



Afterschool Nutrition in Washington, D.C.

An Overview of the District's Accomplishments and Opportunities for Growth

This issue brief provides a summary of the key federal afterschool nutrition programs, the District's accomplishments in operating these programs to date, and opportunities to expand and strengthen them.

With record rates of unemployment, revenue shortfalls, and an increasing number of families and afterschool programs feeling the pinch of the economic recession in the District, steps must be taken to make sure all children are accessing the Afterschool Nutrition Programs. Additionally, urging Congress to add Washington, D.C. to the Afterschool Meal Program is key to serving a more substantial, nutritionally adequate meal in our nation's capital, where one out of eight families struggles with hunger.

Afterschool Nutrition Programs Fight Hunger and Improve Children's Nutrition

The federal afterschool nutrition programs provide funding to afterschool programs so that they can serve healthy food to the children in their care. Nutritious food is an essential part of any afterschool program as hungry children cannot benefit fully from the activities a quality afterschool program offers. As the May 30th Washington Post article¹ poignantly recounts, a growing number of children participating in afterschool programs in the nation's capital are struggling with hunger.

Also, providing children with consistent access to healthy snacks is an important tool in reducing obesity. Children who receive nutritious food in afterschool programs are less likely to purchase fast food and unhealthy snacks. Quality afterschool programs often provide participants with nutrition education.

The federal afterschool nutrition programs are a win-win solution for both afterschool activity providers and the children they serve. By leveraging federal nutrition funding to serve snacks, children receive nutritious and healthy snacks on a consistent basis and afterschool programs strengthen their fiscal sustainability by incurring lower out-of-pocket costs for food. The current economic climate has created a growing need to feed hungry children and made the federal nutrition programs even more vital.

Key Opportunities for Growth in Afterschool Nutrition:

- Urge Congress to add D.C. to the list of states that can operate the Afterschool Meal Program.
- Seek improvements to the afterschool nutrition programs in Child Nutrition Reauthorization.
- Continue to build on the District's success in expanding participation in the current afterschool nutrition programs.

¹ To view the article, visit <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/29/AR2009052903130.html>.



Two Afterschool Nutrition Programs are Currently Available in D.C.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Services, operates three afterschool nutrition programs:

- The At-Risk Snack Program
- The Outside-School-Hours Care Program
- The Afterschool Meal Program. (Currently, not available in D.C.)

The first two programs, the At-Risk Snack Program and the Outside-School-Hours Care Program, are available nationwide and are currently the only programs available in D.C. The At-Risk Snack Program is operated through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and serves children 18 and younger. The Outside-School-Hours Care Program is operated through CACFP and serves children 12 and younger.

The third program, Afterschool Meals (also known as the Afterschool Supper Program), is available only in ten states, not including D.C, and is operated through CACFP. In all of the programs, funding is provided on a reimbursement basis. Program sponsors such as schools, YMCAs, or Boys and Girls Clubs, must purchase and serve snacks that meet the USDA nutritional guidelines and then they are reimbursed on a monthly basis for all eligible snacks served.

Participation Rates Have Grown Significantly Since 2004

In the fall of 2004, city leaders had become increasingly concerned about low participation in the afterschool nutrition programs. D.C. Hunger Solutions and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) convened a work group to examine opportunities to increase participation in the District's federally-funded Afterschool Nutrition Programs. The Afterschool Snack Program Work Group developed and implemented an action plan to increase the afterschool nutrition participation rates and address many of the obstacles limiting participation.

The group's work resulted in a more than **550 percent increase in participation** from 2,590 children participating in fiscal year 2004 to 14,653 children participating in fiscal year 2008. This tremendous growth demonstrates both the demand for afterschool nutrition and the ability of afterschool programs to operate nutrition programs. A key factor pushing this dramatic growth was the agreement of D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) to provide snacks to all students participating in eligible school-based afterschool programs through NSLP, beginning in fiscal year 2006.

