

CHILD FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS: HOUSEHOLD AND ACADEMIC SETTINGS

Food insecurity affects approximately 496,110 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**, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, offer recommendations** on healthy eating and drinking habits to support nutrient needs, enhance overall health, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.⁶ The guidance is organized by age group.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

*This factsheet was prepared before the release of the 2026–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Information reflects the most current guidance available at the time of publication.

**Recommendations 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

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Programs Designed to Support Child Nutrition at Home

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

Eligibility Requirements

Georgia Enrollment

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

417,226

Individual Demographics [15](#)

households with children [17](#)

- Resident of the state of Georgia
- Lived in the United States for at least 5 years, or
- Receives disability-related assistance or benefits, or
- Children under age 18

Income [16](#)

- Lives at or below 130% of the federal poverty (FPL) income guidelines, depending on household status and deduction calculations



Food Benefits

Monthly monetary benefit loaded on the SNAP/EBT card to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and frozen, canned, and shelf-stable items [18](#)



Health and Nutrition Resources

Nutrition education (i.e., information on healthy eating, safe food, staying active, stretching food dollars, etc.) [19](#)

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

231,480

total participants [23](#)

- Pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women
- Infants and children up to age 5 [20](#)

Income [21](#)

- 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](#)

- Applicants must be determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional or a trained health official



Food Benefits

- Nutritionally balanced food packages [24](#)
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits [25](#)



Health and Nutrition Resources

- Breastfeeding supports [26](#)
- Healthcare referrals [27](#)
- Nutrition education [28](#)
- Immunization screenings [29](#)

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Programs Designed to Support Health and Adequate Child Nutrition in Early Education, School, and Afterschool Programs

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).

Program and Description	Georgia Enrollment
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Reimburses for nutritious meals and snacks, which align with dietary meal guidelines. Child care programs, afterschool care programs, child care homes, emergency shelters, and adult care centers can be CACFP eligible. ^{30}	130,208 average daily attendance ^{35}
National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Provide nutritionally balanced, free or reduced-cost (based on a sliding scale) lunches, which align with dietary meal guidelines to children in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. ^{31}	1,129,375 total participation ^{36}
School Breakfast Program (SBP) Provides cash subsidies to public or nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions to provide meals , which align with dietary meal guidelines. Meals are provided to eligible children for free or at a reduced cost. ^{32}	650,185 total participation ^{37}
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. ^{33}	124,471 average daily participation ^{38}
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Reimburses for healthy meals and snacks which align with dietary meal guidelines served to children from areas with low-income during summer months when school is not in session. ^{34}	52,518 average daily attendance ^{39}



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For Programs Supporting Household Nutrition Programs:

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:

- 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

For Programs Supporting Early Education, School, and Afterschool Nutrition Programs:

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:

- Allow all CACFP programs to be reimbursed for an additional meal (e.g., snack or dinner), as was previously allowed
- Increase nutritious food access for Head Start, family child care homes, and afterschool programs by allowing them to receive a higher reimbursement rate (an additional 10 cents for eligible meals and snacks)
- Eliminate the two-tier system for family child care homes in CACFP, which would provide consistent and adequate reimbursement rates
- Streamline CACFP program requirements, reduce paperwork, and maximize technology to improve program access (e.g., streamline CACFP and SFSP applications, virtual monitoring)

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