes, after-school programs, and nonresidential adult-care centers for the meals and snacks they serve to children, the elderly, and chronically disabled persons. In child care centers and nonresidential adult-care settings, per-meal/snack subsidy payments are the same as those for school meals and child care centers. Family day care homes are reimbursed according to a tiered system. Federal subsidies currently range from about 40 cents to $4.60 per meal (depending on the type of meal and the recipient's household income, with higher subsidies in Alaska, Hawaii, and specified U.S. territories). **Eligibility:** (*Child care centers)* Children's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and snacks is the same as for school meals programs. Children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals may not be charged separate meal fees (however, child care centers may incorporate meal costs into tuition). *(Day care homes)* There are no individual eligibility determinations; rather, day care homes receive a subsidy for every meal served, and the size of the subsidy is based on whether the home is a Tier I or Tier II home. Day care homes located in a low-income area or that are operated by a low-income provider receive a higher, Tier I reimbursement rate; other homes receive a lower, Tier II rate per meal. Families may not be charged separate meal fees but meal costs may be incorporated into tuition. *(Adult services)* Elderly (age 60+) or chronically disabled persons attending participating nonresidential adult-care centers. Both for-profit and nonprofit centers are eligible to participate. Adults are eligible for free or reduced meals based on income guidelines that are the same as in school meals programs, or if they receive SNAP, FDPIR, Supplemental Security Income, or Medicaid. **Data:** In FY2025, the average daily participation of children and adults was approximately 4.7 million (4.6 million children and 117,600 older adults). Of the children served, approximately 3.9 million were in child care centers and 627,000 were in family day care homes.	$4,521

Source: Funding data are FY2026 appropriations from P.L. 119-37 and the accompanying explanatory statement unless otherwise noted. Appropriations for child nutrition programs may not match final expenditures for the fiscal year because spending fluctuates with the number of meals served in the programs and because funds are available for two fiscal years. Participation data are from USDA, FNS, "September 2025 Keydata Report," December 23, 2025, https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/overview/keydata-sept2025, unless otherwise noted below. Participation data are preliminary for FY2025 and may be revised in future releases as reporting agencies finalize data.

a. USDA, FNS, "October 2025 Keydata Report," January 23, 2026, https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/overview/keydata-oct25.

b. Daily average half-pints served in the Special Milk Program were estimated by CRS based on the average number of half pints served per month divided by an estimated 20 operating days per month.

HHS ACL Programs

The Administration on Aging (AOA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Community Living (ACL) administers domestic food assistance programs authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA). These programs provide formula grants to states, U.S. territories, and Indian tribal organizations to support congregate meals in group settings (e.g., senior centers, community centers, schools, and houses of worship) and home-delivered meals to older individuals.[34] AOA also administers the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP), which provides funds to the same entities to purchase food for these programs. While OAA's nutrition services programs provide food assistance in the form of a prepared meal to older individuals living in the community, the stated purpose of the program is not only to reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition, but also to promote socialization, as well as the health and well-being of older individuals.[35] **Table 3** provides details on the HHS ACL programs, including eligibility, services provided, and funding.

Older individuals who meet certain income and other requirements may also be eligible for other domestic food assistance programs administered by USDA, such as the SNAP, SFMNP, CSFP, and CACFP. Moreover, other services funded under OAA provide outreach, education, and referral to assist eligible older individuals in accessing these USDA benefits and programs. While senior nutrition programs are administered by AOA, there continues to be program coordination between HHS ACL and USDA FNS. At the federal level, states and other entities may choose to receive all or part of their NSIP allotments in the form of USDA commodities.[36] Obligations for NSIP commodity procurement are funded under an agreement between ACL and FNS.[37]

At the state level, HHS ACL and USDA FNS nutrition services programs that target seniors may be jointly administered under state aging and disability agencies, who are primarily responsible at the state level for administering OAA-funded programs. According to findings from an evaluation of the OAA nutrition services programs, 8 in 10 State Units on Aging (SUAs)—designated state-level agencies[38]—had a nutrition program administrator (NPA) who plans, develops, administers, implements, and evaluates OAA nutrition services. In 40% of SUAs with an NPA, the NPA has program responsibilities for OAA nutrition services as well as USDA programs such as SNAP and SFMNP.[39] Whether a state agency has some responsibility for administering HHS ACL and USDA FNS programs and services may depend on whether the agency functions as an

[34] The Older Americans Act (OAA) statute defines "older individual" as an individual aged 60 and older. For more information on programs and funding under the OAA, see CRS Report R43414, *Older Americans Act: Overview and Funding*.