Other factors, spurring the increase in participation, included the Work Group's focus on:

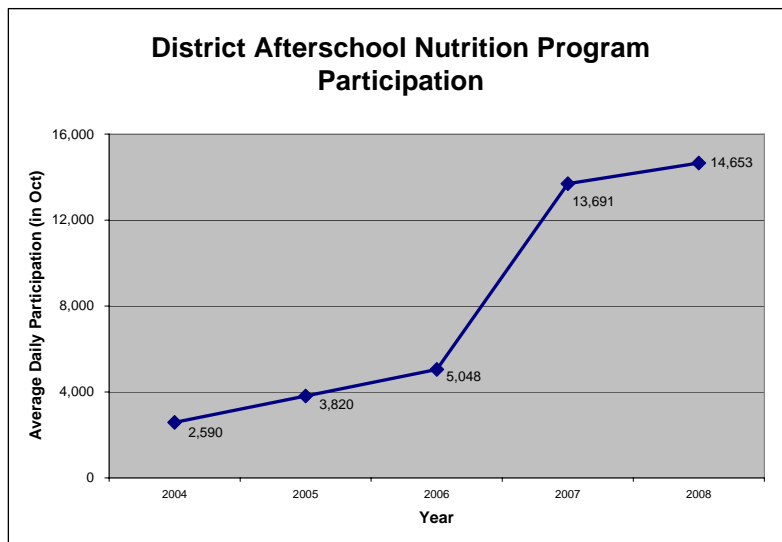
- Conducting an aggressive outreach campaign;

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- Providing on-site training and support by OSSE to new and potential sponsors;
- Reducing the required application and supporting documents from an unwieldy 72 pages to a succinct 12 pages;
- Improving the agreement process for new and existing sponsors;
- Streamlining the training materials for At-Risk Snack Program sponsors; and
- Recruiting new large sponsors to serve additional community sites including the Capital Area Food Bank, DCPS, D.C. Central Kitchen, and the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The chart below shows the dramatic increase in participation rates from 2004 to 2008, in large part due to the Work Group's outreach efforts.



The following chart shows the increase in the number of both the CACFP and NSLP afterschool nutrition sites from 2004 to 2008. It is important to highlight that **CACFP snack sites more than doubled** from 31 in FY 2005 to 63 in FY 2007.

Sites Participating in the Afterschool Nutrition Programs					
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008
CACFP Sites	30	31	27	63	63
NSLP Sites at DCPS schools		6	77	88	88
NSLP Sites at charter schools		25	31	38	51
Total Snack Sites	*	62	135	189	202

While this growth is commendable, there is much work to be done. As more and more afterschool providers see increasing numbers of hungry children arrive at their programs, the District must act to reach additional low-income children with nutritious snacks and meals through the federal nutrition programs.

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D.C. Would Benefit Significantly from Joining the Afterschool Meal Program

Now is a prime time for the District to join ten other states and become an Afterschool Meal Program State so that afterschool programs and children ages 18 and under can benefit from the ability to consume an entire meal at their afterschool program. Congress must approve the addition of states to the program.

There are a variety of benefits to the Afterschool Meal Program such as:

- **Afterschool meals stimulate the economy.**
If given the opportunity to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program, current Snack sponsors will see their reimbursements rise from 74 cents per snack to \$2.68 per meal. Based on current At-Risk Snack participation, this funding increase could infuse an additional \$577,238 of federal funds each month into the community. This support would come at a time when public and private agencies are coping with strained resources at the local level.
- **Serving meals attracts children and teens to programs that keep them safe.**
The nutritious meals draw children into educational and enrichment activities that keep them learning and safe during the after school hours, which is the time when children are most likely to get into trouble. Studies show that juvenile crime peaks between the hours of 3pm and 6pm. This is also the time when children are most likely to become victims of crimes and when teenage girls are at the highest risk of becoming pregnant.
- **Providing healthy food to children helps struggling families.**
The Afterschool Meal Program provides students, especially teens, with enough food to continue learning throughout the afternoon. As more families struggle with the economic recession, meals can help them stretch their food budget and make sure that children have access to healthy food.

Case Study: The Department of Parks and Recreation Would Benefit from the Afterschool Meal Program

The District's Department of Parks and Recreation highlights just one scenario in which the afterschool program and the participating children would greatly benefit from being able to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program.

In 2008, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) enrolled in the Outside-School-Hours Care Program and began serving afterschool meals at recreation centers. DPR currently is the only entity participating in the Outside-School-Hours Care Program solely to provide afterschool meals. Because D.C. cannot participate in the federal Afterschool Meal Program, DPR can only serve full reimbursable meals to children 12 and under. This means that recreation center directors may have to tell children 13 and older that they cannot receive a meal.

