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An Introduction to Child Nutrition Reauthorization

The child nutrition programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) were last reauthorized in 2010. Some of the authorities created or extended in that law (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, P.L. 111-296) expired on September 30, 2015. However, the vast majority of program operations have continued with funding provided by appropriations acts.

Child nutrition reauthorization refers to Congress's process of making changes, additions, and deletions to the permanent statutes that authorize the child nutrition programs, WIC, and related policies: (1) Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (2) Child Nutrition Act, and sometimes (3) Section 32 of the Act of August 24, 1935. During the 114th Congress, committees of jurisdiction marked up bills but reauthorization was not completed (see CRS Report R44373, *Tracking the Next Child Nutrition Reauthorization: An Overview*).

Major Programs Typically Amended in a Child Nutrition Reauthorization

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

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

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

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

Related Programs and Policies in the Farm Bill

The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable ("Snack") Program (FFVP)** is authorized in the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. Omnibus farm bill legislation in 2008 and 2014 amended the program. No amendments to FFVP were made in the 2010 child nutrition reauthorization or the 2018 farm bill. The 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334) reauthorized the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** as well as USDA's purchase of foods for the child nutrition programs.

Categorization of Programs' Funding

Most of the WIC and child nutrition programs' funding requires annual appropriations:

- Most child nutrition program funding is appropriated mandatory spending based on formulas and criteria in the authorizing laws (e.g., the programs' per-meal reimbursements).
- Some smaller child nutrition grants and activities are funded with discretionary appropriations (e.g., Team Nutrition).
- WIC and WIC FMNP funds are discretionary.

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

Last Reauthorization

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

Have the Programs Expired?

Many of these programs' authorizations are permanent (they have no expiration date). This is the case for the main functions of NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and SMP.

In other cases, while the authority for the program itself is permanent, the program's authorization of appropriations expired on September 30, 2015 (e.g., SFSP, WIC, WIC FMNP, and State Administrative Expenses, which funds states' operation of certain programs). In such cases, the program may still operate if funding is provided in appropriations laws, which has been the case for these programs in FY2016 (P.L. 114-113), FY2017 (P.L. 115-31), FY2018 (P.L. 115-141), and FY2019 (P.L. 116-6) (as well as FY2016, FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 continuing resolutions).

A few pilot programs and temporary activities expired on September 30, 2015, and were not always extended. A California program to provide SFSP snacks year-round has not been extended. Currently, federal authority to conduct food safety audits and mandatory funding for a National Hunger Clearinghouse have been extended by FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 appropriations laws.

Table I. Child Nutrition and WIC Programs at a Glance

Program	Authorizing Statute (Year First Authorized)	Distinguishing Characteristics	FY2018 Expenditures (exceptions noted)	FY2018 Average Daily Participation (exceptions noted)
National School Lunch Program	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1946)	Lunches at school Typically served in schools, to pre-K-12 students, during the school day and year Possible to provide summer food and afterschool snacks	\$13.8 billion	29.7 million
School Breakfast Program	Child Nutrition Act (1966)	Breakfasts at school (also for pre-K-12) Typically served in schools, to K-12 students, during the school day and year	\$4.4 billion	14.7 million
Child and Adult Care Food Program (child care center, day care homes, adult day care centers)	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1968)	Meals and snacks in early childhood and adult day care settings Rules and funding differ based on type of institution	\$3.6 billion (includes at-risk after-school spending, described below)	4.5 million children; 131,700 adults
Child and Adult Care Food Program (at-risk after-school snacks and meals) ^a	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1994)	Supper and snacks for school-age children after-school	(not available; included in CACFP total above)	1.9 million children (included in CACFP children above)
Summer Food Service Program	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (1968)	Meals and snacks provided during summer months Sites vary and include schools, community centers, camps, parks, and others Eligibility rules vary by type of site	\$472 million	145.8 million meals served annually ^b
Special Milk Program	Child Nutrition Act (1954)	Subsidizes milk, not meals or snacks Institutions eligible must not participate in NSLP or SBP	\$7.9 million	37.9 million half-pints average monthly
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Child Nutrition Act (1974)	Provides benefits redeemable for supplemental foods; and nutrition counseling, and breastfeeding support, to pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women; infants; and children (under five years old).	\$6.1 billion (FY2019 appropriations) ^c	6.9 million average monthly (preliminary FY2018 data)
WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP)	Child Nutrition Act (1992)	Provides vouchers for WIC participants to redeem at farmers' markets.	\$18.5 million (FY2019 appropriations)	1.7 million recipients total in FY2017
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (2002)	Provides free fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to elementary school students	\$167.5 million (transfer from Section 32) ^d	Not available

Source: Except as noted, participation and funding data from USDA-FNS Key Data Report, January 2019, based on data through November 2018. WIC, WIC FMNP FY2018 appropriations from P.L. 115-141 and related documents.

- At-risk after-school snacks and meals are part of CACFP law and funding, but differ in their rules and the age of children served.
- In a May 2018 report, GAO found that average daily participation estimates in SFSP were unreliable (for more information, see GAO, *Actions Needed to Improve Participation Estimates and Address Program Challenges*, GAO-18-369, May 31, 2018).
- Section 723 of P.L. 116-5 also rescinded \$500 million in prior-year carryover funding.
- FY2018 allocation, not expenditures. USDA-FNS policy memorandum SP 35-2017, FFVP FY2018 Funding Allocation, June 2017.

CRS Reports for Further Detail

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

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

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

CRS Report R45486, *Child Nutrition Programs: Current Issues*

CRS Report R44373, *Tracking the Next Child Nutrition Reauthorization: An Overview*

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

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

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