[35] 42 U.S.C. §3030d-21.

[36] The Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) was originally established by the OAA in 1974 as the Nutrition Program for the Elderly and administered by USDA. Congress transferred the administration of NSIP from USDA to HHS AOA in 2003. In 2006, pursuant to P.L. 109-365, Congress rescinded states' option to receive commodities. However, in 2007, this option was reinstated through P.L. 110-19 (effective April 23, 2007), which authorized the transfer of NSIP funds from HHS to USDA for the purchase of commodities and related expenses.

[37] Most entities choose to receive their share of NSIP funds in cash, rather than commodities. In FY2024, four states chose to receive a portion of their share of the nutrition services incentive funds in commodities: Delaware, Kansas, Massachusetts, and Montana. The FY2024 total value for these commodities was $2.26 million (USDA, FNS, 2026 Explanatory Notes, pp. 34-100 and 34-114).

[38] At the state-level, a State Unit on Aging (SUA) may be referred to as a Department, Office, Bureau, Commission, Council, or Board for older adults, seniors, aging, the elderly, and/or adults with physical disabilities.

[39] James Mabli et al., "Final Report: Process Evaluation of Older Americans Act Title III-C Nutrition Services Program," Mathematica Policy Research, September 30, 2015, p. 15.

independent administrative agency or part of an umbrella agency that also has responsibility for other health and human services.

SUAs may also collaborate with USDA programs. Most SUAs reported that they also collaborate with SNAP (56%) and SFMNP (62%), but collaborate less so with other USDA programs, such as CSFP, CACFP, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).[40] Collaboration activities with SNAP and SFMNP included promoting older-adult access to these programs, participating in committees and workshops as well as training and assistance programs, and policy planning activities.[41] Also, older adults participating in SNAP can use their benefits as a voluntary contribution toward the OAA meal if the nutrition service provider is authorized by USDA to accept SNAP benefits for this purpose and the older adults choose to do so.

Congress has reauthorized and amended the OAA numerous times since it was first enacted in 1965. The last OAA reauthorization occurred in 2020, when the 116th Congress enacted the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-131), which extended the act's authorization of appropriations for most programs, including senior nutrition, through FY2024. While authorization of appropriations for most OAA programs expired at the end of FY2024 (September, 30, 2024), Congress has continued to appropriate funding for OAA authorized activities.

The 2020 OAA reauthorization made several changes to the nutrition services programs. First, it added reducing malnutrition as a purpose of the nutrition services programs and similarly included screening for malnutrition in the definition of disease prevention and health promotion services under the act. It clarified that the officer or employee responsible for federal administration of the nutrition services programs be a registered dietician or registered dietician nutritionist, and that nutrition programs specify that meals adjusted to meet special dietary needs include those adjusted for cultural considerations and preferences and "medically tailored meals." It further required states to decrease administrative burdens and direct services to the greatest need when transferring funds between the congregate and home-delivered nutrition programs. Finally, it required the Assistant Secretary to conduct a Nutrition Services Impact Study to assess how to measure and evaluate the discrepancy between available nutrition services and the demand for such services.[42]

[40] Mabli et al., "Process Evaluation of Older Americans Act," pp. 43-44.

[41] For more information, see the National Aging and Nutrition Resource Center, "Partnerships with Foodbanks and Other United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Programs," https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/Partnerships-with-Foodbanks-and-Other-United-States-Department-of-Agriculture-non-COVID_508.pdf.

[42] For more information about the OAA 2020 Reauthorization see CRS Report R46439, *Older Americans Act: 2020 Reauthorization*.