At present, budget constraints prevent the agency from digging deeper into its own resources to cover the cost of feeding the older children who are currently not eligible for the Outside-School-Hours Care program. Some recreation center directors state that they will

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often purchase food on their own to make sure no child goes without food. DPR could benefit immensely from D.C.'s inclusion in the Afterschool Meal Program and local initiatives to make the program easier to operate.

At a time with the District is making difficult budget cuts, it is critical that DPR be allowed to continue operating afterschool and summer programs, which enables the District to leverage millions of dollars in federal funding to feed hungry children.

KEY FEDERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

While the District has seen commendable growth in the federal Afterschool Nutrition Programs, there is still work to be done. There are several critical improvements that could be made to strengthen the programs.

Advocate for the District to Join the Afterschool Meal Program

The Afterschool Meal Program would give all afterschool programs access to increased funding and the latitude to serve all school-age students a full meal that will sustain even high-school aged students throughout the early evening hours of afterschool enrichment activities. The Afterschool Meal Program will support jobs, infuse federal funding into the local economy, and provide safe environments that help improve student achievement for low-income children.



Current Action: Afterschool Meals Legislation

In July 2009, the House of Representatives passed its appropriations bill, which includes a provision to add D.C. to the Afterschool Meal Program along with Connecticut. The addition of these two states was in large part due to the committed work of Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) and Rosa DeLauro (D-CT).

The Senate Appropriations Committee has passed its appropriations bill and it is awaiting approval from the full Senate. While the Senate bill adds Wisconsin to the Afterschool Meal Program, it does not include a provision to expand the program to the District.



Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton meets with anti-hunger advocates at the Capitol in March 2009 to discuss including D.C. in the Afterschool Meal Program.



After the full Senate votes on the appropriations bill, the House and Senate will go to conference and work out the differences between the two bills.

As of June 2009, 48 District-based organizations signed on to a letter of support to bring the Afterschool Meal Program to D.C.

To learn how you can support D.C. Hunger Solution's efforts to make sure the District is included in the final bill, contact Alex Ashbrook at aashbrook@frac.org or visit www.dchunger.org.

Improve the Afterschool Nutrition Programs through Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization (2009)

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization sets rules and funding for all the federal child nutrition programs, including afterschool, school breakfast, NSLP, summer meals, CACFP, and WIC. The current legislation will expire on September 30, 2009. The following two improvements would benefit the District:

- **Improve the eligibility and reimbursement structure.**
Current area eligibility guidelines for afterschool nutrition programs are inconsistent with other federal programs and leave many low-income families without access to the nutrition support.
- **Modernize and streamline program operations to improve program integrity and efficiency.**
Steps should be taken to streamline program operations, allow more cross program certification, increase flexibility, and maximize the use of technology and innovation to reduce barriers to eligible families and children and to reduce the administrative burden for service providers.



Current Action: For more information about Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization, visit the Food Research and Action Center's Legislative Action Center at www.frac.org.



KEY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

It is critical that the District work to protect the recent growth in the Afterschool Nutrition Programs as more families require assistance in providing healthy food to their children.

To build on the District's expansion in the Afterschool Nutrition Programs, there are several steps that the District and community stakeholders could take to improve the programs in the District.

- **Ensure that all DCPS and charter schools utilize the Afterschool Nutrition Programs.**

All D.C. public schools and charter schools that have at least fifty percent of their students eligible for free and reduced-price meals should serve healthy food to their students afterschool through the Afterschool Nutrition Programs.

- **Provide additional support to the Department of Parks and Recreation.**

The District should support the Department of Parks and Recreation's efforts to expand use of the federal nutrition programs. DPR has built a successful model for providing nutritious food to children in need through the Summer Nutrition Programs. Community stakeholders should help DPR create the same model for afterschool nutrition. Through federal entitlement funding, DPR has a great opportunity, as a lead city agency invested in encouraging children to be healthy and active, to provide nutritious meals to children in DPR programs and sponsor community-based sites that do not have the institutional capacity to sponsor the nutrition programs themselves. If D.C. succeeds in becoming an Afterschool Meal State, providing support to DPR will be even more critical.

