

National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity

Child Nutrition Program Reauthorization Recommendations

Over the last two decades, rates of obesity have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents. Poor diet (too much saturated fat, sodium and calories, not enough fruits, vegetables and whole grains, etc.) and physical inactivity are major contributors to heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, which are responsible for 60% of deaths in the United States.

Strengthen Nutrition Education/Promotion in Child Nutrition Programs

Good nutrition should begin in childhood when eating habits are formed and chronic diseases begin to develop. Promoting and teaching healthy eating should be an integral component of the child nutrition programs.

- Enhance and strengthen the Team Nutrition program by adding a state-level infrastructure and networking component called the "Team Nutrition Network." Fund by increasing the State Administrative Expense formula from 1.5% to 2% and dedicating the 0.5% increase to nutrition education (to provide \$40 million annually). Maintain the current level of funding (\$10 million per year) for existing Team Nutrition program components and give the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) more flexibility to spend those resources.

Improve the School Nutrition Environment

Schools should not only teach nutrition in the classroom, but should model it in the cafeteria and everywhere on school campuses. All food choices available to children at school should make a positive contribution to children's diets.

Help schools to continue to improve the nutritional quality of school meals

The nutritional quality of meals served as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) significantly improved between 1992 and 1998 (they now have less fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium and more fruits and vegetables). However, schools need additional support to continue to make school meals more healthful and appealing to children. Only 15% of schools meet the saturated fat standards for lunches and three out of four American high school students do not eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day (the minimum recommended amount).

- Provide \$10 million annually for grants to states or school districts for the "Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids Initiative" for educational/ promotional materials, salad/garden bars, prepackaged salads and fruit cups, innovative vending options, farm to school programs, cold storage and other infrastructure, and other creative ways to help schools provide and encourage children to consume more fruits and vegetables.
- Expand the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program up to \$100 million annually (from \$50 million) to help improve the quality of produce available to schools.

- Give schools flexibility to decide what type(s) of milk to offer with school meals (i.e., remove the whole milk requirement). Encourage schools to serve and promote low-fat milk.
- Provide USDA's Food and Nutrition Service with \$2 million per year to do field trainings and give grants to states to train localities on the School Meals Initiative to help schools improve the nutritional quality of meals, increase fruits and vegetables, reduce saturated fat, improve school nutrition environment, etc.
- Await the results of the pilot study on providing free fruits and vegetables to school students as snacks, and recommend next steps based on those results.
- Await the results of the GAO report on reimbursement rates for the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program and after-school snacks and determine if they need to be adjusted to allow for adequate purchases of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat cheeses and other healthy options.

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity 2001 recommends that "[i]ndividuals and groups across all settings ... [adopt] policies specifying that all foods and beverages available at school contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*."

Reduce competition to school meals from low-nutrition foods

Competitive foods (from vending machines, a la carte, school stores, etc.) are widely available to students. They can negatively affect children's diets, since the majority of competitive foods are high in calories and fat and low in nutrients. Between 1989 and 1996, children's calorie intake increased by approximately 100 to 180 extra calories per day (depending on the child's age). While obesity is a complex, multi-factorial problem, over-consumption of soft drinks and snack foods plays a role. Competitive foods of poor nutritional quality undermine the significant federal investment (\$7.9 billion in FY 2001) in the school meal programs.

- Congress should **give the U.S Department of Agriculture authority to establish and enforce regulations for all foods sales anywhere on school campuses throughout the school day** in schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to ensure that foods sold outside of the school meal programs make a positive contribution to children's diets and do not undermine the national investment in school meals.

Within 6 months of enactment, the Secretary of Agriculture should convene an advisory committee of experts in child health, nutrition and education to develop recommendations for nutrition standards for competitive foods. Within 24 months of enactment, the Secretary should finalize regulations to improve the nutritional quality of competitive foods. The regulations should not preempt states or school districts from having stronger requirements.

WIC: Improve the Nutritional Quality of Foods and Maintain Mission

Scientific understanding about nutrition has advanced considerably since the WIC Program began in 1974. Yet, six out of the seven WIC food packages have never been significantly changed or updated. In addition, given the success and reach of the WIC Program, it has been assigned additional tasks that have reduced the time and resources dedicated to its principal mission of promoting nutrition and health. Additional services add to program costs and take resources away from nutrition and health services.

- Urge USDA to update and improve the nutritional quality of the WIC food packages. Require that the food package, target nutrients and nutrient needs of participants be re-evaluated at least every 10 years and revised to reflect current nutrition science.
- Maintain the nutrition and health mission of WIC. Increase the Nutrition Services and Administration funding to assure quality nutrition education services. Provide adequate funding to accompany additional related administrative and client service requirements, such as substance abuse education, immunization screening, etc.

Total Cost of NANA Requests: \$102 million.

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