Table 3. Overview of Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Congregate Nutrition Program		
Older Americans Act, Title III, Part C, Subpart 1 (42 U.S.C. §3030e) / Administered by HHS, ACL	**Description:** Provides meals to older adults in settings such as senior centers, schools, and adult day care centers. Offers social services such as nutrition education and screening, nutrition assessment, and counseling at meals sites. Provides older adults with opportunities for social engagement and volunteerism. **Eligibility:** Available to persons age 60 or older and their spouses of any age. May be available to persons with disabilities who live with an adult age 60 and older or who reside in a housing facility that is primarily occupied by older adults at which congregate meals are served, and volunteers during meal hours. **Data:** In 2024, almost 64.6 million congregate meals were served to about 1.4 million participants.	$565
Home Delivered Nutrition Program		
Older Americans Act, Title III, Part C, Subpart 2 (42 U.S.C. §3030f) / Administered by HHS, ACL	**Description:** Provides meals to older adults who may be limited in their ability to leave their home unassisted, shop for and prepare nutritious meals, have a disability, or possess other relevant factors that demonstrate a need for services. Offers services such as nutrition screening and education, nutrition assessment, and counseling. **Eligibility:** Available to persons age 60 or older and their spouses of any age. May be available to persons with disabilities who live with an adult age 60 and older. **Data:** In 2024, about 179.2 million home-delivered meals were served to about 1.2 million participants.	$381
Grants to Native Americans: Supportive and Nutrition Services		
Older Americans Act, Title VI, (42 U.S.C. §3057c) / Administered by HHS, ACL	**Description:** Provides for the delivery of supportive and nutrition services comparable to services provided under Title III (i.e., congregate and home-delivered meals) to older Native Americans. **Eligibility:** Same program eligibility criteria as Congregate and Home Delivered Nutrition Program (see above rows). A tribal organization or Hawaiian Native grantee may develop further eligibility requirements for implementation of services for older Native Americans consistent with the OAA and applicable federal requirements. **Data:** In 2023 (the most recent data available), 2.8 million congregate meals were served to about 56,000 participants and 3.8 million home-delivered meals were served to almost 45,000 participants.	$40

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2026 Funding (in millions)
Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)		
Older Americans Act, Title III, Part A, Section 311 (42 U.S.C. §3030a) / Administered by HHS, ACL	**Description**: Provides funds to states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations to purchase food or to cover the costs of food commodities provided by USDA for the congregate and home-delivered nutrition programs. Funds are allotted to states and other entities based on each state's share of total meals served during the prior year. Most states choose to receive their share of funds in cash, rather than commodities.[a]	$112

Source: Prepared by CRS based on FY2026 Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS)-Education Appropriations acts and accompanying report and explanatory statement language available at the CRS appropriations status table. Eligibility rules are under 45 C.F.R. §§1321.81, 1321.87, 1322.21, 1322.27. Program data are from the Administration on Aging, AGing Integrated Database (AGID), https://agid.acl.gov/.

Notes: For more information on programs and funding under the OAA, see CRS Report R43414, *Older Americans Act: Overview and Funding*.

a. In FY2024, four states chose to receive a portion of their share of the nutrition services incentive funds in commodities: Delaware, Kansas, Massachusetts, and Montana. The FY2024 total value for these commodities was $2.3 million (USDA, FNS, 2026 Explanatory Notes, pp. 34-100 and 34-114).

DHS FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—administers the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP).[43] The EFSP was established through the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983 (Title I of P.L. 98-8) and later authorized under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (Title III of P.L. 100-77).[44] Unlike some forms of FEMA assistance, the provision of EFSP funding does not require a presidential emergency or major disaster declaration.[45]

The EFSP provides grants to local government and nonprofit organizations to support and expand existing programs that aid individuals and families who are, or are at risk of, experiencing hunger or homelessness. As established in statute, the EFSP provides funding for food, shelter, and supportive services.[46] The guidance for each funding phase lists the eligible costs that program-funded organizations may cover with EFSP resources, such as the following:

- food costs (e.g., congregate meals, items for food pantries such as groceries, food vouchers, transportation expenses related to picking up, delivering, and distributing food);
- shelter costs (e.g., mass shelter services, temporary hotel/motel lodging assistance);
- temporary rent/mortgage assistance;
- temporary utility assistance; and
- necessary equipment purchases.[47]

Table 4 provides details on the EFSP, including eligibility, services provided, and funding.