- **Streamline administration of inspections.**

A new requirement for the At-Risk Snack Program is that sites interested in participating in the program must get both a health and safety inspection and a fire inspection. While ensuring the safety of the children participating in the program must be a priority, the new process for getting inspections is difficult for sites to navigate and could discourage sponsor organizations from choosing to participate in CACFP or cause existing sponsors to drop out. The District government should work to create a more efficient process for At-Risk Snack inspections.

- **Recruit new sponsors.**

Grant makers, city agencies, and large community-based organizations familiar with federal grants should be recruited to sponsor the Afterschool Nutrition Programs, thereby reducing administrative burdens on small sites.

- **Reduce paperwork.**

OSSE should implement paperwork reduction strategies including removing the requirement to complete programmatic records in addition to meal counts and menus; and lifting any license or permitting requirement above and beyond current child development regulations for afterschool programs, such as the building use agreement requirement.



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- **Offer limited food handlers training every year.**
In 2009, the Department of Health offered an efficient two hour limited food handlers training, provided free of charge. This should be offered every year to ensure that receiving the required food handling training is convenient for site staff.
- **Partner with foundations to promote the nutrition programs.**
Funders can encourage afterschool programs to participate in afterschool nutrition programs, promote the programs, and provide start-up funding for new Afterschool Snack sites for costs such as equipment and staff time.

D.C. Hunger Solutions, an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center, works to end hunger in our nation's capital and promote the health, nutrition, economic security, and well-being of low-income families. For more information, visit www.dchunger.org.



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

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Overview of the Federal Afterschool Nutrition Programs

	At-Risk Snack (CACFP & NSLP)	Outside-School-Hours Care (CACFP)	Afterschool Meals (CACFP)
Eligibility	Children ages 18 and under attending an afterschool program in a geographic area classified as low-income (i.e., 50% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals at their school).	Children ages 12 and under whose families complete income eligibility forms.	Children ages 18 and under attending an afterschool program in a geographic area classified as low-income (i.e., 50% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals at their school).
Reimbursement Rates and Structure	All snacks are reimbursed at the highest (i.e., free) rate based on area eligibility. Reimbursement for the 2009-2010 school year is \$0.74 (adjusted annually).	Based on families' income eligibility for free, reduced-price, or paid meals. (School meal application data may be used.) Reimbursement for the 2009-2010 school year are \$2.68 – free; \$2.28 – reduced-price; and \$0.25 – paid (adjusted annually).	All meals are reimbursed at the highest (i.e., free) rate based on area eligibility. Reimbursement for the 2009-2010 school year is \$2.68 (adjusted annually).
Sample Reimbursement	Example of reimbursement based on a program serving 50 children who qualify for free snacks: \$0.74 reimbursement at free rate x 50 children qualified for free rate x 22 school days in a month \$814 per month in fed. reimbursement	Example of reimbursement based on a program serving 25 children who qualify for free meals, 5 children who qualify for reduced meals, and 20 children at the "paid" rate: \$67.00 reimbursement for 25 children at free rate \$11.40 reimbursement for 5 children at reduced-price rate \$ 5.00 reimbursement for 20 children at paid rate \$83.40 x 22 school days in a month \$1,834.80 per month in fed. reimbursement	Example of reimbursement based on a program serving 50 children: \$2.68 reimbursement at free rate x 50 children x 22 school days in a month \$2,948 per month in fed. reimbursement
Food Served	<u>A quick healthy snack:</u> Example: Sliced peaches and cottage cheese <i>Or</i> Apple slices and cheese stick	<u>A full meal:</u> Example: Baked chicken, whole wheat roll, sliced peaches, peas, and milk <i>Or</i> Turkey sandwich, carrot sticks, apples, and milk	<u>A full meal:</u> Example: Baked chicken, whole wheat roll, sliced peaches, peas and milk <i>Or</i> Ham sandwich, celery sticks, orange slices, and milk
Limitations	Reimbursement is for a supplemental snack only. Most programs can serve little more than granola bars or a piece of fruit, which is not adequate to sustain many students. Many afterschool programs in the District would like to serve a more substantial amount of food.	1) Reimbursements are based on the child's family income, which the family may be reluctant to provide. 2) Providers must devote considerable staff time to collecting and verifying applications. 3) An incomplete form will receive the "paid" reimbursement rate of \$0.25, even if the child would otherwise qualify for the free rate. 4) Children aged 13 and older are ineligible to receive a meal through this program.	Not available in D.C.