The EFSP is governed by a National Board composed of representatives from private nonprofit organizations and chaired by the FEMA Administrator.[48] The National Board is responsible for

[43] 42 U.S.C. §§11331-11352.

[44] The act has also been amended and reauthorized, including through the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-628). P.L. 106-400 renamed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 2000.).

[45] The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act; P.L. 93-288, as amended; 42 U.S.C. §§5121 et seq.) authorizes the President to declare an incident an "emergency" or a "major disaster." An emergency or major disaster is required in order for FEMA to provide many forms of assistance.

[46] 42 U.S.C. §11343(a).

[47] The National Board, which governs the EFSP, issues guidance for each phase (i.e., a grant cycle aligning with a tranche of appropriated funding). For examples of eligible costs as detailed in the program guidance, see the National Board, *Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program Phase 35 Responsibilities and Requirements Manual*, pp. 65-76, https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/EFSPManual/Phase_35_Manual.pdf (hereinafter, "National Board, *Phase 35 Manual"*). The National Board has produced addendums to the *Phase 35 Manual* or published tables reflecting updates to the guidance for subsequent phases. See, for example, the National Board, *Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program Phase 36 Addendum*, https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/AddendumtoProgramManual/AddendumP36Manual.pdf and National Board, "Emergency Food And Shelter Program Changes / New Guidance: Implementation Beginning with Phases 39 and ARPA-R Awards," https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/pdfs/EFSP%20Program%20Changes.pdf.

[48] 42 U.S.C. §11331(a)-(c). By statute, the National Board includes representatives from six private nonprofit organizations: (1) the American Red Cross, (2) Catholic Charities U.S.A., (3) the Council of Jewish Federations, Inc., (4) the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., (5) the Salvation Army, and (6) the United Way of America (also referred to as United Way Worldwide), and the FEMA Administrator is the Director (the Director is the Chairperson of the National Board).

establishing program guidance,[49] determining qualifying jurisdictions and funding allocations,[50] and disbursing awards to subrecipients (referred to as Local Recipient Organizations [LROs]—local government and nonprofit organizations).[51] The National Board identifies and selects the jurisdictions with the highest need for food and shelter assistance (i.e., qualifying jurisdictions) using a formula that considers population data, poverty data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census's American Community Survey, and unemployment data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and determines the amount to be distributed to each.[52]

Each locality designated for funding must establish a Local Board, the composition of which mirrors the National Board—with a local government representative and representatives of the same private nonprofit organizations as the National Board—to the extent practicable.[53] Local Boards are responsible for determining community needs and distribution strategies for the locality's funding allocation. Local Boards also select LROs for funding awards.[54]

FEMA has continuing authority to administer the EFSP, as the program's establishing legislation did not include a sunset provision. The authorization of appropriations in the *U.S. Code* for the EFSP expired at the end of FY1994. Congress has continued to provide funding to FEMA for EFSP program activities since FY1995. The committees of jurisdiction for the EFSP are the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Financial Services. The EFSP is typically funded—and given de facto authorization—by a specific subappropriation under FEMA's annual Federal Assistance appropriation in the DHS Appropriations Act, and occasionally through supplemental appropriations. Most recently (as of the cover date of this report), in FY2025 Congress appropriated $117 million for the EFSP through the FY2025 full-year continuing resolution (P.L. 119-4). According to the National Board's website, hosted by the United Way, thus far, "During its 42 years of operation, the program [has] disbursed over $6.6 billion to over 14,000 local providers in more than 2,500 counties and cities."[55]

[49] 42 U.S.C. §11346(a).

[50] 42 U.S.C. §11346(a)(1)-(2). The National Board publishes allocation information (see, for example, the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, *Phase 42: Fiscal Year 2024 Allocations*, https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/pdfs/Phase%2042%20(FY2024)%20Allocations.pdf).

[51] 42 U.S.C. §11345.

[52] The National Board uses a formula to determine whether a jurisdiction is eligible for funding (e.g., a jurisdiction could qualify for Phase 40 funding [FY2022 annual appropriations] if it met one of the following criteria: number of unemployed: 300 or more with a 3.9% rate of unemployment; or number of unemployed: 300 or more with a 12.8% rate of poverty"). EFSP grant award amounts to formula-qualified jurisdictions are based on a per capita rate, which is determined by dividing the available funds by the number of unemployed persons within each qualifying jurisdiction. In addition, there is a "State Set-Aside" process that allows any jurisdiction—formula-qualified or not—to receive EFSP funding. The National Board allocates a portion of the appropriated funds for such purposes based on the unemployment rates in the jurisdictions that do not qualify under the formula. These grants can be used to address pockets of homelessness and poverty or immediate needs. See National Board, *Phase 35 Manual*, pp. 16, pp. 20-21; and National Board, "How Areas Qualify," https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=qualify.cfm (accessed January 12, 2026).

[53] 42 U.S.C. §11332(a).

[54] 42 U.S.C. §11332.

[55] National Board, "About the Emergency Food and Shelter Program" web page, https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/about.cfm#ssac (accessed January 12, 2026). The "Your Community" web page tab provides information on the amount spent and the assistance provided related to served meals, other food, mass shelter, other shelter, supplies and equipment, rehabilitation of facilities, rent or mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and administrative costs at the county level by fiscal year and EFSP funding phase (filtered by state and county), available at https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=qualify.cfm.

Table 4. Overview of FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program

Authorizing Legislation/Federal Administrative Entity	Program Information	FY2025[a] Funding (in millions)
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §§11331-11352) /administered by DHS, FEMA	**Description:** Provides grant funding to local government and nonprofit organizations to supplement and expand efforts to provide food, shelter, and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, hunger or homelessness. **Eligibility:** Local Recipient Organizations—EFSP subrecipients—include private nonprofit organizations and public organizations of the local government within the United States and the U.S. territories. The EFSP is needs-based and clients (i.e., beneficiaries) must be permanent residents of or "transients" within that jurisdiction.[b] **Data:** In FY2022 (the most recent year of data), the EFSP funded an estimated 73.1 million meals, 2.8 million nights of lodging, 32,449 rent/mortgage payments, and 32,297 utility payments.	$117

Source: Prepared by CRS based on statute, program guidance, funding opportunities, and federal grants resources, including the National Board, *Phase 35 Responsibilities and Requirements Manual*, https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/EFSPManual/Phase_35_Manual.pdf; Department of Homeland Security (DHS), *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Fiscal Year 2025 Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program*, https://files.simpler.grants.gov/opportunities/baf1e52b-2fe8-49c8-912b-c7552b1c74d6/attachments/7b75447d-ae95-4634-8209-5f17d10f689d/Fiscal_Year_2025_Emergency_Food_and_Shelter_National_Board_Program_508.pdf; and Federal Program Inventory, "Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program," last accessed January 9, 2026, https://fpi.omb.gov/program/97.024 (see "Program Results").

Notes: For more information on EFSP and funding under Title III of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, see CRS In Focus IF12026, *FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)*.

a. As of the cover date of this report, FY2026 appropriations have not yet been finalized for DHS, so FY2025 funding data is presented in this table.

b. The National Board does not set client eligibility criteria; however, Local Boards may choose to establish client eligibility criteria based on community needs. If the Local Board does not establish client eligibility criteria, Local Recipient Organizations may use their existing criteria or set criteria for assistance provided under the EFSP award (with Local Board approval). Criteria used must not discriminate based on age, race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, economic status, or sexual orientation, and consideration must be given to the transition from temporary shelter to permanent homes, and the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness who have disabilities and illness, and to facilitate access to other sources of services and benefits for individuals experiencing homelessness.

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